


 Maximum : 32°C  
 Minimum : 20°C  
 Humidity : 61%  
 SUNSET Today 07:22 PM  
 SUNRISE Tomorrow 05:49 AM

# OBSERVER

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## News Digest

### Pak Troops Fired At Border Posts: Army

Jammu: Pakistani troops opened fire on forward posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday in violation of a ceasefire agreement, a defence spokesman said. The unprovoked firing from across the border started in the Balakote sector around 10.15 am and was given a befitting response by Indian Army personnel guarding the LoC, the spokesman said. He said the cross-border firing between the two sides was going on when last reports were received. However, there was no report of any casualty, the spokesman said. Officials said Pakistan Army ● P-02

### 2 OGWs Held In Sopore: Police

Srinagar: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested two militant sympathizers from Sopore town of north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Ishfaq Ahmad Mir of Gund Brath and Mohammad Shafi Bhat of Boma were arrested by a joint team of 22RR, SOG, CRPF 179, 92 BN and Sopore police at a checkpoint at Darpura Boma, news agency KNS reported. According to the report one hand grenade and 20 AK-47 rounds were recovered from their possession. A case FIR No. 63 / 2020 U/S 7/25 IA Act, 18, 23, 38, 39 ULA (P) Act has been registered in PS Boma in this regard.

### Carpenter Falls From Roof, Dies

Srinagar: A carpenter on Monday died after he fell from a two-storey building in Khansahib area of central Kashmir's Budgam district. 24-year-old carpenter Nazir Ahmad Bhat of Shamusabad was working on the roof of a double storey house in Yegbugh, Khansahab when he lost control and fell on the ground, an official told news agency KDC. The carpenter died on the spot due to the fall, the official added.

### 12 Injured In Ganderbal Mishap

Srinagar: At least 12 persons on Monday were injured after the vehicle they were travelling in met with an accident in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. A mini bus carrying passengers to Ganderbal skidded off the road and turned turtle near Baderkund, causing injuries to at least 12 persons, an official said. He said that the injured were shifted to district hospital Ganderbal for treatment. He said that of 12 injured persons 6 were shifted to SKIMS Soura for specialized treatment. He identified them as Abdul Razaq Magary, resident of Wayial, Mohammad Shafi Gujar, resident of Yarmuqum, Abdul Gani Rather, resident of CherwanKangan, ● P-02

### Water Scarcity Sparks Protest In Sopore

Srinagar: Scores of people in north Kashmir's Sopore town on Monday staged a protest against the Jal Shakti department for their alleged failure in providing adequate drinking water. According to the reports, the residents of Check Roday Khan area of Sopore today held a protest demonstration against the Jal Shakti department and claimed that have been facing scarcity of drinking water for the last five years. The residents said that they were being forced ● P-02

## Missing Rajouri Men Killed In 'Fake Encounter', Allege Families

Auqib Javeed

SRINAGAR: Three missing youth from Rajouri district of Jammu region have allegedly been killed by army in a 'staged encounter' in south Kashmir's Shopian district last month, the families said on Monday.

Abrar Ahmed Khan and Abrar Yousuf Chouhan, both residents of Dhar Sakri village of Qotranka in Rajouri, left for valley on July 16 to earn their livelihood after their relative Imtiyaz Hussain assured them work as labourers in south Kashmir's Shopian district, where he had been working for over a month, Chouhan's father Mohammad Yousuf told Kashmir Observer.

A day later, Yousuf said the two boys called up their families and informed them they have reached Shopian safely and have also hired a room for accommodation.

"That was the last time we heard from them. For next 22 days, their mobile phones were switched off," Yousuf said.

The families, he said suspected that the authorities might have taken the boys for quarantine, as per the standard operating procedure (SOPs).

However, as the mobile phones remained continuously switched off and the boys remain ►PAGE 02



PICTURES of three Rajouri boys. Courtesy Twitter

### Army Says Investigating Matter

Army on Monday said it is "investigating the matter" as it "noted social media inputs linked to July 18 encounter at Shopian." "We have noted social media inputs linked to the operation at Shopian on 18 July 2020. The three Terrorists killed during the operation have not been identified and ● P-02

### Missing Report Filed With Police In Rajouri

Families members of three "labourers" from Rajouri district who are missing from last three weeks have filed a written report with police. The trio, aged 18, 21, 26 years respectively, had last called their families on July 17 informing them they ● P-02

### PDP, CPI (M), JKAP Seek Probe

Several mainstream parties on Monday demanded a probe impartial and time bound probe to unearth the mystery behind the disappearance of three poor labourers of Rajouri district and their alleged killing in a fake encounter in south Kashmir's Shopian last month. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) termed the reports of three missing labourers killed in a ● P-02

## Covid-19 Claims 9 More Lives, J&K Toll 483

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus consumed nine more lives in Kashmir valley on Monday, raising the number of fatalities to 482 since the pandemic outbreak in the across the Union Territory.

A 70-year-old man from Palpora Kulgam, an elderly woman from Buchoo Tral Pulwama, a 65-year-old man from Chidibugh Tral Pulwama, a 71-year-old man from Yaripora Kulgam, a 45-year-old man from Palpora Srinagar, a sexagenarian man from Arampora Ganderbal, a 47-year-old man from Rainawari Srinagar and a



### 107 Travellers Among 470 New Cases

Jammu and Kashmir on Monday reported 470 new covid-19 cases including 107 travelers, taking the total tally to 25367. Among them, 102 were reported from Jammu and 368 from Kashmir Valley. Giving district-wise breakup, official sources ● P-02

65-year-old woman from Budgam were among the victims, official sources said Monday. Regarding the septuagenarian ►PAGE 02

## Quarantine Period Of Doctors To Be Treated As 'On Duty': Govt

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The health ministry has asked all the states to treat the quarantine period of doctors and health workers as "on duty" amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a letter to the chief secretaries of the states and Union territories, directors of all the AIIMS and directors and medical superintendents of Central government hospitals dated August 6, joint secretary in the health ministry Lav Agarwal said the quarantine period of doctors and health workers for their duties related to COVID-19 shall be treated as "on duty".

The matter was under consideration since it was pointed out in the Supreme Court that in some cases, doctors and health workers, who are quarantined, are being treated as on leave, Agarwal said.

"The matter has since been considered by this ministry in consultation with the department of personnel and training and it has been decided that the quarantine period of doctors and health workers needs to be treated as on duty," he said.

Those with a high-risk exposure to the virus while performing COVID-related duties are required to undergo quarantine for a week initially. Thereafter, a ►PAGE 02

## BJP Worker Injured In Militant Attack Dies

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: A BJP worker, who was shot at by suspected militants in Budgam district of central Kashmir, succumbed to injuries at a hospital here on Monday, police said.

Abdul Hamid Najar, a resident of Mohiendpora Ompora area of Budgam, was shot at and critically injured by militants in his native village on Sunday, the official said.

He succumbed to injuries early Monday.

Najar is the fourth BJP worker or office bearer targeted by militants in the last one month.

BJP's district president for Bandipora, Waseem Bari, ►PAGE 02

### Grenade Attack On BJP Panch's House

Militants on Monday night hurled a grenade towards the residence of a BJP panchayat member in Pulwama in Kashmir, the latest in a string of attacks targeting workers and leaders of the party in the Valley.

There were no casualties in the explosion, police said. ● P-02

### Militant Attacks Trigger Resignation Spree

Nearly a dozen BJP workers in Kashmir have resigned from the party following recent attacks on village-level leaders by militants, which ● P-02

### Congress Seeks Review Of Security To Politicians

Jammu and Kashmir unit of Congress on Monday termed as highly condemnable the continued militant attacks on political leaders in the ● P-02

### LG Sinha Calls On Prez, VP

SRINAGAR: J&K's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday called on President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu in New Delhi.

Sinha, who is in New Delhi since Sunday, called on President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan this morning.

"Shri, Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir called on President Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan," President's secretariat tweeted. Later, he met Vice President Venkaiah Naidu at Upa -Rashtrapati Nivas.

Sinha also met Union Minister Jitendra Singh and discussed with him future plans and public outreach programmes ● P-02

### UNGA President-Elect Offers Help To Resolve Kashmir Issue

ISLAMABAD: UN General Assembly president-elect Volkan Bozkir on Monday said that he is ready to help Pakistan and India within his mandate to resolve their differences on Kashmir issue if requested by both the parties.

Addressing a news conference along with Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Bozkir said that the resolution of the Kashmir issue was vital for sustainable peace in South Asia, and offered that he can help as per his mandate.

"If my assistance is requested by the parties, I will be ready to provide contributions ● P-02

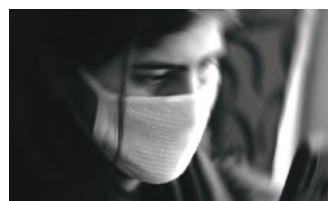
...DU ONLINE EXAMS

## Slow Pace Of 2G Internet A Hurdle For Students In Kashmir

NEW DELHI: From going to friends' homes to keeping their fingers crossed that 2G internet connectivity does not deceive them, Delhi University's Kashmiri students have an additional set of worries regarding their online open book exams.

The Delhi University commenced its online open book examinations from Monday, amid opposition from students and teachers who had been demanding that exams be scrapped and evaluation be done over past performance.

Abha Dev Habib, a professor at Miranda House said, Kashmiri students from our college said they



want education and not depression".

She said even if the students in Kashmir managed to get connected to the 2G network, they found it difficult to download heavy applications and the internet connection would not always be stable.

Students have also said they ►PAGE 02

# The Demon Of Depression Has Returned To Haunt Kashmiri Women In Lockdown

Rabia Noor

A fidgety mental state reached a crescendo for Rabia Amin with the arrival of the virulent spring in Kashmir this year. Suddenly, the 27-year-old felt haunted by a sense of worthlessness, despair, and suicidal thoughts.

Confined to her home since last summer when Jammu and Kashmir lost its semiautonomous status, the soon-to-be bride had a tough time dealing with a year-long troubling routine of grim moments, family mood swings, distressing dispatches, uncertain income, and frequent fights in the family.

The trouble only grew after Kashmir entered into the pandemic lockdown in March 2020.

"Throughout this disconcerting period, there was this question constantly haunting you: What's the way out of this situation," Rabia, holding a master's degree in Social Works, recounts her ordeal.

"At times," she continues, what sounds like a disturbing monologue, "there was this feeling of getting wasted inside those four-walls of home. You wanted to read or watch movies to kill your time, but for how long? You felt like a captive for carrying that cursed identity of a Kashmiri. And this can be a very troubled feeling in times like these."

It took four fortnights of rigorous clinical treatment to restore some sanity in Rabia's fast derailing mindset. But sadly, she isn't alone in the woeful vale to suffer the silent mental assault.

### 'Therapist' at Task

Her ability to attend, document and fix some women-related worries makes Nighat Shafi Pandit a therapist for many stressed souls of Kashmir.

Pandit has been dealing with Rabia-like cases since 2000 when she started Help Foundation — a non-governmental organisation dealing with women in distress.

"When we started to catering these cases, nobody was willing to accept that women suffer from depression or other psychological illness," Pandit, Chairperson Help Foundation, says. "But I'm happy to see some change now."

Even though Pandit might not be the go-to-person under the present circumstances, she has been dealing with women of Kashmir, including several young girls, suffering from depression and anxiety.



Kashmir Observer

"They frequent our NGO for mental health counselling," she says. "And our counsellors make sure to deal with them with a sense of empathy."

Once a college principal in Nawa Kadal area of old Srinagar requested Pandit to counsel their students, who would get palpitations every time an untoward situation took

place in the vicinity.

"We sent our counsellors there and witnessed such incidents on numerous instances," she recalls.

What otherwise is being dismissed in Kashmir as a regular restlessness—"Dil Chu Raawaan" type of feeling—can be a stark sign of depression, warn counsellors.

"Whenever we visit villages to conduct general health check-ups, the women often complaint of pain in abdomen, but the issue remains psychological," Nighat informs. "Some women in Pattan area in north Kashmir had resorted to substance abuse as a result of acute depression."

### Poverty Paths

Much of the depression in Kashmir today stems from the 'fast disintegration' of its social institu-

tions, experts opine.

Several girls of marriageable age in the valley aren't able to get married due to the prevailing situation.

"Thing is," Pandit continues, "girls getting married late often suffer from depression and anxiety. They also face certain behavioural issues, like irritability and shattered self-confidence, which sometimes results in frustration." The lockdown has only deepened this marital mess.

Besides, there're numerous women in Kashmir, who live in abject poverty with no source of income. "All such situations lead to severe depression," says Pandit, adding that it would not be wrong to say that the state of mental health in Kashmir is alarming as far as women are concerned. Situational Stress ►PAGE 02



# From Front page...

## Missing Rajouri Men Killed...

incommunicado, the families, Yousuf said filed a missing complaint on August 9. "I was on my way to home from Qotranka when I received a call from a journalist. He started asking questions about the boys. Minutes later, he sent some pictures on my Whatsapp," Yousuf said. "To my shock, the pictures were of my son and two other relatives. I am devastated," he added. Yousuf further said that the youth, including his son have been killed in a fake gunfight and passed off as militants by the army. "They (state forces) are not killing militants but created them. My innocent children have been killed in cold-blood. Had they been militants, I would have no regrets," he said. Choudhary Mohammad Bashir, another relative of a slain youth alleged that army had tried to disfigure the faces of the youth so that they could never be identified. "All the three were killed in broad day light. Army had tried to disfigure their faces so that no one would ever know the truth of this stage managed encounter," he said. Pertinently, in a statement issued here on July 18, a police spokesperson had claimed that three militants were killed by a joint team of army, police and CRPF in village Amshipora area of district Shopian. The police spokesperson had also claimed recovery of incriminating materials, including arms and ammunition from the site of encounter. The handout had further said that the operation was launched by army's 62 RR on a specific input about presence of militants in the village "During search terrorists fired upon Army personnel and encounter started. Later on police and CRPF also joined. During the encounter three unidentified terrorists were killed. Dead bodies of all the killed three terrorists were retrieved from the site of encounter. The identification and affiliation of the killed terrorists is being ascertained. The police spokesperson had said that the bodies of terrorists were sent to Baramulla for their last rites after conducting medico-legal formalities including collection of their DNA. When contacted, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shopian, Amrit Pal Singh told Kashmir Observer on Monday that the action will be taken as per law if the families approach the police. "The family has not approached police so far. If they approach us, we will do whatever is required as per the law," Singh said. Meanwhile, Srinagar-based Defence spokesperson Colonel Rajesh Kalia issued a brief statement saying the army has noted social media inputs linked to the operations at Shopian on July 18, 2020. "The three terrorists killed during the operation have not been identified and the bodies were buried based on established protocols. The army is investigating the matter," the Defence spokesperson said.

## Army Says Investigating...

the bodies were buried based on established protocols," a defence ministry spokesman said in a statement. "Army is investigating the matter," the statement added. Meanwhile, a senior police officer was quoted by a local news agency that if the families report to Shopian police station for bodies, legal formalities would be set into motion. On July 18, police in a statement had said that three militants were killed in gunfight with joint team of police, army and CRPF in Shopian district on an input by army.

"On a specific input by 62RR about presence of (militants) in village Amshipora area, an operation was launched by them in the area," a police spokesperson had said.

During search, he had said, the militants fired upon Army and encounter started. "Later on police and CRPF also joined. During encounter three unidentified militants were killed," he had said in the statement, adding, "Bodies of all the killed three (militants) were retrieved from the site of encounter." However, he said, the identification and group affiliation of the slain was being ascertained.

"Incriminating materials including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter," he said.

All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other militancy-related incidents, he had said.

"The bodies have been sent to Baramulla for their last rites after conducting medico-legal formalities including collection of their DNA," he had said.

He had said a case FIR No. 42/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered at Police Station Hirpora and investigation has been initiated into the matter. With inputs from GNS

## Missing Report Filed With...

have reached Shopian and got a room on rent, according to their relative. "They last called on July 17 when they informed the families that they have reached Shopian where they have taken a room on rent," Lal Hussian, a relative of the missing persons said. Asked reason for filing the missing report now, he said, "We thought there are connectivity problems in Kashmir for one or the other reasons and we were waiting that they will call soon. However, we thought it was enough and as such filed the missing report." He urged authorities to take all measures to trace out the trio.

Residents of Dhar Sakri in Kotranka, the trio include Imtiaz Ahmad son of Sabar Hussein(26), Ibrar Ahmed son of Bagga Khan (18) and Ibrar Ahmed (21) son of Mohammad Yousaf.

According to Station House Officer (SHO) Kotranka Mustaj Ahmed a written report has been received in this regard.

## PDP, CPI (M), JKAP Seek Probe

"staged encounter" at Shopian as shocking and extremely excruciating episode and has said that such repressive measures have pushed Jammu and Kashmir in a precipice of a disaster.

PDP spokesman in a statement issued here has said that the reported killing of three missing labourers from Rajouri in a staged encounter at south Kashmir's Shopian has raised questions on all such encounters in recent months especially in view of the new decision not to identify bodies, or hand them over to families and bury them reportedly in remote, inaccessible, unidentified places. The spokesman said that in order to justify its repressive, unconstitutional, inhuman and extremely violent measures upon the people of Kashmir, any government of India needs is a militancy narrative.

He added that armed forces in Kashmir have been given absolute impunity to detain, torture or kill innocent people. "Such an episode has elucidated why bodies, post encounters, are allowed to decompose at unknown locations. It is high time that impartial and high-level probes into recent encounters must be ordered," said the PDP spokesman.

The incident of three labourers from Rajouri going missing from Shopian district from July 17 is a serious issue and needs a time-bound judicial probe, CPI (M) said

"According to media reports the trio went missing just a day before the security forces claimed it killed three unidentified militants in Shopian. There are unverified reports that the missing labourers have been killed in a fake encounter in Shopian on July 18. This is shocking and must be probed by a sitting High Court judge in a time-bound manner," reads the statement.

"In the past also unfortunate incidents of civilians being killed in fake encounters for rewards and promotions have been reported in Kashmir. The 2010 unrest was the creation of the Machil fake encounter. Those who are proved to be involved in such heinous crimes be brought to justice," the statement added.

Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) president Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari urged the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to order a high level probe into the disappearance of three labourers—Imtiaz Ahmed, son of Sagar Hussain, Ibrar Ahmed, son of Bagha Khan and Ibrar Ahmed son of Mohammad Yousuf whose whereabouts are unknown since July 17.

"The Lt. Governor led government in J&K is expected to order and pursue a serious, impartial and transparent investigation that leaves no stone unturned in finding out what happened to these three poor labourers who have lost contact with their families since July 17. The truth behind their missing must be unearthed as quickly as possible," he remarked in a statement issued here. The JKAP president hoped that the government will assign the probe to some sitting judge who can lead the investigations while taking all the factors into consideration. Bukhari expressed solidarity with the families of these three missing labourers and assured them of all possible help in tracing the whereabouts of their loved ones.

## 16 Months On, Shah Faesal...

everyone by resigning from the government service in January 2019, had floated his own political party two months later. He was arrested in August last year, a week after the Centre revoked the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and divided it into two union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The JKPM's executive committee held an online meeting on Monday to discuss the ongoing political developments in the state, the party said in a statement.

"In the meeting, the request of Dr Shah Faesal to spare him from the organisational responsibilities was discussed. Dr Shah Faesal had informed state executive members that he is not in a position to continue with political activities and wants to be freed from the responsibilities of the organisation," the JKPM said.

"Keeping in view this request, it was decided to accept his request so that he can better continue with his life and contribute whichever way he chooses," the party said.

The JKPM's statement said it has been unanimously decided to appoint vice president Feroze Peerzada as interim president till formal elections can be held for the post of president. The committee also accepted the resignation of its chairman Javed Mustafa Mir, who is a former MLA, it said.

## Covid-19 Claims 9 More...

from Palpora Kulgam, a doctor at district hospital Kulgam said that the he was brought to hospital yesterday and died on the same day. "The family had called officials on covid-19 helpline and later he was brought the hospital and died shortly after admission. His test returned positive for the novel coronavirus later," the doctor added.

The woman from Buchoo Tral was admitted to SMHS hospital as a case of bilateral community acquired pneumonia and died last night at SMHS hospital. "Her COVID swab was detected as positive," a senior official said.

A relative of the woman said that by mistake her residence was registered as Kulgam instead of Buchoo Tral. "She died at around 7 p.m. last night (August 9). Subsequently we took the body by undertaking that we will follow the covid-19 protocol and later we were informed that her sample has returned positive for the virus," the relative added.

Regarding the 65-year-old man from Tral, they said, he was admitted to SMHS hospital on August 1 and was later diagnosed with bilateral pneumonia. "He died at 1 p.m. on August 10," they said.

Regarding the man from Yaripora, they said, he was admitted on August 01 and was as a case of "BHP, HTN and bilateral viral Pneumonia." He passed at around 1:10 p.m.," they said.

Meanwhile, a regarding four others deaths, they said, two each were reported from SKIMS Soura and SMHS here. All of them had underlying ailments, they said.

Regarding man from Rainawari, they said, he was admitted with bilateral pneumonia to SMHS hospital on August 1 and passed away on Sunday night.

The woman from Budgam, they said, was admitted to the SMHS hospital on 23 July with bilateral pneumonia and lost battle with the disease on Monday morning.

Regarding the man from Palpora, Srinagar, officials at SKIMS Soura said that he was admitted on 21 July and died today.

Regarding the man from Arampora Ganderbal, the officials said, he was admitted on August 6 and died today.

With these deaths, officials said, 482 people have died due to the virus in Jammu and Kashmir so far. Among them, they said, 48 were from the Valley while 35 others from Jammu division.

Srinagar district with 156 deaths tops the list followed by Baramulla (82), Budgam (36), Anantnag (33), Kulgam (32), Pulwama (32), Kupwara (27), Shopian (24), Jammu (23), Bandipora (18), Ganderbal (8), two each in Rajouri, Doda and Udhampur besides one each in Ramban, Samba, Poonch, and Kathua. (With GNS inputs)

## 107 Travellers Among 470...

said that Srinagar reported 115, Baramulla 41,Pulwama 30, Kulgam 10, Shopian 14, Anantnag 16, Budgam 31, Kupwara 17, Bandipora 79, Ganderbal 15, Jammu 58, Rajouri 5, Ramban 16, Kathua 8, Udhampur 2, Samba 5, Doda 4, Reasi 2 and Kishtwar2.

In Kashmir, Srinagar tops the list with 6263 cases followed by Baramulla with 2178, Pulwama 1860, Kulgam 1619, Budgam 1568, Shopian 1534, Anantnag 1569, Kupwara 1273, Bandipora 1101 and Ganderbal 689.

In Jammu division, Jammu district has 1613 cases, Rajouri 763, Ramban 605, Kathua 602, Udhampur 625, Samba 522, Doda 315, Poonch 275, Reasi 228and Kishtwar 165.

Moreover 372 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals, 90 from Jammu Division and 282 from Kashmir Valley, the officials added.

## Bjp Worker Injured In Militant...

his father and brother were shot dead by militants last month.

A BJP panch was shot at and injured on August 4, while another sarpanch from the party was shot dead two days later in south Kashmir's Kulgam district.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha has strongly condemned the killing of BJP panch and said that the "heinous act" was an attempt to spread fear and there can be no justification for such attacks.

"The society does not have any space for perpetrators of violence and those involved in this cowardly act shall be brought to justice," he added. (With PTI inputs)

## Grenade Attack On BJP...

"Terrorists lobbed a grenade on the house of Bhupinder Singh in Tral town on Monday night," a police official said.

The grenade exploded outside the house of Singh, who is a BJP worker and a panch, the official said adding there was no damage caused by the blast.

Militants have stepped up attacks on BJP workers in Kashmir valley since last month.

The latest attack came on a day BJP worker Abdul Hamid Najar, who was shot at by militants in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, succumbed to injuries at a hospital.

Najar was the fourth BJP worker or office bearer targeted by militants in the last one month.

## Militant Attacks Trigger...

prompted the party to suggest hostel-type secure accommodation for its members and their families in each district in the Valley.

Worries have escalated after Abdul Hamid Najar, BJP's OBC morcha' district president from Budgam, died at a hospital early on Monday, a day after he was shot at in his village.

Admitting that several party workers, most of them lower-rung activists, have resigned over the last few days following the recent attacks on BJP panchayat members and sarpanches, a BJP leader said some were from Budgam district in central Kashmir.

Letters and videos of several BJP workers announcing their resignations or disassociation with the party have been posted on social media platforms. The BJP leader said three party workers, including two panchayat members and a sarpanch from Kulgam district of south Kashmir, have resigned from the party. There is one from Handwara, one from Kupwara and one from Sopore as well, he added.

BJP media in-charge Manzoor Bhat dismissed the resignations as of no consequence. These all are lower rung workers. This will not affect the party, Bhat told PTI. However, he said the party has taken serious note of the attacks on its workers and has suggested that secure accommodation be created for its members and their families in all districts. BJP J-K general secretary (organisation) Ashok Koul raised the matter with party's national president J P Nadda and the union territory's party unit now believes that something will be done to secure its members, Bhat said. We brought the matter to the notice of Nadda and have already sought enhanced security cover for our workers. Some of our workers from places like Kulgam are given accommodation in Srinagar but their family lives in Kulgam so they cannot remain here. We have therefore sought secure accommodation for our workers in their respective districts. We believe something is being done on this and it will

take shape in the coming few days, the BJP's media in-charge said.

Several BJP leaders and workers have been provided security or individual secure housing but most have said they have to take care of their family as well and cannot live without them.

Also, they cannot work by living in another district. So we have suggested that to stop such killings, hostel-type accommodation, like headquarters, be created in every district to accommodate BJP workers and their families, Bhat said.

The hostel-type accommodation can provide a secure environment for hundreds of workers, even from other political parties, he said. Providing individual security to political workers is very difficult, he added.

The attack on Najar followed the killings of Wasim Bari, former BJP district president of Bandipora, and his father Bashir Ahmad and brother Umar Bari last month in North Kashmir. A BJP panch was shot at and injured on August 4 while a sarpanch from the party was shot dead two days later in south Kashmir's Kulgam district.

## Congress Seeks Review...

valley and sought a review of the security arrangements for them. The party also urged the new Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to take a holistic view of the situation and change the pattern of "bias and vendetta" in the matter of security. In an apparent reference to the latest killing of BJP leader Abdul Hamid Najar by militants in Budgam district of Central Kashmir, Pradesh Congress Committee chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma accused the Centre and the Union Territory administration of failure to ensure the security of the political class in the valley.

"The continued attacks on the political leaders is highly condemnable and needs to be stopped to foil the designs of the militants. The New Lt Governor should immediately review the security of the politicians," Sharma said. He strongly condemned the recent killings and attacks on the political leaders and Panchayati Raj institution members and termed it a matter of serious concern. "The attacks are part of a nefarious design to create fear amongst the political class in Kashmir and elsewhere," the Congress leader said, expressing sympathy with the families of the victims of the targeted attacks.

He urged the government to ensure fool proof security measures for the political activists in the wake of the increased attacks.

Sharma claimed his party has always demanded appropriate and adequate security for all vulnerable leaders irrespective of their political affiliations depending upon their status, class and vulnerability. Sharma also claimed that the people at the helm of affairs have favoured a "particular class" and deprived the opposition Congress and some other leaders of adequate security.

"One of the reasons for lack of any political activity, especially in the valley, is either withdrawal or downgrading of the security of the leaders and activists of Congress and other opposition parties," he said.

The Congress leader said during the past one year or so, his party's senior leaders were deliberately deprived of proper security cover as compared to others and security was mostly given on the basis of "likes and dislikes of a few". "We urged the new Lt Governor to take a holistic view of the situation and change the pattern of bias and vendetta in the matter of security, if you want revival of political activity to help sort out issues of suffering masses," he said.

## LG Sinha Calls On Prez, VP...

to be undertaken in the union territory in the coming months.

During the two-hour-long one-on-one meeting, Singh, the Union minister of state for PMO, gave Sinha an update about some of the newly-launched development projects of national importance in Jammu and Kashmir. Singh, who is from the union territory, described the meeting as an enriching exchange of views on various issues.

Having worked closely with Sinha in the Narendra Modi government 1.0, there is much in common to share, Singh said. Sinha discussed some of the future plans and public outreach programmes which he is scheduling for the coming weeks and months, a press release issued here said. The lieutenant governor (LG) said he will closely coordinate with the central government for the benefit and development of Jammu and Kashmir. Singh said while most of the mega projects related to power and irrigation have been cleared during the last one year, the Ratle project, held up for six years, will also be cleared and resumed shortly.

Appreciating Sinha's decision to visit the COVID-19 wards in Srinagar hospitals, soon after taking over the charge of the LG, the Union minister said that on the advice of the union territory administration, a provision of oxygen tanks has been made in all major hospitals in Srinagar and Jammu. Singh, however, made it clear that there is sufficient oxygen supply availability both in Jammu and Kashmir as well as the union territory of Ladakh. He conveyed to Sinha the Centre's will and intention to resume the outreach programme by Union ministers which had got interrupted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said 36 Union ministers had visited Jammu and Kashmir in the first phase and the next phase will be started as soon as the coronavirus pandemic situation eases out. The regular visits by Union ministers had proved to be highly useful in the northeastern region and it was on the advice of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that a similar initiative was undertaken in Jammu and Kashmir. Singh also appreciated the investors' outreach programme that began in recent months. He said the union territory administration under the new LG will be provided with all assistance and support to encourage investments in Jammu and Kashmir. This was Sinha's first visit to Delhi after taking charge as LG of the union territory on Friday. He replaced G C Murmu, who has been appointed the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.Sinha is also expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi before his return to J&K UT.

## UNGA President-Elect Offers...

within my mandate," he said. New Delhi's long-held position has been that Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan and there is no question of any mediation or intervention by any third party. After India revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5 last year and announced the bifurcation of the State into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, Pakistan tried to internationalise the issue. India has firmly told Pakistan that the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been, is and shall continue to be an integral part of India. Issues related to Jammu and Kashmir are internal matter to India.

Bozkir, the first-ever Turkish national to be elected to the Office of the President of the UNGA, was slated to visit Pakistan on July 26-27 but the visit was postponed citing "some technical flight problems." He also said that "regional security should be maintained through political and diplomatic means". He added that all issues should be resolved peacefully through meaningful mutual engagements. Bozkir comments came after he held detailed talks with Qureshi on different issues, including Kashmir.

The UNGA president-elect arrived in Islamabad on Sunday on a two-day visit at the invitation of the government of Pakistan. Talking about his meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan, Bozkir called him "a well-known political figure in the world" who has a vision for the region and the world. Khan during his meeting with Bozkir said the UN should play its role in addressing the situation in Kashmir. Bozkir also talked about the unprecedented health challenge of COVID-19 which was a threat with social, political and economic consequences.

Earlier, Bozkir planted a sapling in the gardens of the foreign office building as part of the nationwide tree plantation drive.

## Slow Pace Of 2G Internet...

have to rely on resources provided by others and miss out on one-on-one interaction which is the crux of the teaching and learning process. They have also claimed that many teachers are inconsiderate to these situations before giving out links and readings in class and during assignments, she added. Bushra, a student of BA (English) Hons at Zakir Husain College, said her district in Jammu and Kashmir was in a state of lockdown. "I am from Rajouri district. We have 2G network here. I had planned to go to a friend's house for taking my exams but it is almost four hours away and it's not feasible during the pandemic. Internet cafes are closed because of the lockdown in my area. I am praying that my 2G network does not deceive me and I am able to take my exams which will begin from tomorrow, she said.

Samiya Aziz, another student of Zakir Husain College, said her nearest Common Service Centre (CSC) was 16 kilometres away and during the pandemic it was not feasible for her to travel for each exam. She said she will go a friend's place where there is wi-fi connection to take her exams. A Kashmiri student of St Stephen's College said he

had to travel almost 69 kilometres from Kulgam to Srinagar to take his exams and still faced problems due to unstable internet connectivity. The situation is not very good in my area. I had to travel 69 kilometres to Srinagar, take my exams in an internet caf but while uploading I was getting the message, Please check your internet connection'. I refreshed the page multiple times and even tried uploading the answer sheets over my phone's 2G connection but got the same message. Eventually, I had to ask my friend in Lucknow, who was also taking the exam, to upload the answer sheets using my user ID. It was a terrible experience, he said. Another student in Kashmir from Dyal Singh College said he relied on his phone's 2G network to appear for the exam.

I had not faced issues while uploading answers on my phone's 2G network during the mock tests so I relied on my phone's internet connection. I faced issues while uploading answers and got error messages while uploading them on the portal. I kept refreshing it but got the same message," he said.

He said he had to email the answers to the university and the college, and could manage to send them almost 20 minutes after the stipulated deadline of 7.30 pm.

"I do not know whether my answer sheet will be accepted, he said.

## Priest, 5 Officials Indicted...

case, an ACB spokesperson said. He said the accused in the case include former Patwari Dalip Singh, the then Naib Tehsildar Manohar Singh, erstwhile Tehsildars Shanti Saroop and Surinder Gupta (both dead) and former Patwari Babu Ram (expired) besides Mahant Baba Ram Milan Dass and his assistant Damodar Dass of Uttar Pradesh. The case was registered on February 21, 2011 after the verification of allegations that over 18.75 acres of land situated in villages Muthi and Paloura and belonging to the temple Thakur Dwara Shri Ram Janki Pracheen Mandir, Udheywala, Jammu, was sold off illegally, the spokesman said. During the investigation, he said it transpired that the mahant, who was priest-cum-custodian of the temple, had no authority or competence to alienate or transfer or lease out the land belonging to the temple. To take undue pecuniary benefits for himself and to make a wrongful loss to the temple, the mahant hatched a criminal conspiracy with accused revenue officials who issued the revenue extracts for the execution of the sale and lease deed illegally and later on entered and attested mutations of different pieces of land, the spokesman said. "This action on their part individually as well as collectively was found to be illegal involving a sheer abuse of their official positions and powers to confer an undue benefit to the mahant" and wrongful loss to the temple," he said.

## Quarantine Period Of Doctors-

decision shall be taken by the institution concerned on extending the quarantine period by one more week, the letter said. "This quarantine has been prescribed in larger public interest to stop the spread of the disease," it added.

## The Demon Of Depression...

The trouble, however, doesn't start and end with destitution itself. Kashmir's protracted political problem is itself making depression as some kind of a pervasive-plagued phenomenon in the valley today. In an uncertain terrain where CASOs, gunfights, unknown guns and regular home wreckages have somehow become a part of life, women constantly have to worry about the safety of their loved ones.

"In a conflict-ridden region," says Dr Sabreena Qadri, Lecturer, Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College, Srinagar, "each day can be stressful for an individual, and women are no exception." Most women keep on checking if the situation is normal, whenever their children step out of their home, Dr Qadri continues. "Such things can be quite stressful for women," she says. "Unfortunately, these kinds of situations are a routine affair in Kashmir, which can depress a person every day."

**Most Urgent Health Issue**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has ranked depression as the fourth among the list of the most urgent health issues worldwide and has predicted it to become number two "in terms of disease burden by 2020 overriding diabetes, cancer, arthritis and so on". Earlier, it was believed that depression in women was the result of hormonal changes that they undergo throughout their life cycle. It was a well-accepted theory. But over the period of time, it was found that the role of hormones has been highly over-rated.

"Hormones have a role to play," agrees Dr Insha Rauf, Registrar, Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS), Kashmir, "but they don't affect you to the extent that was previously presumed."

If you remove three factors—poverty, gender inequality and domestic violence—from women's lives, Dr Rauf says, the rates of depression in males and females are going to be almost similar. "This is something that was recently found in a study by WHO," she says. The study notes that the ratio of depression in males and females is 1:1.2, that is almost equal. "Conflict can add to all of these three factors [poverty, gender inequality and domestic violence] which in turn can add to depression," Dr Rauf explains.

"Even males vent out the stress generated through conflict situations on women back home. It further takes a mental toll on women."

**Study Findings**

As per 'Muntazar; Kashmir Mental Health Survey' report published in 2015 by Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) India, IMHANS Srinagar and University of Kashmir, 50 percent of women suffer from probable depression as compared to 37 percent men, while 36 percent of women suffer from a probable anxiety related disorder in comparison to 21 percent men. The study also found that 22 percent women and 18 percent men suffer from probable Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) — a clinical syndrome that is triggered by a traumatic event.

The finding of the study confirmed "a serious mental health situation, with highly prevalent common mental disorders and distress having continued to increase to reach epidemic levels among the traumatised population of Kashmir". Another study titled 'Life in Conflict: Characteristics of Depression in Kashmir' published earlier by International Journal of Health Sciences has found that women in Kashmir had a higher prevalence of depression in all the age groups than men, and was the highest in the age group of 26 to 35 years, viz., 68.66 percent. In fact, the study says, in rural areas, the prevalence of depression among women was found to be 93.1 percent.

It also found that prevalence of depression in Kashmir was 55.72 percent—higher than other places—while the researchers attributed to conflict situation in the Valley. Pertinently, according to the United Nations' latest report, one person in five suffers from mental health condition in conflict zones. The study has used data from 39 countries published between 1980 and August 2017.

Around 22 percent of those affected suffer from depression, anxiety or PTSD, as per an analysis of 129 studies published in the reputed medical journal The Lancet. Contrary to the past studies, which seemed to underestimate the magnitude of mental health conditions in conflict-hit areas, the revised estimates show increased rates of severe, moderate and mild mental health issues.

**Healed Yet Haunted**

Despite being a depression survivor, Rabia Amin today fears that the searing stress getting normalised inside Kashmiri households amid lockdown might come to haunt her again. "It somehow affects your mind when you get to read how women are facing domestic violence and militant moods of their men sitting home these days," she says. "At the end of the day, the conflict in Kashmir boils down to home, where it makes women its certain victim."

## Pak Troops Fired At Border...

personnel also fired mortar shells targeting Tarkundi village, causing panic among residents. On Sunday, Pakistani troops resorted to heavy shelling in Mankote, Shahpur, Kirni and Krishna Ghati sectors.

## 12 Injured In Ganderbal...

Abdul RehmanRana, resident of MamarKangan, Rafeqa Begum, resident of Prang Kanga and FaizanFayaz resident of Prang. The official said that condition of three of the injured was critical—(KNO)

## Water Scarcity Sparks...

to drink contaminated water from the nearby streams as the department has failed to provide them potable drinking water. They appealed to the district administration and concerned department to restore the water supply in the area to mitigate their sufferings—(KNO)



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



(Kashmir Observer, August 11, 2000)



## KASHMIR OBSERVER

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### New LG

As expected, people in Kashmir Valley have largely been indifferent to the appointment of new J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. And understandably so. Since the revocation of Article 370 last year, people in the Valley have hardly felt any sense of involvement in the functioning of the administration. Nor has the administration sought to involve them in its functioning, let alone open itself to public scrutiny considering the state of local media.

That said the appointment of a career politician as a governor is a good news. Engaging with the people and being responsive to their mood and grievances is a politician's basic instinct. His career as also the achievement of his political, ideological and development objectives depend on this. Though the situation in Kashmir is different and the politics here doesn't operate normally, people will still expect a politician governor to act differently than his predecessor, a career bureaucrat.

Would Sinha be any different? Well, here's hoping he is. He has had a long innings in politics. An alumnus of IIT-BHU, Sinha is a former union minister and three-time MP representing Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur constituency. He was believed to be in the running for the post of chief minister in Uttar Pradesh after the BJP scored a landslide victory in the 2017 Assembly elections, but the state's top job finally went to Yogi Adityanath. Sinha has started his political career as a member of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidharthi Parishad, the student wing of the BJP, in the 1970s.

Soon after taking over as Sinha called Kashmir "a heaven of India". He termed the August 5 an important date as "after years of isolation J&K came to mainstream". More importantly, Sinha affirmed there won't be any bias against anyone. He has assured the people that their genuine grievances will be listened to and a way out found. And if the tweets he has issued since his takeover as the LG are anything to go by - one of which was about the Kashmiri pronunciation of the names of the local places - he is already trying to relate to people. Here's hoping the LG Sinha follows it up with a more substantive outreach to the people.

The past year has sadly been bereft of any political activity not only in the Valley but in Jammu too. The attempts to kickstart it have been frustrated, almost nipped in the bud. An administration headed by a bureaucrat only further deepened this vacuum. This is where the stepping in of a politician LG is expected to make a redeeming difference. And to start with the LG can make the government more responsive to the grievances of the people as he himself has made it clear.

#### OTHER OPINION

### Brick and milestone

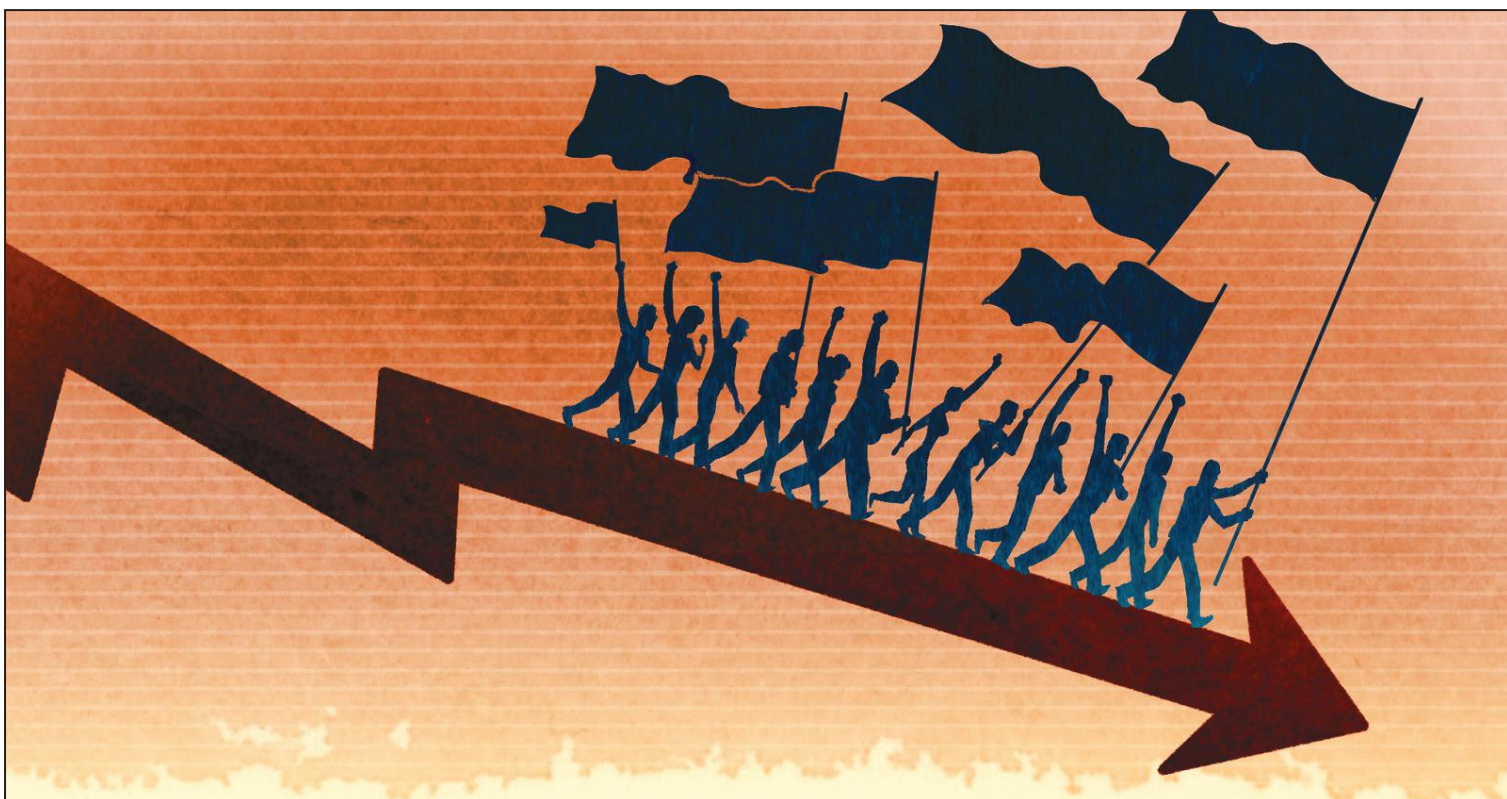
The issue that coalition politics compelled it to place on the "backburner" in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime has now journeyed to the centre, flamboyant and triumphant, in Narendra Modi raj. Of the two large national political projects that reconfigured India's politics in the early 1990s — Mandal and Mandir — the former met with only scattered and fragmented success while the BJP has led the latter to full and unequivocal fulfilment. But if the BJP has reason to celebrate a conclusion, for India, the beginning of temple construction at Ayodhya underlines a challenge. The leading role of the Prime Minister, Chief Minister and Governor at an event ostensibly organised by the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust was foretold. Even so, its images, of intimacies between state and religion, have implications that will need to be grappled with in days and years to come.

India's secularism has been a variant of the traditional western notion of the strict wall of separation between church and state. The Indian version has described itself, more, as being about a state that keeps equal distance from all religions but respects them all. Now, even that increasingly embattled idea of equi-distance will need to be qualified or redefined. Of course, this task is the burden of the non-BJP parties, should they have the stomach for it, which, so far, they don't.

In the BJP's narrative, on the other hand, a discredited secularism has deservedly fallen. At Ayodhya on Wednesday, Prime Minister Modi sought to draw parallels between the bhoomipujan on August 5 and August 15, Independence Day. A five-centuries-old struggle had triumphed in the liberation of an idea that will now be the link, the PM said, between "nar" and "narayan" (man and god), "lok" and "aastha" (people and faith) "varman" and "ateet" (past and present). The Ram temple, he said would be an inspiration for a self-confident and self-reliant India on the world stage.

The BJP's political opponents may not rise to the challenge posed by the far-reaching changes in political culture wrought by it — both the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 and the bricklaying for the temple at Ayodhya have been met by the same sullen silence, if not acquiescence. But as the ruling party at the Centre of a diverse nation, the BJP must be mindful of the dangers of majoritarian triumphalism. Even the Supreme Court, which paved the way for the temple by giving the disputed site to the Hindu side, described the 1992 destruction of the Babri masjid as illegal. The demolition case continues in court. At Ayodhya on Wednesday, there was no mention of the debris of the mosque that lies under the proposed temple, or of the exclusions of faith-based politics. These need to be acknowledged and addressed. Only then can the invocation of national unity — by virtually the entire political establishment today — ring sincere.

The Indian Express



## Nationalism Redefined

During the Covid-era efforts are on to redefine nationalism as interpreted during the medieval history.

ASAD MIRZA

In India nationalism in its extreme sense is being described not as loyalty to your nation state, as in the European example, but as your devotion to a particular religion, its beliefs and myths. More regrettable is the fact that even the so-called educated have fallen prey to this brand of ultra-nationalism and are going gaga over it

While the world was busy in fighting the Covid pandemic, some negative and fissiparous tendencies reared their head again globally. During this time they were able to reconsolidate, strengthen and further their negative agenda.

In the emerging scenarios after the pandemic, it doesn't look as if the world will go back to its old ways including that of globalisation or a global village. As during the Covid-era, the concept of nation state or nationalism is staging a comeback. Responses of various governments could be interpreted as guided most by the principles of territory, national priorities and cohabitating communities.

One trend, which was observed immediately after the panic started globally, was the closure of national borders and countries air-lifting their citizens from every corner of the globe. In a sense this seemed logical and what was required. But in this background various initiatives taken by different countries started reeking of concern for their own citizens only. Instead of forging a global response to the pandemic under the umbrella of various international organisations, most countries resorted to taking individual steps. These steps recalled the memories of nation-states, which existed during the medieval period.

However, most countries have unconsciously re-ignited the concept of nationalism amongst their citizens, interpreting it in a narrow manner. They completely ignored the development and progress of a globalised world and instead focussed on narrow national identities, which in the long run may prove detrimental to the personal liberty and rights.

#### What is nationalism?

A narrow interpretation of nationalism, which calls for identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations, not only embraces the negative aspects of

nationalism, but also tries to define the political duties of its citizens in a negative manner, which first of all should not call into question any decision of the state.

However, right from the beginning the response of various countries to the pandemic has been couched in national footings. Most of the media reporting started from being country specific instead of being region specific. Next, most countries closed their borders to other nationals and tried to bring back their citizens from all corners of the globe, back to their country of origin.

But the real danger arises when all nation-states slide into uncontrolled passion and calls for nationalism, with no regard for international co-operation and not looking at the world as a globalised village.

In such a nationalist world, a war between two opposing nations could be termed as logical. This, destabilising point is what is more worrisome, as it could initiate forms of ultra nationalism amongst various countries, which may be the harbinger of collapse of many international organisations, cobbled together after much efforts and energy.

#### Nationalist bogey in India

However, in India the nationalism bogey was raised by the right wing, which had been trying to change the national perspective on the issue for the last 70 years, through covert and overt activities and organisations. It was trying hard to implant its interpretation of nationalism in the public and societal domain and found much needed further salience during the Covid-crisis.

As everyone's attention was focussed on the pandemic, the so-called nationalists continued to work behind the scenes and were able to further create irreparable divisions in the social and community fabric of the country, by using the state institutions, apparatus and media to their advantage. They were able to distort and manage the national discourse

by blaming one particular minority for all the ills and most of the population fell for it, hook, line and sinker. Demonising one particular community appealed to the masses and also conformed to the narrative which was being used by the right wing in the name of nationalism

But the worrisome issue here is that this self-obsessed nationalism is bound to divide the society very decisively. It rejects all rationality and objectivity and instead harps back to the ancient glorious days of a particular civilisation or a religious group.

Also, the negative repercussions on the society and the political discourse in the long run, as a whole will not be easy to be undone, as now the ultra-nationalism has got the state support to grow, impose and rule and destroy every obstacle in its path and entrench itself firmly in the Indian soil.

It has already started taking steps to change the country's education policy, minority-focussed laws, laws related to the organisation of the Indian union besides undoing the economic progress and reforms initiated by the previous governments, through its illogical decisions.

Further, in India nationalism in its extreme sense is being described not as loyalty to your nation state, as in the European example, but as your devotion to a particular religion, its beliefs and myths. More regrettable is the fact that even the so-called educated have fallen prey to this brand of ultra-nationalism and are going gaga over it. Though some sane voices still try hard to counter this ideological hegemony in the name of nationalism and covert religion but it seems as if the composite culture of India is bound to be shattered forever, and it will be very difficult for the common Indian and minorities to rebuild it.

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## Re-opening my Diary of Disaster from August'19

Kashmir has always been a macabre site of stifled stories inflicted by decades of conflict. Hundreds and thousands of them lay scattered across — unmarked and unnamed. Last year marked an upsurge in such stories of horror with collective pain reaching a crescendo after the breakdown of communication channels adding an extra layer of suffering to the wounded tissue of pain.

Like the rest of us, I also started spilling my frustrations on my diary which has now become a haunting memoir of confiscation of sukoon. Initially, I would write out of rage that I felt to the marrow of my bones but eventually it became a helpless habit. The only thing I could do was to record the calendar of miseries.

On 25th of August the entry went: "Here dates don't mean anything. As for our collective incarceration, it has been twenty days. Living a life in

siege feels not only impossible but blasphemous too. So all we do is just exist quietly, carrying the weight of the skin onto our bones musing if the possible imminent end will allow our bodies find a patch of the soil or turn it into a graphic material impossible to look at. Helicopters keep droning in the confused skies, drowning out the mellifluous cooing of birds, pulverizing our hopes that our loved ones will be fine"

Days passed. Like Eid, Ashura was swallowed up by the foreboding monster of siege but the Karbala of silence inflicted on us seemed unprecedented; invading every bit of sanity. Baba, in his personal regular duel with the communication blockade would try to win the favour of frequencies so that he could tune-in to BBC Urdu on my late grandfather's radio that had long functioned only as a revered relic of the past.

In the hope of finding some reprieve, I would often jump to my next-door friend's in the hope of gleaming

some favourable news marking the regional and international politics vis-à-vis Kashmir. Together sometimes, our quest for peace would take us to a local hospice which stands adjacent to her home. But finding peace is not that simple in Kashmir. On the 28th of August as we were leaving for Maghrib prayers toward the hospice, an alarm was sounded by my friend's mother- "Offer your prayers here. Somebody in the neighbourhood has been picked up by police". Hysteria hung over the entire neighbourhood, "Wails and cries from the neighbourhood flung sickness into the morbid air"

A year has elapsed since the abrogation of the special status of Kashmir and a multi-layered lockdown in the times of pandemic is still in place. Peace is still elusive, yet I continue to hold onto the politics of hope in real life which I spill onto the paper thus:

a concertina wire seems to have sprout-

ed in my throat  
the one which violates the weave of my needle-embroidered duppatta everytime I try to walk free in my lane, or some street, or a highway along the paddy field

The concertina in my throat violates my breath, my speech and my comprehension suffocates with deoxygenated brain

Mother offers liquorice Kehwa Herbs do not decompose metal, try to tell her, my speech cracking like isband seeds in a kangri two pools of salt condense around my eyes  
Mother picks up her rosary pick my Kalima the concertina wire in the lane becomes a smooth clothesline My speech is free am free

Ahymon Ayoub



In the history of recorded global pandemics, fewer turnarounds of infections are more spectacular than the one Pakistan is witnessing at present. Before mid-July the country looked set to become a South Asian version of Spain or Iran in terms of COVID-19 spread.

The vicious virus after a slow start early this year made up for the lost time and began to take a heavy toll on the population, killing and infecting at quadrupling rates.

Hospitals were choking with patients; paramedics were sending out SOSs; policy planners, both at the centre and in the provinces, were bracing for mass scale deaths.

As prominent personalities — musicians, political leaders, writers, doctors, teachers, soldiers — fell to the onslaught of the pandemic, the ordinary mortals felt particular insecure. Some took refuge in the voodoo of local antidotes that ranged from black tea to wild bush oils.

The reality is that for now COVID-19 is back-page news in Pakistan and the least important concern on the pressing public concern issues. We need another few months to be fully comfortable with the conclusion that this virus has somehow spared the country from the kind of calamity that Italy saw or the US is experiencing

- Syed Talat Hussain

Businesses shutdown and mobility of goods and services came to a grinding halt. As helplessness raged, some became brazen and expressed their fears by pretending that the virus did not exist even when they buried their loved ones after thinly attended last rites and according to strict protocols officials enforced.W

But then, miraculously, in a span of 40 days — mid June to mid July onwards — the virus seemed to suddenly run out of homicidal steam.

Death, infections, and active cases graphs first plateaued and then declined precipitously as recovery rates moved in inverse proportion.

To get your head around this COVID-19 U-turn consider this: On the 13th of June 6,825 news cases were registered on a single day, which most likely was an underestimate because of the country's low testing ratios.

#### Death count is down

Last week, these cases had shrunk to

# The great COVID-19 mystery of Pakistan

Given its initial infection rates, no one knows what thwarted a full coronavirus assault

SYED TALAT HUSSAIN | GULF NEWS

just 634. On June 19 the daily death metre showed 153, which again did not reflect the reality since many families chose not to take their dying to the hospitals. Last week the death count was 8.

Now if you land in Pakistan — you can because international flights have resumed — you would not know that the world is still in the midst of a pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands, caused trillions of dollars trade and commerce losses, ruptured supply chains, and has rendered centres of the world economy paralysed with fears of an economic depression akin to the Great Depression.

projects in a desperate attempt to bring out green shoots of employment and commercial activity.

You would also see the people, never fully compliant of the dozens of life-saving guidelines that WHO and local health officials drummed in vain, now not wearing masks or sticking to social distancing at all. Marriage halls have opened up with crazy booking schedules — one had 12 in a day — and schools are slated to resume

works, very few take them seriously.

No less remarkable is the fact that no one really knows what has thwarted COVID-19's attack on what looked like a perfect prey. From global health experts to prophets of doom making dire forecasts about Pakistan a month ago, everyone is baffled and clueless.

Even government's own experts can't agree on what caused this incredible change. One official, from the Khayber

larged the number of asymptomatic infections, and, among communities created local versions of herd immunity.

Another explanation is greater body resilience to the pandemic because of exposure to sunlight and Vitamin-D efficiency, which reportedly build shields against acute respiratory infections.

Yet another is the relatively lesser public gathering density in both urban and rural areas where outsider movement and intermingling with the locals for business and entertainment purposes is marginal.

#### Informal bio-bubbles

Pakistan has no subway system. Its cinemas and theatres, at any rate very few, are not famous for being abuzz with activity. Its inland travellers move pretty much in straight lines of home to work and back. Its domestic tourism is underdeveloped.

There is every possibility that the country's hundreds of informal bio-bubbles prevented the virus from penetrating the social and economic cordons within which they exist. Remember the virus needs mobile carriers to spread. The fewer the carriers, the safer the localities.

But again these are speculations, some informed, some smart and others downright outrageous like the one that suggests the Chinese are secretly helping Pakistan to control COVID-19 because of their Belt and Road Project!

The reality is that for now COVID-19 is back-page news in Pakistan and the least important concern on the pressing public concern issues. We need another few months to be fully comfortable with the conclusion that this virus has somehow spared the country from the kind of calamity that Italy saw or the US is experiencing.

Pandemics can return with mutated vengeance. COVID-19 has proven many pundits wrong. Pakistan has many structural weaknesses in the health system and should not take things for granted.

The next few months can be crucial in deciding whether the nation is over the worst or is lulled into complacency by a temporary phase.

Syed Talat Hussain is a prominent Pakistani journalist and writer. He tweets at @TalatHussain12

## Yakjut: Kashmir's New Age 'Yarbal Kakini'

TOOBA TOWFIQ

“Yakjut” is not limited in purpose. Women in this group engage in a spectrum of issues. It is a mirror that lets us through the lives of women in Kashmir. Many dismiss it as a space meant for gossip without considering the radical potentials of it. So many women in the group anonymously post queries about extremely personal

“IN the days of yore”, as nostalgia goes — we're told stories in sepia. Our mind's eye dwindles our surroundings and erects history in imagination. We see our reality disintegrate to aid the creation of old days we've only heard of and never lived. Perhaps, we enter this vision through our grandmother; significantly younger in black and white.

My ancestral house feels full of life even as memory deters me from imagining it otherwise. Perhaps, I can ask my grandmother for a photograph and place my family in the visible one dimensional precincts of the house — in monochrome.

It becomes easier thinking about my mother. The memory is not mine but is still coloured enough for me to vividly understand. It is interesting the way I disintegrate and reintegrate to understand the history of women in my family.

Why must I not? There's a thread that connects us.

We've all had a shared history of challenges that come with being a woman but there's so much more to us than enforced silences.

My grandmother used to narrate the story of women who would spend an extra minute on the banks of the river, passing alongside the old city to have a session of what was deemed to be “gossip”. These women are still remembered as Yarbal Kakini.

I wish I could join these conversations and sneakily eavesdrop to see what was brewing there. I'm sure our grandmothers and mothers would have had a lot more to say than mere jibber jabber. How else would they have made us into the women we've become and the women we're trying to become?

The culture of sisterhood or vveston still exists. This feeling is accessible to a lot of us these days through a Facebook group called “Yakjut”.

It is a platform solely meant for Kashmiri women. But it is only ethical for us to note that a virtual group available only to smartphone users can hardly represent all Kashmiri women. Nonetheless, it has reached some of us.

“Yakjut” is not limited in purpose. Women in this group engage in a spectrum of issues. It is a mirror that lets us through the lives of women in Kashmir. Many dismiss it as a space meant for gossip without considering the radical potentials of it. So many women in the group anonymously post queries about extremely personal matters.

Romance and divorce, which are the two most discouraged topics pertaining to women in Kashmir are rigorously discussed here.

A quick look through the comments makes us come across conventional as well non-conventional views. This proves as an opportunity for many in the group to enlighten each other and engage with those with problematic views.

In a world where women are expected to know motherhood by instinct; Yakjut helps young mothers navigate through the initial years of motherhood.

Clueless and paranoid, young mothers often post urgent queries and are assisted by everyone as much as possible. This also helps to normalise newly married women not knowing what to do.

How many of us have had mothers, sisters and friends who could declare to her in-laws, “I am clueless”?

As stated earlier, women's talks have radical potentials and this is truly epitomised by this group's



“Very often, I transmute this virtual group and transport it to a past through my imagination. I place myself and other women on the banks of Jhelum and feel connected to our past.”

entrepreneurial thrust.

In our social circles, we often joke about women being obsessed with shopping. This obsession has sociological and cultural reasons as well but we gloss that over with a sexist joke.

In any case, Yakjut's work speaks for itself. It has tokenised this shopping habit and allowed home-based and local online-businesses by women to sell their products here. This has given women especially single mothers, homemakers, unmarried and divorced women a space to make a living.

The group is also democratic in the sense that many have managed to secure pro bono services from a female psychologist, a dermatologist, a dietitian etc. It has also been used to assist brides from underprivileged families as nuisances in our wedding ceremonies refuse to tone down.

However, Yakjut as a group is not infallible. There are many negatives and they're a reflection of issues that plague our society in itself. In fact, it is also a valid argument raised against the group that it does not let Kashmiri women discuss themselves and their lives as political beings in a conflict zone.

These aren't brushed under the carpet and are often dealt with through conversations. However, the group does shy away from this part very often.

Even as the group does not encourage any talk that would actively let Kashmiri women articulate

their political sisterhood, it has also helped many navigate through the challenges conflict brings.

Home-based business is one of the paramount ways that this group has helped women past the constraints of lockdowns to some extent.

Another criticism of the group is that it also participates in the culture of promoting certain social evils such as those related to male dominance, moral policing and Kashmir's caste system.

However, these don't go unchallenged. Additionally, there's also a possibility of the group acting as an advertisement in itself.

Women who are economically privileged, knowingly or unknowingly, promote certain luxuries which others may start aspiring to. This is also a reflection of how a society functions and Yakjut plays a crucial part in this field as well.

Nevertheless, even as it propagates certain trends, it also radically subverts them.

Very often, I transmute this virtual group and transport it to a past through my imagination. I place myself and other women on the banks of Jhelum and feel connected to our past.

I place myself alongside my great-grandmother and laugh with her; relieved that I have preserved her resilience to some extent.

I look at everyone and realise that as women of the valley, we shoulder the responsibility to ensure that we endure, resist, improve and excel.



# COVID-19 MAY HAVE LONGER INCUBATION PERIOD THAN THOUGHT

**COUNTRIES AND HEALTH AUTHORITIES HAVE** implemented various containment measures such as quarantines to slow the spread of Covid-19," the Chinese researchers wrote.

## Agencies

Chinese scientists have come up with a new estimate for the incubation period of Covid-19, which is around 7.76 days, longer than previous estimates of 4 to 5 days.

The study, published in the journal Science Advances, in-

volves the largest amount of coronavirus patient samples to date.

By providing health authorities with a potentially more accurate figure for the incubation period, the results could inform guidelines for containment efforts such as quarantines and studies investigating the disease's transmission.

"Countries and health authorities have implemented various containment measures such as quarantines to slow the spread of Covid-19," the Chinese researchers wrote.

"To work effectively, these strategies depend on understanding the disease's incubation period, or the time between

someone becoming infected and showing the first symptoms of the disease, and how much it varies from individual to individual," they added.

However, researchers lack a reliable estimate of the incubation period of Covid-19.

The few existing estimates of 4 to 5 days were based on small

samples sizes, limited data, and self-reports that could be biased by the memory or judgement of the patient or interviewer.

For the current findings, the research team developed a low-cost approach to estimate incubation periods and applied it to 1,084 confirmed cases of Covid-19 that had known histories of travel or

residency in Wuhan, China.

Their approach improves accuracy by relying on a public database of dates of infection and uses the renewal theory in probability to reduce recall bias -- the inaccurate recollection of past events.

Ultimately, the team calculated that the median incubation period was 7.75 days, with 10 per

cent of patients showing an incubation period of 14.28 days.

The authors noted that this last finding may concern health authorities relying on the standard 14-day quarantine, but caution that their approach relies on several assumptions and may not apply to later cases where the virus may have mutated.

## Covid-19: Scientists Develop Low-Cost Method To Test Mask Effectiveness Against Viral Droplets

### Press Trust Of India

Using widely available tools, scientists have developed a simple method to visualise how effectively different types of masks prevent the spread of droplets that could contain novel coronavirus particles, an advance which could aid small scale mask producers to optimise designs, and help community outreach organisations demonstrate proper mask fitting procedures.

The technique, described in the journal Science Advances, is still in the early stages, and has so far only been tested in a small group of people, the scientists said.

According to the researchers from Duke University in the US, the preliminary, proof-of-principle findings suggest that professional-grade N95 masks, surgical or polypropylene masks, and handmade cotton masks may all block much of the droplet-spray produced when wearers speak.

However, they said bandanas and neck fleeces likely provide little protection, as the scientists observed that more droplets are expelled through these materials.

They said this is likely because the materials break up larger droplets as they pass through the material.

In the study, the scientists evaluated the effectiveness of 14 different types of masks and other frequently substituted face coverings, using a simple ap-



proach in which either one male speaker or, in some cases, four speakers wore each mask while standing in a dark enclosure.

The speaker then uttered the phrase "stay healthy, people" five times in the direction of a laser beam, which scattered light from the droplets released during speech, the study noted.

A cell phone camera recorded the droplets and a simple computer algorithm counted them, the scientists added.

The setup, intentionally designed to be simple and inexpen-

sive, can be replicated by non-experts, according to the researchers. They said the hardware it requires, including laser equipment, is commonly available and can be purchased for less than USD 200.

While the researchers acknowledge the need for further testing, they suggested based on the findings that N95 masks without valves blocked droplet spread best, and surgical or polypropylene masks and handmade cotton face coverings were also effective.

But the early findings suggested that bandanas and neck fleec-

es do not provide protection.

"Our work was a demonstration of a simple measurement method, not a systematic mask study," noted Martin Fischer, the study's corresponding author.

"More work is required to investigate variations in masks, speakers, and how people wear them. We also want to extend our method to other droplet-generating actions, like coughing and sneezing. Further, we want to explore effects of incorrect placement and moisture saturation," Fischer said.

## The Sun Might Be More Active Than Expected During Its Passive Period

### Agencies

Solar activity varies in 11-year cycles. As the activity cycle switches to a new one, the Sun is usually very calm for several years.

For a long time, researchers have believed that there is not much of interest going on in the Sun during the passive period, therefore not worth studying. Now, this assumption is shown to be false by Juha Kallunki, Merja Tornikoski and Irene Bjorklund, researchers at Metsahovi Radio Observatory in Finland, in their peer-reviewed research article published in Solar Physics.

Not all phenomena could be explained -- yet

The researchers reached their conclusion by examining the solar radio maps detected by the Metsahovi Radio Observatory and comparing them with the data collected by a satellite observing the Sun in the ultraviolet range. The solar maps showed active areas, or radio brightenings, which can be observed on the maps as hotter areas than the rest of the solar surface. According to researchers, there are three explanations for radio brightenings.

First, some brightenings were observed in the polar areas on the solar maps that could be identified as coronal holes. Particle flows, or solar winds, ejected by coronal holes can cause auroras when they reach the Earth's



atmosphere. The corona is the outer atmosphere of the Sun.

Second, the researchers observed brightenings from which, based on other observations, ejections of hot material from the surface of the Sun could be detected.

Third, radio brightenings were found in areas where, based on satellite observations, strong magnetic fields were detected. Researchers also found radio brightenings in some areas where no explanatory factor was found on the basis of satellite observations.

"The other sources used did not explain the cause of the brightening. We don't know what causes those phenomena. We must continue our research," Kallunki says.

Additional observations and research are also needed to predict whether the phenomena of the solar minimum indicate something about the next active period, about its onset and intensity, for example. Each one of the last four cycles has been weaker than the previous one. Researchers do not know why the activity curves do not rise as high as during the previous cycles.

"Solar activity cycles do not always last exactly 11 years, either," explains Merja Tornikoski. "A new activity period will not be identified until it is already ongoing. In any case, these observations of the quiet phase we are now analysing are clearly during a period when activity is at its lowest. Now we are waiting for new rise inactivity."

Solar storms can cause danger on Earth, solar activity can be seen as auroras, for example. Solar activity can even cause major damage, as solar storms caused by solar flares can damage satellites, electricity networks and radio frequency communications. Research helps to prepare for such damage.

"In solar storms, it takes 2 to 3 days before the particles hit the Earth. They reach satellites higher up in orbit much faster, which would leave us even less time to prepare for damage," Kallunki points out.

Located in Kirkkonummi, Finland, Aalto University Metsahovi is the only astronomical radio observatory and continuously operational astronomical observation station in Finland. Metsahovi is internationally known for its unique, continuous datasets, including a solar monitoring programme spanning over 40 years that has collected data from scientifically very interesting high radio frequencies. This is possible thanks to the exceptionally precise mirror surface of the Metsahovi radio telescope.

## Promises Could Encourage Students To Be Honest Towards Studies Too, Says Study

### Agencies

Researchers conducted a study in India that involved 640 ten to 14-year-olds. The study was designed in a way that meant it was impossible to tell who had and had not kept their promise. The results of the study suggested that it is not just the fear of social retaliation that makes people stick to their word. Besides it also proves that promises could be a powerful way of encouraging and sustaining honest behaviour in an academic context. The team of researchers included two newly appointed members of the School of Psychology at the University of Plymouth, and the study is published in the Journal

of Behavioral Decision Making.

Cheating and dishonesty, even on a small scale, can undermine trust and lead to costs for others, and society at large. Cheating in academic settings is a problem worldwide. As of 2018, 20% of the world's adolescents - about 250 million individuals - lived in India and the country's highly competitive educational system means academic cheating is a concern. To the best of the research team's knowledge, there are no previous experimental studies into the effect of promises on cheating rates in Indian adolescents.

The research used a series of experiments to test the effectiveness of inviting participants to promise to be truthful, with points that would later be con-

verted into prizes as an incentive. For example, participants played a game in which they mentally chose a location in a box with 16 dice, shook the box and recorded the number of the die falling in their chosen position. Prizes were proportional to their total reported scores across fifteen rounds. As the initial choice was private, opportunistic and unobservable switching to a higher scoring die as possible. Before the task, the adolescents received a choice to promise to be truthful or not. To make promising attractive for participants, those who did so received extra points. This gave even potentially dishonest participants an incentive to choose to promise. Control groups of participants could

choose between the same incentives but did not have to promise.

The authors were able to measure the degree of dishonesty by comparing participants' reported results to what would be statistically expected. Compared to control groups, promises in the study systematically lowered cheating rates, and the authors conclude that they could be a simple tool to reduce dishonest behaviour.

The study's first author, Dr Patricia Kanngiesser, who is an Associate Professor in Psychology at the University, commented: "Promises are what we call 'speech acts' and create commitments by merely saying specific words. So one would think that they have very little binding power.

In contrast, research has shown over and over again that many people do keep their word, even at a personal cost. "This study provides more evidence of that and suggests promises could be a powerful way of encouraging and sustaining honest behaviour in an academic context.

"The study also exemplifies the benefits of global cooperation and diverse perspectives in research: we were conducting online studies with adults on promise-keeping when our collaborator, Dr Jahnavi Sunderarajan, suggested applying this in academic contexts in India, where there is a lot of competition and educators are worried about cheating, but few empirical studies exist.





## GCC backs extending UN arms embargo on Iran

### Agencies

DUBAI: A six-nation bloc of Gulf Arab nations torn apart by internal strife endorsed on Sunday an extension of a United Nations arms embargo on Iran, just two months before it is set to expire.

The Gulf Cooperation Council said it sent a letter to the UN Security Council backing an extension of an arms embargo that's kept Iran from purchasing foreign-made weapons like fighter jets, tanks and warships.

The GCC comprised of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates alleged Iran had "not ceased or desisted from armed interventions in neighbouring countries, directly and through organisations and movements armed and trained by Iran."

A Saudi-led coalition continues to battle Yemen's Houthi rebels, whom the UN, the US and armament experts have accused of receiving arms from Iran. Tehran denies arming the Houthis, even as Iranian armaments and components have repeatedly turned up in Yemen.

Restrictions stop Iran from purchasing foreign-made weapons like fighter jets, tanks and warships

As such, it is inappropriate to lift the restrictions on conventional weapons movement to and from Iran until it abandons its destabilising activities in the region and ceases to provide weapons to terrorist and sectarian organisations, the GCC said.

Iran's mission to the UN did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the GCC statement.

The UN banned Iran from buying major foreign weapon systems in 2010 amid tensions over its nuclear program. That blocked Iran from replacing its aging equipment, much of which had been purchased by the shah before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. An earlier embargo targeted Iranian arms exports.

Iran's 2015 nuclear deal saw the UN agree to sunset the arms embargo this October. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the deal in 2018, part of a maximum pressure campaign that's hurt Iran's already-ailing economy and led to a series of escalating incidents in the Mideast.



## 40% Covid Cases Have No Symptoms, May Be Key To Ending Pandemic: Report

### Agencies

Geneva: When researcher Monica Gandhi began digging deeper into outbreaks of the novel coronavirus, she was struck by the extraordinarily high number of infected people who had no symptoms.

A Boston homeless shelter had 147 infected residents, but 88% had no symptoms even though they shared their living space. A Tyson Foods poultry plant in Springdale, Ark., had 481 infections, and 95% were asymptomatic. Prisons in Arkansas, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia counted 3,277 infected people, but 96% were asymptomatic.

During its seven-month global rampage, the coronavirus has claimed more than 700,000 lives. But Gandhi began to think the bigger mystery might be why it has left so many more practically unscathed.

What was it about these asymptomatic people, who lived or worked so closely to others who fell severely ill, she wondered, that protected them? Did the "dose" of their viral exposure make a difference? Was

it genetics? Or might some people already have partial resistance to the virus, contrary to our initial understanding?

Efforts to understand the diversity in the illness are finally beginning to yield results, raising hope that the knowledge will help accelerate development of vaccines and therapies - or possibly even create new pathways toward herd immunity in which enough of the population develops a mild version of the virus that they block further spread and the pandemic ends.

"A high rate of asymptomatic infection is a good thing," said Gandhi, an infectious-disease specialist at the University of California at San Francisco. "It's a good thing for the individual and a good thing for society."

The coronavirus has left numerous clues - the uneven transmission in different parts of the world, the mostly mild impact on children. Perhaps most tantalizing is the unusually large proportion of infected people with mild symptoms or none at all. The Centers for Disease Control and Preven-

tion last month estimated that rate at about 40%.

Those clues have sent scientists off in different directions: Some are looking into the role of the receptor cells, which the virus uses to infiltrate the body, to better understand the role that age and genetics might play. Others are delving into masks and whether they may filter just enough of the virus so those wearing them had mild cases or no symptoms at all.

The theory that has generated the most excitement in recent weeks is that some people walking among us might already have partial immunity.

When SARS-CoV-2, the technical name of the coronavirus that causes the disease covid-19, was first identified on Dec. 31, 2019, public health officials deemed it a "novel" virus because it was the first time it had been seen in humans who presumably had no immunity from it whatsoever. There's now some very early, tentative evidence suggesting that assumption might have been wrong.

## US court issues summons for Saudi's Mohammed bin Salman

### Agencies

Washington: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has been issued a summons by a US court for a lawsuit by a former top Saudi intelligence agent who was reportedly targeted in a foiled assassination attempt.

The US District Court for the District of Columbia issued the summons on Friday, a day after Saad al-Jabri filed the lawsuit accusing Prince Mohammed of sending a hit squad to Canada to try and kill him.

A summons is an official notice of a lawsuit, given to the person or persons being sued.

Al-Jabri, who lives in Canada, reportedly under increased protection by police and private security guards, claimed that his close ties with the US intelligence community and deep knowledge of the prince's activities had rendered him one of the aspiring monarch's key targets.

"Few places hold more sensitive, humiliating and damning information about Defendant bin-Salman than the mind and memory of Dr. Saad - except perhaps the recordings Dr. Saad made in anticipation of his killing," the lawsuit read.

Saudi Arabia, which has issued Interpol red notices seeking al-Jabri's return -

which have since been dismissed by the agency as political - has urged other countries to send al-Jabri back to the kingdom, accusing the former senior intelligence officer of corruption.

The summons, which named 12 people in addition to Prince Mohammed, added: "If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint".

The suit asserts that MBS had ordered the detention of two of al-Jabri's children, who have gone missing from their home in the capital Riyadh in mid-March, and that other relatives have also been arrested and tortured "all in an effort to bait Dr. Saad back to Saudi Arabia to be killed".

The claims in the lawsuit are allegations which have not been proven.

"MBS will now vigorously lobby President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to issue what is called a letter of suggestion immunity," Bruce Fein, a former US associate deputy attorney general, told Al Jazeera.

"It is rather an odd realm of law, but it asks the court to dismiss the case because it will interfere with the foreign relations of the US and relations with a head of state or high-level officials.

## New Zealand Reaches 100-Day Milestone Without Coronavirus Transmission

### Agencies

Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand marked 100 days on Sunday with no recorded cases of the coronavirus in the community but health officials warned there was no room for complacency.

There are still 23 active cases but all were detected at the border when entering the country and are being held in managed isolation facilities.

"Achieving 100 days with-

widespread praise for its effective handling of the coronavirus since closing its borders on March 19.

The World Health Organization has hailed the country as an example to others for having "successfully eliminated community transmission".

Since the first patient was diagnosed in February, there have been 1,219 confirmed cases of the virus in New Zealand with the last case of community transmission recorded on May 1.

As a result, New Zealand-



out community transmission is a significant milestone, however, as we all know, we can't afford to be complacent," director-general of health Ashley Bloomfield said.

"We have seen overseas how quickly the virus can re-emerge and spread in places where it was previously under control, and we need to be prepared to quickly stamp out any future cases in New Zealand."

New Zealand, with a population of five million, has won

ers are enjoying a near-normal, pre-coronavirus lifestyle with no social distancing and spectators allowed at sports and cultural events, but with the border strictly controlled and all arrivals required to spend 14 days in quarantine.

The government has maintained the prospect of a second wave remains a possibility and is pushing for all households to keep emergency supply kits including masks.

## Taliban Ready For Peace Talks After Prisoner Release

### Agencies

Kabul: Afghan peace talks are expected to begin within days after authorities announced Monday they would soon start releasing hundreds of Taliban prisoners accused of brutal attacks including on foreigners.

The fate of some 400 Taliban prisoners has been a crucial hurdle in launching much-delayed talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, who had committed to completing a prisoner exchange before negotiations could start.

Thousands of prominent Afghans on Sunday approved their release at the end of a three-day "loya jirga" -- a traditional Afghan gathering of

tribal elders and other stakeholders sometimes held to decide on controversial issues.

"Our stance is clear, if the prisoner release is completed, then we are ready for the intra-Afghan talks within a week," Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen told AFP.

Shaheen said the first round of talks would be held in Doha, Qatar.

"The Afghan government will start releasing the 400 Taliban prisoners within two days," National Security Council spokesman Javid Faisal told AFP on Monday.

The prisoner exchange was a key part of a deal signed by the Taliban and the United States in February, which saw

Washington agree to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in return for a pledge from the insurgents to hold peace talks with the Kabul government.

The Taliban were ousted from power in 2001 by a US-led invasion which has been followed by nearly two decades of fighting that has killed tens of thousands of people.

US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad tweeted that "a historic opportunity for peace is now possible".

- Brutal attacks - The Afghan government has released almost 5,000 Taliban inmates already, but authorities had balked at freeing the final 400 prisoners demanded by the terrorists.

## Paris Makes Face Masks Mandatory As US Hits 5 Million Coronavirus Cases



### Agencies

Paris: Face masks became compulsory in tourist hotspots in Paris on Monday amid warnings of a resurgence of coronavirus cases, as infections in the world's worst-hit country the United States topped five million.

The requirement came as France along with much of Western Europe sweltered in a heatwave, with temperatures soaring above 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit).

The blistering heat sent crowds flocking to beaches at the weekend despite health warnings about the risk of infection.

In Berlin, thousands of children returned to school on Monday after the summer break, sporting masks which are compulsory in common areas like school courtyards. Schools in some other German regions also reopened, though with differing rules on masks.

"No child forgot their masks this morning, so we see everything is back to normal," said Domenica Aciri, headmistress of the Carl Orff primary school in Berlin.

In Pakistan, all restaurants and parks were allowed to reopen Monday, as well theatres, cinemas and public transport, after the country saw a drop in new cases for several weeks.

"Anything but second lockdown"

People in Paris aged 11 and over are now required to wear the masks in crowded areas and tourists hotspots.

These include the banks of the Seine River and more than a 100 streets in the French capital, including tourist destinations like Montmartre, where the Sacre Coeur basilica is located.

Several French towns and cities have already introduced similar measures, as well as parts of Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain.

### NEWS MAKERS

## 2 Months After Plane Crash, 193 Pak Pilots Get Notice Over "Fake" Licence

Islamabad: Pakistan's aviation regulator has issued show-cause notices to 193 pilots suspected of having "dubious" flying licence after completing the scrutiny process of 262 pilots in the wake of a major scandal, according to a media report on Monday.

The scandal over pilot licences in Pakistan emerged from an investigation into the crash of a Pakistan International Airlines plane on May 22 in Karachi that killed 97 people. The inquiry determined that nearly one-third of Pakistan's pilots cheated on exams but still received licences from the country's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The CAA was tasked by the Supreme Court on July 21 to immediately complete



an inquiry against pilots of the national carrier, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), following revelation by the aviation minister about fake documents of scores of pilots.

The CAA after completing the scrutiny process of the re-

cord of 262 pilots issued show-cause notices to 193 of them, the Dawn News reported.

The CAA inquiry board found 850 pilots with suspected credentials out of which 262 licences were found "dubious". The board had grounded all

the 262 pilots, while the federal Cabinet had approved cancellation of the licences of 28 pilots out of these 262, the report said, quoting sources.

Of the 193 pilots, who were issued show-cause notices, 140 have submitted their replies and they are being called in batches by the inquiry committee to explain their positions.

A senior official said notices to the remaining pilots could not be sent because there were "technical mistakes" in the names of some pilots and their registration or reference numbers, which are being resolved.

A five-member committee constituted by the Aviation Division to investigate the pilots' cases has been scrutinising the credentials of pilots.

## Mahatma Gandhi's Gold-Plated Glasses To Be Auctioned In UK

London: A pair of gold-plated spectacles believed to have been worn by Mahatma Gandhi and presented as a gift in the 1900s have emerged on the UK auction circuit, estimated to fetch between 10,000 pounds and 15,000 pounds.

East Bristol Auctions in Hanham, southwest England, said on Sunday that they were pleasantly surprised to find that the spectacles, dropped through their letterbox in an envelope, may have such a rich history behind it.

"It's a huge find of great historical importance. The vendor had presumed them to be interesting, but of no value and did tell me to dispose of them 'if they're not worth anything'," said auctioneer Andy Stowe of East Bristol Auctions.

"I think he nearly fell off his chair when we presented our valuation. It's a really great auction story - and one that we all dream of," he said.

The glasses, which have already attracted an online bid for 6,000 pounds, are said

to have been in the family of the unnamed elderly gentleman vendor in England, who was told by his father that they were a gift to his uncle when he was working for British Petroleum in South Africa between 1910 and 1930.

"The vendor's uncle definitely worked for British Petroleum in South Africa, and I believe Mahatma Gandhi didn't wear glasses until the late 1910s early 1920s," says Stowe in reference to the provenance of the glasses, which are likely to be one of Mahatma Gandhi's earliest pairs during his time in South Africa.

"The story that appears with the lot is exactly what the vendor told us, and exactly what was told to him by his father some 50 years ago," explains Stowe.

The lot, titled "Pair of Mahatma Gandhi's Personal Spectacles", forms part of the auctioneers' Military, History and Classic Cars online sale and will go under the hammer on August 21. It has already attracted much interest, including from India.



## India Faces Lost Generation As Virus Pushes Children From School To Work



The coronavirus pandemic is forcing India's children out of school and into farms and factories to work, worsening a child-labor problem that was already one of the most dire in the world.

Sixteen-year-old Maheshwari Munkalapally and her 15-year-old sister stopped attending lessons when virtually the entire economy was brought to a halt during the world's biggest lockdown. Munkalapally's mother and older sister lost their jobs as housemaids in Hyderabad, the capital of the southern Indian state of Telangana. The younger girls, who had been living with their grandmother in a nearby village, were forced to become farmhands along with their mother, in order to survive.

"Working under the sun was difficult as we were never used to it," Munkalapally said. "But we have to work at least to buy rice and other groceries."

It's difficult to quantify the number of children affected since the pandemic erupted, but civil society groups are rescuing more of them from forced labor and warn that many others are being compelled to work in cities because of the migrant labor shortage there.

Even before the outbreak, India was struggling to keep children in school. A 2018 study by DHL International GmbH estimated that more than 56 million children were out of school in India — more than double the combined number across Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The cost to India's economy, in terms of lost productivity, was projected at \$6.79 billion, or 0.3% of gross domestic product.

Of those children not in school, 10.1 million are working, either as a 'main worker' or as a 'marginal worker,' according to the International Labour Organization.

**Global Trend**  
Global child labor had been gradually declining in the past two decades, but the Covid-19 pandemic threatens

to reverse that trend, according to the ILO. As many as 60 million people are expected to fall into poverty this year alone, and that inevitably drives families to send children out to work. A joint report by the ILO and United Nations Children's Fund estimates that a 1 percentage point rise in poverty leads to at least a 0.7 percentage point increase in child labor.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most-populous nation, is another country that will see large numbers of children from vulnerable families drop out of school and into the workforce. The ILO estimates about 11 million are at risk of being exploited as child laborers under current conditions, especially in the less-developed eastern parts of the country, like Sulawesi islands, Nusa Tenggara and Papua.

**Economic Loss**  
In India, home to more young people than any other country in the world, this lost generation of children will have substantial effects on Asia's third-largest economy: lower productivity and earning potential, unrealized tax revenue, increased poverty levels and pressure for more government handouts.

"Even prior to the pandemic, numbers of children out of school in India and in child labor were high," said Ramya Subrahmanian, the chief of research on child rights and protection at Unicef-Innocenti in Florence, Italy. "An even bigger issue will be for those children who are due to enter school during this time. If these children face delays in entering school, there may be an increase in the numbers of never-enrolled children, which could in turn push up child labor numbers."

The Indian constitution provides free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to 14 years as a fundamental right. While Munkalapally and her sister are no longer covered by it because of their age, they are protected by the local law on child labor, which prohibits employment of adolescents between the age of 14 and 18 from working in any hazardous or dangerous occupations. The same law bars children under the age of 14 in any form of occupation except as a child artist, or in a family business.

## 'Is This India Or Hindia', Asks Stalin On CISF Official's Remarks To Kanimozhi On Hindi

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Monday took umbrage over the incident in which his sister and party MP Kanimozhi was asked by a CISF official if "she was an Indian" as she could not speak Hindi, asking if knowing that language was the 'yardstick' of being an Indian.

"Is Hindi the yardstick for being an Indian. Is this India or Hindia," the DMK chief said in a tweet.

Kanimozhi has alleged a CISF official at Chennai airport had asked her if "she was an Indian" as the DMK leader could not speak Hindi.

Stalin, whose party, as a policy, is opposed to the "im-



position" of Hindi for decades, further said in the tweet that those trying to "bury pluralism" will get "buried."

On Sunday, Kanimozhi had tweeted "today at the airport a CISF officer asked me if 'I am an Indian' when I asked her to speak to me in Tamil or English as I did not know Hindi," prompting the paramilitary force to order an inquiry.

"It is not the policy of CISF to insist upon any particular language," it said.



MONDAY SAW SIGNIFICANT increase in traffic movement on the city roads while public transport remained off and most of the markets shut

## US Tech Giants Preparing Pushback Against India Data-Curb Plan: Report

**NEW DELHI:** India's plan to regulate "non-personal" data has jolted U.S. tech giants Amazon, Facebook and Google, and a group representing them is preparing to push back against the proposals, according to sources and a letter seen by Reuters.

A government-appointed panel in July recommended setting up a regulator for information that is anonymised or devoid of personal details but critical for companies to build their businesses.

The panel proposed a mechanism for firms to share data with other entities - even competitors - saying this would spur the digital ecosystem. The report, if adopted by the government, will form the basis of a new law to regulate such data.

But the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC), part of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, calls imposed data sharing "anathema" to promoting competition and says this undermines investments made by companies to process and collect such information, according to a draft letter for the government.

"USIBC and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are categorically opposed to mandates that require the sharing of proprietary data," says the USIBC's previously unreported letter, which is likely to be completed and sub-



mitted in coming weeks to India's information-technology ministry.

"It will also be tantamount to confiscation of investors' assets and undermine intellectual property protections."

A USIBC spokeswoman had no comment on the draft letter. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce didn't respond to Reuters queries.

The head of the panel, Kris Gopalakrishnan, founder of Infosys Ltd, said the group will work with the government to review input from the industry.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Amazon.com Inc, Facebook Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google did not respond to requests for comment. The report is open for public comments until September 13.

### "FORCED DATA SHARING"

India's plan to regulate non-personal data is the latest irritant for U.S. tech companies that have been battling tighter e-commerce rules

and data storage norms that several countries are also developing.

New Delhi and Washington are already at odds on such issues, as well as over digital taxes and tariffs.

The USIBC draft letter says "forced data sharing" will limit foreign trade and investment in developing countries, and the panel's proposals run against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's calls for U.S. companies to invest in India.

The lobby group expresses concern about the panel's recommendation to mandate local storage for non-personal data, describing this as a "dramatic tightening" of India's international data transfer regime.

"These are far-reaching concepts that would have a significant impact on the ability of both Indian and multinational firms to do business in India," Washington-headquartered law firm Covington & Burling said in a note prepared for the USIBC, which was also seen by Reuters.

The law firm did not respond to a request for comment.

The Indian panel has listed research, national security and policymaking among purposes for which such data should be shared. Three sources said tech executives participated in several meetings in recent weeks to discuss concerns over the report.

## Over 500 People, 100 Elephants Die Every Year Due To Conflict: Officials

**NEW DELHI:** More than 500 people and 100 elephants die every year due to conflict with each other, officials of the environment ministry said today.

Releasing the figures at an event ahead of World Elephant Day on August 12, the officials said interactions between humans and elephants have led to the death of both.

As per the last census conducted in 2017, India is home to 30,000 elephants. Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said elephant conservation is vital as it balances the ecosystem.

Elephants have to be kept in forests for which fodder and water augmentation programme has been initiated, the minister said, adding that by next year results will start showing.

Union Minister of State for Environment Babul Supriyo condemned the May 27 incident in Kerala where a pregnant elephant died after consuming a firecracker-filled pineapple. "We must protect our elephants. The Kerala incident was inhuman and such criminal acts will be dealt with. The ministry and states have zero tolerance approach to such



activities and I am sure exemplary punishment will be given to the culprit," Mr Supriyo said.

Giving out the figures of deaths due to human-elephant conflict, Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife) Soumitra Dasgupta said hundreds of elephants migrate and come in contact with human beings.

"More than 500 human and 100 elephant deaths take place each year due to the conflict. In last five years, the ministry has unleashed a series

of activities for the conservation of elephants. More elephant corridors have been identified, budget has been increased by 30 per cent and several committees have also been formed," said Mr Dasgupta.

During the event, Mr Javadekar also released a booklet on best practices of human-elephant conflict management and launched the national portal of project elephant which will have all the data and details of elephant movements.

## Governor "Hounding" Groups Engaged In Peace Talks: Naga Bodies To PM Modi

**NEW DELHI:** Two influential Naga civil society groups have complained to Prime Minister Narendra Modi against Nagaland Governor RN Ravi, alleging that he is functioning in an "autocratic" manner and without any regard for what has been achieved in 23 years of peace talks with insurgent group NSCN-IM.

The Naga Hoho and the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) have also alleged that Mr Ravi, who is the Centre's interlocutor for the peace dialogue, has been "hounding" the same Naga groups with whom he is supposed to negotiate and conclude the peace talks, and that he does not seem to have the time or inclination to listen to the voices of women peace makers.

In a memorandum to the prime minister, the Naga Hoho said the Nagas have been observing that the governor "is functioning in an autocratic manner without any regard and respect for what has been achieved so far".

"With the appointment of RN Ravi as the governor, it was hoped to expedite the peace process. Instead, he is breaking the hard-earned trust and faith of the people and rendering the 23 years of negotiation meaningless by smearing Naga history and also the political groups with whom the government of India is engaged in a negotiation," it said.

The Naga Hoho, which is the top body of different Naga tribal communities,



said it felt that "peaceful settlement cannot be achieved with an interlocutor without empathy and without understanding our people, our history and our aspiration".

The organisation told the prime minister that it continues to trust his leadership and urged him to look into the matter on priority.

"With your personal and political commitment, we believe that the solution is not far away," it said.

The NMA, in its memorandum to the Prime Minister Modi, said Governor Ravi was allegedly "threatening" and "hounding" different Naga groups. "We are confronted with a situation, where the interlocutor, who is also the Hon'ble governor of Nagaland, is bent on threats and hounding the same Naga political groups, with whom he is supposed to negotiate and conclude the peace talks," it said.

The NMA alleged that Governor Ravi's "disrespect for the Naga people and women, in the midst of such a crucial dialogue is also obvious in the fact that the governor has turned down the official request of the Naga Mothers' Association for an appointment on two occasions, which is highly questionable".

## Former President Pranab Mukherjee Says He Has Tested Positive For COVID-19



**NEW DELHI:** Former President Pranab Mukherjee this afternoon said that he has tested positive for the coronavirus while on a hospital visit for a separate procedure.

In a tweet, Pranab Mukherjee, who was India's president between 2012 and 2017, urged all those who have come in contact with him in the last week to isolate themselves as a precaution and get tested for COVID-19. The outbreak has affected over 22 lakh people in the country.

"On a visit to the hospital for a separate procedure, I have tested positive for COVID-19 today. I request the people who came in contact with me in the last week, to please self isolate and get tested for COVID-19. #CitizenMukherjee," the 84-year-old former president tweeted today.

Minutes after Pranab Mukherjee posted the tweet, wishes for his speedy recovery poured on social media.

"Please take care sir. We are praying for your speedy recovery and good health @CitizenMukherjee (sic)," Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote on Twitter.

"Sir, wishing you a speedy recovery and a long and healthy life," Ajay Maken, ex-Delhi Congress chief tweeted.

"I pray for the well being and speedy recovery of Shri

Pranab Mukherjee. I am confident he will be successful in recovering from the virus quickly. Wishing him strength and good health," Union Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted.

"Wishing Former President Shri. Pranab Mukherjee a speedy recovery from COVID-19 and good health (sic)," Karnataka Congress leader DK Shivakumar wrote.

"A prolific reader, Pranab Mukherjee has authored several books on the Indian Economy and on Nation Building. The many awards and honours conferred on him include India's second highest civilian award, Padma Vibhushan in 2008, the Best Parliamentary Award in 1997 and Best Administrator in India Award in 2011," according to the profile on his official website.

Several top politicians in the country, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, Congress leader Siddaramaiah, have tested positive for coronavirus in the last few weeks.

India is the third worst-hit country by the pandemic after the United States and Brazil. This morning, the country passed 22 lakh coronavirus cases, just four days after crossing the 20-lakh mark. Over 44,000 patients have died since the beginning of the pandemic.

India has been recording a bigger single-day jump in fresh Covid infections than the US and Brazil for the last six days.

## NEWS MAKERS

## Misreading Vs Misdirection: Salman Khurshid, Amit Malviya On CAA In New Book

**NEW DELHI:** Congress veteran Salman Khurshid and BJP's Amit Malviya offer insights into the history and politics of the citizenship law debate as they together attempt to present the two sides of the contentious issue in a new book.

The Parliament passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 on December 11, 2019, triggering heated debates and protests - both violent and non-violent.

In the book titled "The Citizenship Debate", Mr Malviya argues that the CAA is a case of misreading, while Mr Khurshid says it is a case of misdirection.

Mr Malviya, the head of the BJP's information technology cell, contends that the "entire debate on the CAA, and the violent protests and the riots

that have been engineered are all part of a political scheme aimed at unsettling the BJP government and creating an atmosphere of fear and anxiety in the country".

This is not just any old opposition tactic or hypocrisy but political gamesmanship that threatens the very foundations of a democratic India, he alleges. According to him, the CAA is not against the spirit of the Constitution but is, in fact, the nurturing spirit that will strengthen the spirit of the Indian ethos.

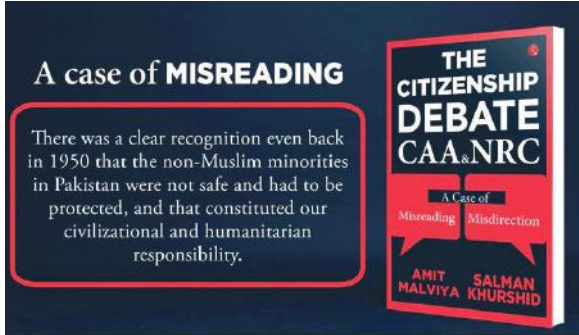
However, Mr Khurshid feels the CAA, in its "implicit endeavour to subsume a refugee law in its Citizenship Act, has forgotten to give concrete rationale for inclusion of only a few religious groups or countries given the

broad contours of persecution".

Mr Malviya argues it is wrong to say that the CAA is a step towards "Hindu Rashtra".

"It is a step towards a policy that rejects appeasement politics, pandering to particular groups, and assuring the rights of those minorities who are facing religious persecution at the hands of extremists, rogue states and agents provocateurs," he writes in the book, published by Rupa.

"The Hindu Rashtra argument falls apart for another very important reason: the CAA is not a law that protects only Hindu minorities from the three neighbouring countries, but it is also a conscious attempt to protect the interests of other persecuted groups, including Christians, Buddhists,



Jains and Sikhs," he says.

But Mr Khurshid, a senior advocate and a former Union minister, says "questions are posed on one's nationality on the basis of religion. Muslims, even today, are viewed as naturally disloyal to the nation in popular perception".

Mr Malviya sees no link be-

tween the CAA and the NRC exercise from a legalistic point of view. Khurshid finds the real sting is in NRC-NPR, and the CAA is but the balm for someone who might be singed by the former.

"But even the arguably intended beneficiaries will be at a loss to establish their

Pakistan, Bangladesh or Afghanistan citizenship having failed to establish their Indian citizenship," he says.

The CAA seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslim migrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jain and Parsi communities who came to India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014.

Mr Malviya also says that the allegation that the track record of the NRC is poor is a red herring and needs to be dismissed with the contempt that it deserves.

"If at all a government agency is not working efficiently, then it is incumbent upon both the political leadership and executive to shape up and de-

mand efficiency. To, therefore, argue that the NRC exercise ought not to be carried out is mischievous," he says.

Mr Khurshid is of the opinion that the central government, with the CAA and the intention of conducting a pan-India NRC, should have given it a deeper thought to finalise what documents they want shown.

With this lack of clarity in the "Show Your Documents" drive, a large number of people get sent to detention camps, with no concrete treaty with countries such as Bangladesh for deporting migrants, he says.

"India is a large country with a majority of its population poor and illiterate. Documentation thus becomes a herculean task not only for the authorities conducting this exercise

but also for the people to own them," Mr Khurshid writes.

People have different impressions about the CAA-NRC-NPR protests happening across India, says the senior Congress leader.

"Some are impressed, others curious whilst a few are puzzled. As much as Amit Shah would have us to believe that there is no evidence of large-scale public support for CAA, it is undeniable that the trigger may have been the spontaneous reaction in Muslim-dominated areas and institutions.

"However, from the beginning, citizens of different faiths have participated in the protests with determination and conviction. It was truly an inclusive endeavour untouched by party political ambition," he says.