



Maximum : 32°C
Minimum : 19°C
Humidity : 61%

SUNSET
Today 07:19 PM
SUNRISE
Tomorrow 05:52 AM

OBSERVER

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News Digest

Landslide Blocks Kashmir Highway

Banihal/Jammu: The Jammu-Srinagar Highway was closed for traffic on Thursday due to a landslide in Ramban district that left over 300 vehicles stranded, an official said. The 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, was blocked by a major landslide at Mehaar area, they said.

2 Killed In Pampore Mishap

Srinagar: Two people on Thursday were killed and two others injured in a road accident along Srinagar-Jammu highway in Pampore area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district. Eyewitnesses said that a speedy dumper loaded with boulders overturned and crushed on to a swift car in which four persons were injured. They said that the injured were shifted to SDH Pampore where two of them were declared brought dead. Block Medical Officer (BMO) Pampore Dr Gulzar Ahmad said that two persons were brought dead while as two injured persons were referred to ● P-02

Militant Hideouts Busted In Pulwama

Srinagar: The state forces have unearthed two militant hideouts in the forest area of Awantipora in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir, recovering a cache of arms and ammunition, police said on Thursday. Acting on a tip off about presence of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants in Badroo forests of Awantipora, government forces launched a search operation on Wednesday night, a police official said. "During search in the early morning hours (of Thursday), two hideouts of LeT outfit were busted and destroyed," the official said. He said incriminating ● P-02

'Notorious Criminal' Detained Under PSA

Jammu: A notorious criminal was detained on Thursday under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district, officials said. A police team conducted raids in the Tanda area and detained Nazir Ahmad who was allegedly involved in several criminal cases, including cattle smuggling and robbery, they said. He had become a threat to public order and peace, prompting the authorities to slap the stringent Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act on him. Keeping in view his repeated involvement in ● P-02

3 Drug Peddlers Held In Budgam: Police

Srinagar: Police on Thursday claimed to have arrested three alleged drug peddlers in central Kashmir's Budgam district and recovered contraband substance from their possession. Showkat Ahmad Bhat, Muzaamil Bhat and Ghulam Hussain Bhat were travelling in a car (JK01M-5928) when the police officers at a Choon crossing checkpoint intercepted their vehicle, a police spokesperson said. During checking, he said the officers were able to recover 9 Grams of Heroin and 115 grams of Charas from ● P-02

Police Begins Probe Into Shopian Encounter

Probe To Focus On DNA Sampling, Trio's Militant Links: IGP Kumar

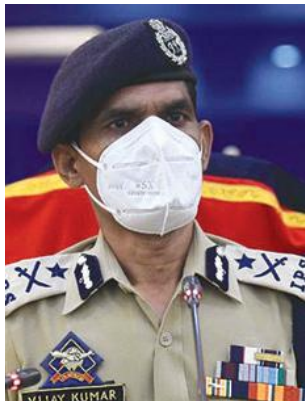
Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: A police team from Kashmir has been sent to Rajouri district in Jammu region to collect DNA samples of the people claiming to be relatives of the three youths killed in an alleged fake encounter in Shopian district of the Union Territory last month, a senior police official said on Thursday.

"We have sent a team headed by Deputy SP Wajahat today (Thursday) to Rajouri to collect the DNA samples of those claiming to be relatives of the deceased," Inspector General of Police Kashmir zone Vijay Kumar told reporters on the sidelines of a function here.

Kumar said the DNA samples will be sent to central laboratories for matching.

"There are two aspects of the investigations. One is matching the DNA and then we will be also investigating whether these youths, who had come to work in Kashmir, had any links with militants. We will be going through their call details and other technical aspects as well," he added.



DNA Samples Of Families Collected

A police team on Thursday collected DNA samples of the three families in Rajouri district, who have claimed that their kin have been killed in a "stage managed encounter" by state forces in south Kashmir's Shopian district last month. "The DNA samples of all the three families were collected today at the district hospital after completion of legal formalities," a family source told Kashmir Observer. ● P-02

The Army has already initiated an inquiry into an "encounter" carried out by its troops in Amshipora village of Shopian district.

On July 18, the Army claimed three militants were killed in the higher reaches of Shopian in

south Kashmir. However, no further details were shared.

On Monday, Srinagar-based defence spokesperson Colonel Rajesh Kalia issued a brief statement, saying the Army has noted social media inputs linked to the operations in 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," Kalia had said.

This has sparked a controversy with political parties demanding

an impartial probe into the alleged encounter to ensure speedy justice.

The controversy erupted after some families filed a complaint at a police station in Rajouri stating that their three members are missing since July 17

»PAGE 02

High-Level Panel Red Flags 300 Projects For Funding Under Govt's Ambitious Program

Agencies

SRINAGAR: A high-powered committee has decided against funding 300 projects under the Jammu and Kashmir's ambitious program for languishing projects.

A record note of meeting chaired by Financial Commissioner Finance, Arun Kumar Mehta, has decided against funding or not considered for approval nearly 300 projects due to varied reasons.

The meeting of HPC was held on July 13 to discuss proposals submitted by different departments for funding under government's initiative for funding languishing

projects in Jammu & Kashmir.

According to record note of the meeting, Rural Development department had submitted a total of 129 projects for an amount of Rs 18.619 crore.

But no project was approved for funding by the HPC as they were in requirement of very less funding and as such these projects can be undertaken by way of funding through regular capex budget for completion, the note reveals.

The committee also did not consider six out of seven projects submitted by the Revenue department, reasoning these were low Impact projects and »PAGE 02

Man Hurt In Cross-LoC Shelling Dies

SRINAGAR: A 55-year-old man who was injured in shelling along the Line of Control in Kupwara district last week, died at a hospital here on Thursday, officials said.

They said that the man, Mohammad Yakoub Mir (55) son of Barkatullah Mir of Kachatiya Baghbeela Tangdhar succumbed to the injuries at SKIMS Soura here early morning. Mir had suffered forehead splinter injury.

Mir along with two other persons were referred to the tertiary care hospital from Kupwara after getting critically injured as India and Pakistan troops exchanged fire and mortar shells along the Line of Control in Kupwara district on August 6.

On the same day, Mohammad Arif from Shamspora, ● P-02

1000 J&K Panchayat Representatives To Get Security: Report

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration will provide security to nearly a 1000 Panchayat representatives, mostly from volatile south Kashmir on the basis of threat perception, NDTV reported Thursday.

According to the report, the Union Territory administration has hired hotels, hostels and private residences to provide to security to these grassroot leaders. The leaders would also get security cover when they visit their constituency.

"Data shows the most of the people who will get security are from

Two More BJP members Quit Party

Two more members of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), including a Panch have reportedly announced their disassociation from the party on social media. According to the reports, Ghulam Rasool Sheikh, a resident ● P-02

Raina Blames Pak For 'Targeted Killings'

Pakistan is afraid of the BJP's rise in Kashmir and is engineering targeted killings of party workers in the Valley, BJP's J&K chief Ravinder Raina said on Thursday, asserting the neighbouring country will not succeed in its ● P-02

South Kashmir. A majority of them are from the BJP," the report said.

Quoting unnamed sources, the report says that post-bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP

has been pushing for a "grassroot democracy" that would involve a strong panchayat system

The report further says that Panchayat members »PAGE 02

Security Beefed Up In Kashmir Ahead Of August 15



Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Security has been beefed up in Kashmir ahead of August 15 celebrations as full dress rehearsal was held in Srinagar and various district headquarters on Thursday, officials said.

Police and paramilitary forces have been deployed in strength at many places in the city and elsewhere in the valley to thwart any attempts by militants to disrupt the celebrations, the officials said.

They said random search of vehicles was being carried out near Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium here, the venue of the main function.

Similar precautionary measures with respect to security arrangements have been made in other districts of the valley, the officials said.

Lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha will preside over the Independence Day function on Saturday. This will be first August 15

Officers Directed To Attend August 15 Function

The government on Thursday asked all the officers above the rank of Under Secretaries in the J&K stationed at Srinagar and Jammu to attend the main function of the August 15 Celebration at the Sher-i-Kashmir Cricket Stadium Sonawar here and Parade Ground, Jammu respectively as part of their official duty. "Independence Day is an important national event ● P-02

function since Jammu and Kashmir became a union territory.

Meanwhile, full dress rehearsal was held at Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium and other district headquarters of the valley.

"In connection with »PAGE 02

IAF Chief Reviews Operational Preparedness

NEW DELHI: Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria on Thursday flew a Mig 21 Bison jet at a frontline airbase in the Western Command, and carried out a comprehensive review of the operational preparedness of the air warriors in the region, officials said.

The Indian Air Force has kept almost all its air bases under the Western Command at a "very high level of readiness" in view of the over three-month border row with China in eastern Ladakh.

The Western Command looks after the aerial defence of the sensitive Ladakh sector as well as various other parts of North India.

Officials said Air Chief Marshal Bhaduria reviewed the ● P-02

Azad Calls Minister For 4G Restoration

SRINAGAR: Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Thursday discussed the issue of high speed internet restoration in Jammu and Kashmir with Union Minister for Telecommunications Ravi Shankar Prasad. The leader of opposition in the Rajya Sabha spoke telephonically to Prasad and apprised him about the difficulties faced by students, traders and others in Jammu and Kashmir, reports said. Azad threw light upon the adverse impact of the non-availability of 4G internet facilities in Jammu & Kashmir, which has multiplied the problems of students, business community and other establishments.

During telephonic conversation, Prasad assured Azad of ● P-02

'Admin Running In Circles' From Past Five Months: KCCI On Lockdown

Kashmir Inc: 'Royals Enjoying Golf, Shopkeepers Behind Bars'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Thursday slammed government over indefinite lockdown of business establishments in the Valley, especially Srinagar terming it as a serious infringement on the rights of the business community to earn a livelihood.

In a hard hitting statement issued here, a KCCI spokesperson said that despite full cooperation of public and the business community, the administration appeared to be running around in circles since the previous



five months and seem oblivious to the fact that the business community of Kashmir is presently in the 13th month of a disruption

which has wiped out enterprises and devastated the economy.

Comparing Kashmir's Covid-19 situation with Mumbai, »PAGE 02

Admin Hints At Partial Reopening Of Srinagar Markets

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary said on Thursday hinted that there will be no need to implement or extend lockdown restrictions in the district if people will follow SOPs properly. Choudhary said that district administration Srinagar conducted several meetings with religious heads and traders wherein lifting of lockdown restrictions were thoroughly discussed. Besides ● P-02



A CRPF personal stands guard at a checkpoint in this capital city on Thursday. pic, Abid Bhat

From Front page...

Police Begins Probe Into...

from Amshipora area of Shopian where they were working as labourers in apple and walnut orchards. The families, who filed the police complaint jointly, gave pictures of their kin -- Mohammed Ibrar (21), Ibrar Ahmad (18) and Imtiaz Ahmad (26) -- which were subsequently shared with the Kashmir Police for investigation. The relatives of the youths lodged the missing report with the local police after they failed to contact the trio and news of an encounter came on July 18 from Shopian, a police official said.

DNA Samples Of Families...

He said that the officials have told the families that the reports of the DNA tests are most likely to come next week. "We will bring the bodies to Rajouri when the DNA tests match," family sources said. Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Nazir Ahmed Sheikh was quoted by a local news agency KNO as saying that the district administration facilitated collections of DNA samples of family members of all three missing persons. Meanwhile, several delegations of locals, elders, and civil society groups met the police team from Kashmir and Rajouri police officers and demanded an impartial, independent probe into the 18 July killings that took place in Ashmipora, Shopian.

Israel-UAE Announce Full...

and the United Arab Emirates". "This historic diplomatic breakthrough will advance peace in the Middle East region and is a testament to the bold diplomacy and vision of the three leaders and the courage of the United Arab Emirates and Israel to chart a new path that will unlock the great potential in the region," the statement said.

In a separate statement, the crown prince stressed that the agreement would stop further Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories, which Israel has said had been awaiting a green light from Washington.

The agreement, to be known as the Abraham Accords, also gives Trump a foreign policy accomplishment as he seeks re-election on Nov. 3. "HUGE breakthrough today! Historic Peace Agreement between our two GREAT friends, Israel and the United Arab Emirates," Trump wrote on Twitter. The UAE said it would remain a strong supporter of the Palestinian people and that the normalization agreement maintained the viability of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Netanyahu said the agreement represented a "historic day" for his country. But a senior Israeli official said applying Israeli sovereignty to areas of the West Bank – territory Palestinians seek for a state along with Gaza and East Jerusalem – was still on the agenda. The official said, "The Trump administration asked us to temporarily suspend the (sovereignty) announcement so that the historic peace agreement with the UAE can be implemented." Trump's special envoy Brian Hook said the deal is a "nightmare" for Iran. Iran and Israel are arch foes. Israel is particularly concerned about suspected Iranian efforts to develop nuclear weapons, which Tehran denies. Iran is also involved in proxy wars from Syria to Yemen, where the UAE has been a leading member of the Saudi-led coalition opposing Iran-aligned forces there. Delegations from Israel and the United Arab Emirates will meet in the coming weeks to sign agreements regarding investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications and other issues, the statement said. The two countries are expected soon to exchange ambassadors and embassies. The statement said that "as a result of this diplomatic breakthrough and at the request of President Trump with the support of the United Arab Emirates, Israel will suspend declaring sovereignty" over areas of the West Bank that were envisioned in a U.S. plan announced by Trump in January.

In the White House Oval Office, Trump said similar deals are being discussed with other countries in the region. A signing ceremony including delegations from Israel and the United Arab Emirates will be held at the White House in the coming weeks, Trump added.

"Everybody said this would be impossible," Trump said. "After 49 years, Israel and the United Arab Emirates will fully normalize their diplomatic relations. They exchange embassies and ambassadors and begin cooperation across the border."

The agreement envisions giving Muslims greater access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem by allowing them to fly from Abu Dhabi to Tel Aviv, White House officials said. Trump said, "This deal is a significant step towards building a more peaceful, secure and prosperous Middle East. Now that the ice has been broken, I expect more Arab and Muslim countries will follow the United Arab Emirates' lead and normalize relations with Israel."

"We are already discussing this with other nations, very powerful, very good nations that want to see peace in the Middle East so you will probably see others of these," Trump added. "Things are happening that I can't talk about, but they're extremely positive."

Palestinians Slam the Deal A senior Palestinian official has slammed the US-brokered deal establishing full diplomatic ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates in exchange for Israel dropping its plan to annex West Bank land. Hanan Ashrawi said on Twitter the deal perpetuates Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

"Israel got rewarded for not declaring openly what it's been doing to Palestine illegally & persistently since the beginning of the occupation," she wrote. She also said the UAE has come forward with its "secret dealings/normalisation with Israel."

"Please don't do us a favour. We are nobody's fig leaf!" she wrote.

Security Beefed Up In Kashmir

the celebrations of Independence Day-2020, a full dress rehearsal was held today at S K Stadium in Srinagar where Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole hoisted the national flag and took salute at the march past," an official spokesman said.

Officers Directed To Attend...

celebrated on 15 August each year. It is the duty of every government servant to attend the function which commemorates an important turning point in the history of our Nation," reads a circular issued by the government. "All the officers above the rank of Under Secretaries in the Union territory stationed at Srinagar/Jammu are therefore enjoined upon to attend the main function of the Independence Day Celebration, 2020 at the Sher-i-Kashmir Cricket Stadium, Sonawar, Srinagar/Parade Ground, Jammu respectively, as part of their official duty," it said, adding, "Any absence will be with prior permission of their immediate superior. All the Administrative Secretaries, Heads of the Departments, Managing Directors/Chief Executives of the Public Sector Undertakings are requested to ensure that all officers/officials working under their administrative control, and stationed at Srinagar/Jammu, attend the function at their respective places".

The Managing Director, J&K Road Transport Corporation Limited and the Managing Director, J&K Tourism Development Corporation Limited has been asked to ensure that the buses or canter vehicles of their Corporations are deployed for transportation of the employees of moving departments at Srinagar report at their allocated Government Colonies, Hotels, Security Zones etc at 7:30 a.m. on August 15 and facilitate to-and-fro movement of employees for attending the the function at Sher-Kashmir Cricket Stadium, Sonawar, Srinagar. (GNS)

High-Level Panel Red Flags...

information not provided in proper format. According to minutes of the meeting, out of 27 projects submitted by Technical Education department, 15) s were not approved due to less than Rs one crore balance cost. Similarly, the panel also found that 142 projects amounting to Rs 521.99 crore were not satisfactory for approval due to deficiencies like Balance cost required was less than Rs 1 crore, low Impact and

non- visible outcome and duplicity of funds.

The scheme to ensure completion of languishing projects was launched on September 5, 2018 when the State Administrative Council (SAC) headed by the then Governor of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir Satya Pal Malik had approved an amount of Rs 8000 crore for the completion of such projects--(KNO)

Covid-19 Claims 12 More Lives

lower zone CAP". The doctor said the man turned out to be positive for the novel coronavirus on August 3 and died at 8:10 a.m. "The patient was shifted to isolation ward on being found positive," the doctor added.

Also, they said, a 40-year-old man from Poonch who was referred from Batra hospital to Chest Diseases hospital died on the way. A 25-year-old female from Bijbhara Anantnag died at CD hospital here, one of the exclusive facilities of the management of the covid-19 patients. "She was referred to LD Hospital as case of pneumonia with Sepsis with AKI after testing positive on Rapid Antigen Test on August 11 at LD Hospital where she had LSCS and had delivered twin daughters," official sources said. They said she was on ventilator and suddenly developed bradycardia followed by cardiac arrest today at around 4:30 p.m. Regarding two deaths from Kupwara, they said, the victims include a 67-year-old from Kupwara who was admitted to hospital on August 10 and died today.

Also, a 90-year-old woman from Panzgam Kupwara having underlying ailments such as "HTN, CKD and encephalopathy besides bilateral Community acquired pneumonia" died at SKIMS, six days after she was admitted to the tertiary care hospital. The Srinagar fatalities, they said include a 65-year-old woman from Khanyar who was suffering from hypertension, hypothyroidism, besides severe bilateral pneumonia, a 62-year-old woman from Eidgah and an elderly from Lal Bazar "who was a known case of hypertension" and died at around 7:30 a.m. today, nine days after being admitted to SKIMS. A 70-year-old woman from Rafiabad Baramulla who was having "HTN, and bilateral pneumonia" died at SMHS hospital where elderly woman from Mazhama Budgam besides two residents from Pulwama--an eldely man from Baygund Tral and 50-year-old woman from Drabgam--also succumbed, official sources said. "All these patients had bilateral pneumonia and other ailments," they added. A 45-year-old man from Shalabud Ganderbal who was admitted hospitalized on August also succumbed to the virus, they added. With these deaths, officials said, 512 people have succumbed to the virus in Jammu and Kashmir so far--473 from the Valley and 39 from Jammu division. Srinagar district with 163 deaths tops the list followed by Baramulla (86), Budgam (38), Anantnag (36), Kulgam (31), Pulwama (35), Kupwara (32), Shopian (24), Jammu (27), Bandipora (19), Ganderbal (11), two each in Rajouri, Doda and Udhampur besides one each in Ramban, Samba, Poonch, and Kathua. (With GNS inputs)

IAF Chief Reviews Operational

operational preparedness of the base with senior air warriors after flying a sortie on a Mig 21 Bison.

The Mig-21 Bison is a single engine and single seater multirole fighter aircraft of Russian origin which was the backbone of the IAF for several decades. The Mig 21s played a major role in the 1971 Indo-Pak War.

Last week, Vice Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Harjit Singh Arora visited a number of air bases along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh to take stock of the IAF's operational preparedness in the region.

Air Marshal Singh also visited the strategically crucial air base in Daulat Beg Oldie, known as one of the world's highest airstrip. The airbase is situated at an altitude of 16,600 feet.

In June, Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria made a quiet visit to Ladakh and Srinagar air bases to review the IAF's overall preparedness.

In the last two months, the IAF deployed almost all its frontline fighter jets like Sukhoi 30 MKI, Jaguar and Mirage 2000 aircraft in the key frontier air bases in eastern Ladakh and elsewhere along the LAC. The IAF has been carrying out night time combat air patrols over the eastern Ladakh region in an apparent message to China that it was ready to deal with any eventualities in the mountainous region. The IAF has also deployed Apache attack choppers as well as Chinook heavy-lift helicopters to transport troops to various forward locations in eastern Ladakh.

124 New Arrivals, 11 Armed...

the remaining 98 were confirmed Covid-19 positive by officials in Jammu region. Giving district-wise details, official sources said, Srinagar reported 144 cases, Baramulla 46,Pulwama 33, Kulgam 14, Shopian 8, Anantnag 16, Budgam 36, Kupwara 46, Bandipora 54, Ganderbal 41, Jammu 49, Rajouri 3, Ramban 3, Kathua10, Udhampur 1, Samba 8, Doda 3, Poonch 5, Reasi 15 and Kishtwar 1. In Kashmir, Srinagar continues to top the list with 6577 cases followed by Baramulla with 2303, Pulwama 1983, Kulgam 1674, Budgam 1677, Shopian 1545, Anantnag 1680, Kupwara 1394, Bandipora 1251 and Ganderbal 815. In Jammu division, Jammu district has 1776 cases, Rajouri 774, Ramban 619, Kathua 636, Udhampur 634, Samba 541, Doda 327, Poonch 310, Reasi 257 and Kishtwar 176.

Moreover, they said, 779 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals, 218 from Jammu Division and 561 from Kashmir Division. So far 19302--4311 from Jammu and 14991 from Kashmir--have recovered in the J&K

Azad Calls Minister For 4G...

considering of the restoration of 4G internet facilities in 'due course of time'. High speed internet was snapped on August 5, barely hours before the Modi-led government scrapped special status of Jammu and Kashmir and split the state into two Union Territories. The move was followed by a harsh curfew and crackdown during which thousands of people, including separatists and mainstream leaders, including three former Chief Ministers of the erstwhile state were detained.

Advisor Bhatnagar's ...

Friday from 10 AM to 5PM.

For Kashmir: 01942506499

For Jammu: 01912542363

Whatsapp Number: 919419670631

Twitter: @AdvisorBJKGovt

E-mail: advisorbgrivancecell@gmail.com

The official spokesperson said that the move has been done to facilitate public as they can send their grievances electronically without having to physically travel to office and minimise the risk due to pandemic COVID-19. Further, the deputations, delegations, individuals or other people who want to meet the Advisor Bhatnagar have to seek a prior appointment from his office on phone numbers

For Kashmir: 01942506466

For Jammu: 01912542014

"All such people are requested to follow all health guidelines and other COVID related advisories strictly while visiting the Secretariat to contain the spread of pandemic COVID-19," the official spokesperson added.

1000 J&K Panchayat ...

who do not belong to the BJP say they also need to feel safe.

"We have nothing to do with the BJP but people consider us political leaders," said a sarpanch from Anantnag district, where a Congress sarpanch was killed. "We are ordinary people. We acknowledge that the police can't provide security to all but they should think of an arrangement for us also," he added. A senior official in the UT administration told NDTV that the security arrangements were there earlier too, but recently, the numbers have gone up after threat assessments. "Mostly these grassroot leaders are being provided a room. In some cases, a family member is also being allowed to stay with them," said an official in charge of providing security. According to him in some cases private accommodations are also being rented by security forces. "In some cases after threat assessments if it is noted that there is threat to entire family then we are lodging them in private accommodations," he added.

Two More BJP members...

of Fakeer Chiek, Harda Panzu in Khanshab area of Budgam took to social media to announce his resignation from the BJP. Sheikh is also a Panch. In Srinagar also, a BJP worker identified as Imtiyaz Ahmed Lone of Nowpora also announced disassociation from the party.

Both these persons have uploaded their photographs carrying resignation letters, local news agency KNT reported.

The fresh spate of resignation by Panchayat members comes after a number of attacks by suspected militants. Since last month, five BJP leaders have been assassinated by militants in the Valley.

According to reports, around 30 Panchayat members, leaders and workers of BJP have left the party in the last one week across Kashmir.

Raina Blames Pak For...

"nefarious designs". His statement came in the backdrop of militant attacks on some village-level BJP leaders, following which nearly a dozen party workers in Kashmir have resigned. "Pakistan is afraid of the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Kashmir, that's why it is selectively targeting BJP workers in Kashmir", he told reporters here. He said with the rise of the BJP in Kashmir, Pakistani militants and separatists are in frustration and desperation. Applauding the bravery, dedication and commitment of BJP workers in Kashmir Valley, Raina said their sacrifices won't go in vain and very soon the whole Valley will become militancy-free.

Naming some of the party workers who were recently attacked, Raina said Pakistani militants were afraid of the growing popularity of BJP leaders like Sheikh Wasim Bari, Abdul Hamid Nazir and the party's sarpanches and panches, and therefore targeted them.

But it can't stop the BJP in Kashmir valley as the common masses in Kashmir are with the party, he said, adding, "the majority of people of Kashmir valley are true patriots and they love India from the core of their hearts. He said that Pakistan has lost all sympathies among the Kashmiris as people have understood its actual designs. More than 95 percent Kashmiris are "hardcore" Indians and only a few anti-nationals are creating trouble, he said. "These anti-nationals are being treated with Iron hands," he said

Raina said that Pakistan and China will have to vacate all "illegally-occupied" parts of India. Areas such as Gilgit, Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Bhimbar, Kotli, Deva, Batala and Neelam Valley, which are in "illegal occupation" of Pakistan, will soon be a part of India and the Tiranga will be hoisted there with dignity. We all should swear on this August 15 that we will get PoJK vacated and our people free from the slavery of Pakistan and China, he said.

Man Hurt In Cross-LoC...

succumbed to the injuries. In all six civilians, one of them a woman, were injured and three of the critically wounded were shifted to SKIMS for the advanced treatment, they added.

Kashmir Inc: ‘Royals Enjoying

the KCCI spokesperson said that the India's business capital has 5.35 lac COVID-19 cases and a daily average of 1700 new cases but despite it the state has entered unlock 3.0 phase. Quoting figures, the KCCI spokesperson said the Mumbai has a population of over 2 crore living in an area of 603 sq km as compared to Srinagar's population of around 17 lakhs in an area of 294 sq km; six times higher population density of 33,168 persons per sq km as compared to 5,782 persons per sq km in Srinagar. Divulging further details, he said on August 3, the BMC has allowed all shops – essential and non-essential – to open all day except in containment zones. He said only theatres, food courts, in-house dining in restaurants, bars and gaming zones, street vendors and hawkers, continue to be prohibited. "There are currently around 700 containment zones in Mumbai but unlike in Srinagar, they mostly consist of individual buildings and slums," the KCCI spokesperson said. "Here, the administration cannot be bothered to stop tweeting and identify individual houses. They simply barbwire-off entire neighbourhoods, if not the entire districts," he added.

The KCCI spokesperson said that with six times the population density, gradual opening of business establishments and the population being allowed much more movement, the infection rate of around 2.65 percent not been seen as a very successful operation but speaks volumes about the intent of the Maharashtra Government to provide avenues of livelihood and it's concern for the welfare of the public.

Hitting out at the government over the alleged grievous dereliction in proper utilisation of the earlier stages of lockdowns to strategize and prepare for the unlocking phase, the KCCI spokesperson said that MDMA funds have been spent on purchase of barriers despite Kashmir having the highest inventory of barriers including barbed wires available.

"The prices of critical medical equipment including oxygen concentrators has skyrocketed without any system of checks and balances in place. Butchers are hauled in for selling meat at meagerly higher prices but no attention is being paid to regulate the prices of these essentials and critical medical equipment," the KCCI spokesperson said.

"Shopkeepers, pushed against the wall by the financial stress and in pursuit of bringing food to the family are being forced to operate like smugglers and reports of excessive harassment by various enforcement agencies are pouring in," he added.

At the district levels, the KCCI spokesperson said "confusing" amendments have been made to the comprehensive guidelines issued by the worthy Chairman of the State Disaster Management Authority.

"A majority of the public has no idea of what the guidelines are. Banks were open throughout but no care was taken to monitor their functioning resulting in reports of largest COVID clusters emerging from Banks," he said.

"The Royals have been enjoying their golf rounds without any break whereas the shopkeepers are put behind bars for seeking to feed their families out of frustration," he added.

The KCCI spokesperson alleged that handpicked star restaurants frequented by the "high and mighty" have been allowed to operate without any interruption whereas the lesser mortals are not allowed activities. Similarly, he said government offices are functioning at full strength despite daily movement of employees posing a risk whereas schools are not being allowed to operate on minimal rotational routine suggested by their respective associations.

"Our students stand deprived of quality education due to the unavailability of required internet speed, popularly referred to as 4G, providing which the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has been opposing tooth and nail in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India," the KCCI spokesperson said.

"What prevented the Government from providing broadband connections to the students or parents so that our children could also participate in the new normal is beyond comprehension," he added.

Taking a dig at the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha who said Wednesday that it was time to introspect what Jammu and Kashmir has got in 70 years, the prominent business body said that it would be only fair to start with the current year and "we feel that the example of Government's Golf Policy would suffice to illustrate the Governments benevolence on ground".

"The Royal Springs Golf Course (RSGC) which had been closed till May was opened up for play in June. This coincided with the Government's announcement of shifting of the Durbar to Srinagar and with the Royal who-is-who keen on its remaining open; it has been ensured that it remains open since," the KCCI spokesperson said.

Taking pot shots at the District Magistrate, the spokesperson said that a majority of beleaguered 17 lacs people in Srinagar were caged behind fancy barriers when curfew was declared on the 4th and 5th of August

"The RSGC was open and jam packed. Apparently, the jurisdiction of the District Magistrate ends at the gates of RSGC," the KCCI spokesperson said, while quickly adding that it was not against

opening of a Golf Course. I

"It shows the Governments concern for keeping their senior functionaries and powerful elite in a mentally and physically fit condition. Had their salaries and privileges been stopped since 13 months and their families' very survival under threat, we doubt that they would be hitting their shots as beautifully," the KCCI spokesperson said.

"But at closer inspection, we realise that it is not Golf which is the issue, it is saying one thing and doing opposite. It is about speaking empowerment and acting to disempower," he added.

KCCI, the spokesperson said has never shied away from appreciating decisions and policies of the Government wherever it merited appreciation and feel that as the voice of the business community it is equally an responsibility on our shoulders not to mince words while observing any departure in expectations from the Government.

The KCCI spokesperson also pointed out the grim picture of Kashmir Golf Club (KGC), calling it the poor country cousin of the RSGC. The spokesperson said that after spending Rs 40 Crore on its upgradation by the government's bank, over 500 permanent members of the KGC have been sidelined with no say in the functioning of the Club, which remains closed.

"No tangible support has been provided to the business community who continue to struggle not for revival or growth but their very survival. Unemployment is at an all-time high with the tally of job losses in the current pandemic running into lacs, the KCCI spokesperson said.

"On the contrary, inconsiderate policies have pushed the business community against the wall which cry for urgent corrective measures and address the simmering desperation and deep frustration," he added.

Admin Hints At Partial...

other vital issues, resumption of trade and market was also discussed with stakeholders.

traders wherein lifting of lockdown restrictions were thoroughly discussed. Besides other vital issues, resumption of trade and market was also discussed with stakeholders.

DC hinted out that if administration will open 50 percent markets from August 16, SOPs have to be adhered in letter and spirit.

"If we abide by SOPs properly, I don't think any need for enforcing or extending lockdown may arise", he said.

While talking to reports here, Choudhary said that in wake of surge in Covid-19 cases, the authorities were compelled to impose lockdown restrictions for the wellbeing of the community.

"Experts are saying that more Covid-19 cases may arise in Srinagar and there are less chances of seeing a decline in figures in coming days. So in situation like this, it is our responsibility to follow SOPs, use masks, maintain required social distance and take all other precautionary measures to keep the virus away", he said.

Choudhary said that district administration interacted with over 3000 religious leaders who were apprised the lethal consequences of the pandemic.

"We are hopeful religious leaders will play a pivotal role in persuading masses to follow SOPs when religious places will be thrown open for people", DC said.

He maintained that further required information and awareness about lockdown will be made public in a separate notification.

Landslide Blocks Kashmir...

stranded on both sides of Mehaar Ramban landslide and traffic was stopped at Qazigund and UdhampurChanderkot soon after the highway was blocked.

A lighting system was also installed to carry out restoration works in the night hours, he said.

2 Killed In Pampore Mishap...

SMHS and are stable.

He said that among the two dead, one was identified as Raja, 23, son of Jameel Ahmad, resident of Reasi, at present Awantipora, while the identity of another was being ascertained.

He identified the injured persons as Rafakat Ahmad son of Bashir Ahmad resident of NoorporaTral and Mashook Ahmad son of Mohammad RamzanKhanday, resident of Tazipora, Kulgam.

A police official said that a case has been registered in this regard and investigation has been taken up--(KNO)

Militant Hideouts Busted...

material and huge cache of explosive material and ammunition have been recovered from hideouts which include over 1900 rounds of AK ammunition, two hand grenades and an UBGL thrower with four grenades. The other explosives recovered include ammonium nitrate-like substance, five gelatin sticks, one crude pipe bomb and three code sheets.

A case has been registered at police station Awantipora in this regard, he added.

‘Notorious Criminal’ Detained

criminal activities, a dossier was prepared by the Senior Superintendent of Police and forwarded to the District Magistrate who formally issued the order of his detention under the PSA, they said. Ahmad has been lodged at Hiranagar sub-jail.

3 Drug Peddlers Held In...

their possession. "They have been arrested and shifted to Police Station Budgam where they remain in custody. The vehicle used in the commission of crime has also been seized," the police spokesperson said. He said a case FIR No. 316/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Budgam and investigation has been initiated.

India Cannot Keep Depending On Imported Defence Supplies: Rajnath Singh

NEW DELHI: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said India cannot depend on foreign governments and overseas suppliers to meet its requirement of military platforms, and self-reliance in the defence sector is far more crucial than any other field.

Singh made the comments after launching a range of new products brought out by several defence public sector undertakings and the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) at an online event.

The products unveiled by Singh included a prototype of Nag missile carrier, a prototype of 8.6x70 mm sniper rifle and an underwater remote operated vehicle. Separately, he also launched a naval innovation and indigenisationorganisation of the Indian Navy. "Security is its first priority for the development of any nation. It is known to all of us that the nations, which are able to protect themselves, they have been able to build their strong image at the global level," Singh said. "We cannot depend on foreign governments, foreign suppliers and foreign defence products to meet our defence needs. It is not compatible with the objectives and feelings of a strong and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'," he added. In a mega push to boost domestic defence production, Singh on Sunday announced that India will stop import of 101 weapons and military platforms like transport aircraft, light combat helicopters, conventional submarines, cruise missiles and sonar systems under a staggered timeline running into 2024. India is one the largest importers of arms globally. According to estimates, the Indian armed forces are projected to spend around USD 130 billion in capital procurement in the next five years. "We should not only be able to ensure the fulfilment of our national interests but also be able to help other people in times of need. Self-reliance in the defence sector is far more crucial than any other field," Singh said.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
JAL SHAKTI DIVISION QAZIGUND**

CORRIGENDUM No.(02)

Sub:- Construction/Testing/Successful Commissioning of WS Scheme Waltengoo Nard Nobugh (under District Capex Budget)
Extension of date thereof.

Ref:- This office e-NIT No.14 of 2020-21 endorsed under No.PHQ/965-77 dated 17/07/2020 uploaded on tender portal under Tender ID: 2020_PHE_100656_1) read with Corrigendum No.PHQ/1163-68 dated 30/07/2020.

In view of report sought by the worthy Chief Engineer Jal Shakti Department Srinagar after joint representation made by the various contractors, the date for downloading of tender documents/uploading of bids on tender portal advertised vide aforementioned e-NIT under Tender ID : 2020-PHE_100656_1 is further extended up to **20/08/2020 up to 04.00 PM**. The technical cover of the tender shall be opened on **21/08/2020 at 11.00 AM**.

Other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged.

No:PHQ/1305-10
Dtd: 13/08/2020

Executive Engineer
Jal shakti Division Qazigund

DIPK-4061/20

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Case for Indo-Pak talks

A year on from the repeal of Article 370, India, Pakistan relations have gone steadily downhill. And with every new move that New Delhi takes to further integrate Kashmir into the country, the ties between the neighbours are worsening further. On the first anniversary of the withdrawal of Article 370 on August 5, Pakistan issued a new Kashmir map that shows the Indian side of J&K and Ladakh as part of Pakistan. The map is not new except that what was earlier presented as disputed territory is now described as ‘illegally occupied by India. Similarly, Pakistan has urged the US to help improve the India, Pakistan ties. This, in effect, is a call for the US mediation in Kashmir, something the Washington has been loathe to do unless both countries ask for it. India’s position has invariably been against the third party involvement as it regards Kashmir as a bilateral issue with Pakistan. So, Pakistan’s call for the US or any other country’s mediation means little in practice.

This leaves India, Pakistan to sort their messy relationship themselves. They will need to pick up the thread where they have left it. But it won’t be as easy. The withdrawal of Article 370 in August last has further wiped out the space for an engagement between the neighbours. Things have since become complicated geopolitically too. China’s incursions in Ladakh have made the communist power as yet another party to the issue. And the alleged China-Pakistan collusion in the region has erected what some observers in Kashmir think ‘a great wall of China’ around India on its northern and western side. Also the cooperation among China, Pakistan, Iran, Russia is giving all indications of emergence of a geopolitical block. And if all goes well Afghani-istan under Taliban could also be part of this block. Also, India has already withdrawn from China’s Border and Road Initiative. New Delhi, on the contrary, has aligned itself with the US and the west.

These shifting alignments are putting in place a new geopolitical order. This order, however, in no way will help resolve the issues of the subcontinent particularly those between India and Pakistan. That is, if the two countries themselves don’t show a willingness to address these. And this needs to be done before the two countries get sucked into the emerging new cold war. This calls for steps for re-engagement between them, that is informed by a deep realisation that the only way to peace in the region is through India-Pakistan reconciliation.

OTHER OPINON

Goodbye, Rahat Indori

Best known for his politically charged poetry about the rising tide of communalism and growing turpitude in public life, Rahat Indori’s last verses concerned life and death. It was fitting, and also quite natural, because Indori always lived in the moment. His latest work reflected the grim reality of a pandemic sweeping the world, forcing the human race, which suffers from the delusion that it is the master of nature, to ponder its own mortality.

Not long ago, Indori had been the man of the moment as protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act ignited across the country and his poem Agar khilaf hai was recited in rallies, especially the line: “Kisi ke baap ka Hindustan thodi hai” (India is not anyone’s father’s property). His verse connected viscerally with millions because he had abandoned formalisms rendered obscure by the passage of time, and preferred a simple diction which blended Hindi and Urdu, the spoken language of the common people of north India.

An accessible modernism and a determination to hold up a mirror to a nation in the throes of moral decay and ambiguity made Indori the rock star of mushairas. Along with peers like Basheer Badr, he was part of a new generation of poets who spoke directly to the heart, addressing potentates and paupers in the same register. His style recalls the Pakistani poet Nasir Kazmi’s terrifying simplicity as he describes (it is widely believed) the night of Partition: “Main hun, raat ka ek baja hai/ Khali rasta bol raha hai/ Aaj to yun khamosh hai duniya/ Jaise kuchh hone wala hai...” (It’s me, it’s one o’clock at night/ Only the empty road speaks/ And the world is so calm tonight/ That something must happen...). Indori was part of an old tradition of modernity, which will always be with us.

The Indian Express

In The Name Of Security And Public Order

The Lockdown Imposed On August 5 Last Year On Communication And Internet Has Denied The Basic Essential Rights To People In Jammu And Kashmir

Soayib Qureshi

On August 5, at the stroke of midnight, State of Jammu and Kashmir was placed under a complete lockdown. All voices of dissent neutralized. You ask why? The answer smoothly given with a smile is, “In the name of National Security and Public Order”.

Way back on August 5, 1914, Great Britain had declared war on Germany. This was due to Germany’s invasion of Belgium and its refusal to leave Belgium neutral. At that time, telegraph was the mode of communication and Great Britain had the most advanced undersea telegraph cable system. Great Britain, being in a dominant position, thus wanted to make full use of its advanced infrastructure, the only impediment being cables of Germany.

As a military strategy, on August 5, 1914, a British Cable Ship severed five German overseas underwater cables, which passed from Emden through the English Channel to Vigo, Tenerife, the Azores and the United States. German Communications were completely cut, forcing them to communicate on British Lines and providing Great Britain an intelligence windfall. The messages sent on British Lines were intercepted and decoded. This strategy resulted in Great Britain intercepting the “Zimmermann Telegram” which was used to help draw the United States as an ally. Great Britain thus created the first global communications surveillance system.

While, Great Britain used “interdiction”, as a military strategy in war, the same is clearly being used in Jammu and Kashmir, by the Central Government to either gain intelligence inputs or maybe to completely curb dissent. Although, events which have transpired since August 5, 2019 tilt the balance in favor of curbing dissent.

The lockdown imposed on August 5, 2019, on communication and internet, has denied the basic essential rights to people in Jammu and Kashmir: education, healthcare, trade communication, most of all, right to choose their own leaders. Surprisingly, these very rights were guaranteed by the Constitution of India, but put in abeyance, for no good reason, all in the name of National Security and Public Order.

It need not be explained how lack of communication and impositions of restrictions on movement can paralyze an entire eco system. Restrictions imposed on August 5 and continued since, impacted not only trade and commerce, but also took a heavy toll on education, justice delivery system and tourism sector. If figures are to be believed, revenue loss has been stated to be more than 20,000 Crores. Who will compensate people for this loss?

Considering the impact, the restrictions imposed had on the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the issue was taken up to the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India, in the case of Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India. It was expected from the Hon’ble Supreme Court to step in, protect, preserve, and nourish the rights of people of Jammu and Kashmir. But just like, Cancer, National Security and Public Order, slowly and steadily took over the freedoms guaranteed to the people in Jammu and Kashmir, where even Court-therapy (Chemotherapy) did not help. During arguments, before the Hon’ble Supreme Court, Government was unable to justify the basis for its actions and denial of basic rights of communication, trade, and a dignified life. Making it clear that the denial was merely on the whims and fancies of the Executive/Central Government.

While few politicians and individuals challenged the action of the Central Government in abrogating article 370 of the Constitution of India, there was a complete lack of interest by the Civil Society Members, intellectuals and even political parties from Jammu and Kashmir (barring one Politician who filed a case) to take actions for protection of these rights.

On January 10, 2020, the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India, passed a detailed judgment declaring that the freedom of speech and expression and

the freedom to practice any profession or carry on any trade, business or occupation over the medium of internet enjoyed constitutional protection and the restriction upon such fundamental rights was required to be in consonance with the mandate under Article 19 (2) and (6) of the Constitution, inclusive of the test of proportionality.

While doing so, Hon’ble Supreme Court, cautiously, stayed away from declaring actions of Government illegal, perhaps in the name of “National Security”. This Judgment, in all vehemence asserted that the action of complete blocking/prohibition could not be accepted by the Court and observed that the Government should have attempted to determine the feasibility of putting restrictions on social media. The Government was thereafter directed to revisit its orders, pass fresh orders and place the same in public domain.

Consequently, certain relaxations were given, and internet came back to Jammu and Kashmir, albeit at the restricted speed of 2G. As such, it appeared that the Government would in the coming months remove the restrictions. However, that was not the case to be. The Government continued to restrict the Internet Connectivity to 2G on mobiles, despite knowing that majority of population of Jammu and Kashmir was not accessing Internet through board-band. Internet, through mobile communication, remained an effective and cheap mode of accessing internet. Any reasonable Government, having a mandate to help people, would find a way, to make life of people less miserable, or at least provide a way out. But with the “string led administration”, dealing with misery of people clearly was not on menu.

In the interregnum, the entire world was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. This forced entire nation into a lockdown and at the same time gave a glimpse of what a common person from Jammu and Kashmir was suffering. The loss on account of employment, trade, and the effect it had on the economic situation of the country was clearly visible.

It was presumed that the Government would relax the restrictions and allow use of 4G through mobiles as it would not only help children in accessing their online classes, but also allow students/professionals and even the Judicial system to function through this pandemic on the virtual mode.

Who would have thought that more misery would be inflicted by the Government? The orders based on which restrictions were imposed, went on to state that the restriction on Internet speed has no effect on education of children through video conferencing. Additionally, these orders, which as per the Judgment of the Supreme Court were required to be passed based on certain judicial principals, were nothing but “Parrot” orders. Nothing in the orders would show any application of mind or a justifiable reason.

While the entire nation, through virtual mode was progressing, people in Jammu and Kashmir were made to struggle even for essentials. Imagine the extent of damage to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir, in absence of Internet. The only tool, snatched away, which allowed people, to remain sane, to enforce their rights, of trade, education and most importantly, right of communicating with each other and without which right to live in this chaos was difficult.

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic, forced the Foundation of Media Professionals and Private Schools Association of Jammu and Kashmir to knock the doors of Supreme Court, with a basic plea to increase the Internet Speed so that the students, professionals and even traders can go on with their lives, live with dignity.

However, yet again, the Central Government came up with the old excuse of “National Security” and the Hon’ble Supreme Court declined to pass any directions and surprisingly formed a Committee, consisting of Senior officers of the Government to look into the issue and consider the representations of the Petitioners before the Court.

No none can be the Judge in their own cause, this is the fundamental principle of law. However, rights of people, were placed by the Hon’ble Supreme Court at the mercy of the Government, which in the first place had taken the rights away.

It was expected of the Hon’ble Supreme Court to take action, as the orders passed by the Government were not in accordance with law.

The Government, yet again, flouted the law and did not take any action. A contempt petition was thus filed, which is as on date pending. The Hon’ble Supreme Court, yet again, in the contempt petition, filed by Foundation of Media Professionals, did not pass any directions, but requested the Government to see and analyze whether 4G services can be provided on experimental basis. The Apex court has the duty to protect and preserve the rights of the people and such a duty cannot be blinded by the argument of national security. In the said Contempt Petition, Central Government has now given a statement that it would be allowing 4G services on experimental basis in two districts of Jammu and Kashmir Division.

Should we be happy? The answer is in negative. There is no cogent reason for Government to continue with the restrictions. This is especially when the Lieutenant Governor, as available in media, himself made a statement that 4G services can be resumed and they had no impact on the security scenario.

Till date 88 orders have been passed by the Government in respect of Telecom Restrictions. It will take average intelligence to understand that the real issue of the Government is use of Social Media in instigating people against the Country and use of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services by people across the border to destabilize the state.

These assertions clearly appear to be a smoke screen. In case, the Government had any issue with the use of Social Media, the same could have been curtailed by banning or withholding such Social Media Applications, however, that step has not been taken. This is even though an observation was made in this regard by the Hon’ble Supreme Court. In so far as the VoIP is concerned, the same can even as on date be accessed through 2G. Thus, there is no rationale in even giving such a justification. It is in common knowledge that mostly satellite telephones are used for infiltration.

It is also surprising that there is already a system in place to check misuse of Social Media (Inter-mediatory Guidelines framed by the Government), further, Social Media continues to be used on 2G Network, why is it then necessary to put an embargo on the Internet Speed? Why so many restrictions, when the same are not in public interest? I presume it is to force the people to look towards Center for any relief/change.

Most of the population is dependent on 4G services for their basic essential requirements. When the remaining country has access to such services, denying the same to inhabitant of Jammu and Kashmir is anathema to the rule of law.

Clearly, people at the helm of affairs are acting without taking the interests of public into consideration. The actions of the Government are clearly robotic and, on the ipse, dixie of the officials at the Centre. The rights of people of Jammu and Kashmir will continue to be trampled till the time there is a puppet at the helm of affairs. It is the need of the hour for an elected representative to take control of the situation and relay the concerns of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Once the government in Jammu and Kashmir is controlled by the Centre, the interests of People of Jammu and Kashmir will always be secondary. The administrators controlling Jammu and Kashmir neither have the mandate of people nor have any affinity towards them, clearly reflective from their approach to the grievances of people. Political activity therefore is a must.

It is therefore essential for the Civil society members, intellectuals and Political Parties to amplify the grievances of people, through a political process and if possible, approach the Hon’ble Supreme Court and fight for the resumption of 4G services to the entire region of Jammu and Kashmir.

(Soayib Qureshi is an Advocate on Record, Supreme Court of India. Views of the author are personal and not intended to cast aspersions on any person or institution)



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NEP: Don’t discontinue MPhil

The Nation Educational Policy (NEP) which was approved by the union cabinet recently has invited mixed reactions. It may be able to change the course of Indian educational system by introducing to it a modern outlook but the discontinuation of the MPhil degree is a big blow to those who aspire for higher education especially in Kashmir.

With the new National Education Policy’s clause to discontinue the MPhil degree course; securing a research opportunity will become even more daunting for Kashmiri students. Masters students in Kashmir University have little to no research experience. The course isn’t designed to include any research based papers, assignments or projects. One doesn’t even have to submit a dissertation in order to secure a Masters Degree here. There’s no encouragement to develop

research acumen especially in the Humanities and the Social Sciences.

Since, the curriculum does not prepare the students for research; they are expected to have an intermediate degree that will help them bridge the gap of semester oriented studies to a research oriented one. This was supposed to be the utility of an MPhil degree. With its discontinuation, students will now have to look for the foreign counterparts of an MPhil degree and try to gain at least one year of research experience. This will limit opportunities for students from underprivileged backgrounds who will not have the resources to apply abroad.

Some would argue that many other prestigious universities do not have a research based Masters Degree course but Kashmir University is still a special case. It stands out in the sense the education sector has faced major chal-

lenges in the past three decades owing to the political situation in the valley. In addition to a persistent decrease in the number of working days and multiple mass promotions, it is also the mediocre pedagogical structure of higher education that has dented higher education irreparably.

The university has overburdened itself and has closed the doors on quality teaching and learning experience. Only a few years ago, there were a limited number of seats for a Masters degree programme which were allotted to students based on their performance in the University Entrance Test. Recently, this number was increased without taking into account the infrastructure needed to deal with it. A system of dividing students into Morning and Evening shifts was adopted which brought with it many issues as well. It created some sort of a class divide within stu-

dents wherein those studying in evening shifts were looked down upon for securing less marks in the entrance examinations. This also created an unhealthy learning environment in the university and some departments are still trying to deal with it.

Interestingly, while seats have been increased for Masters Courses, those available for a PhD programme have been very limited. The recent advertisements showed no more than 6-8 seats in PhD or MPhil which makes for a very poor ratio with the number of Masters Graduates. If the seats remain limited even after NEP is implemented, where will the huge number of Postgraduate students go?

*Mariya Shawl
Masters in English
from Kashmir University*

Remembering Rahat Indori: The Poet Who Touched Many Hearts in Kashmir

Sanika Athavale

The man had had a stunning 50-year poetic career, and was one of the biggest mushaira stars in the subcontinent. Indori's words had always tickled the conscience and pushed for self-introspection. He had been undoubtedly one of the most loved and popular contemporary Urdu poets in India.

As tributes have been pouring in from all over the world for the celebrity couplet-maker of India, many Kashmiris are hailing him for touching their hearts amidst their dogged distraught state. But the word-smith of 'Mission Kashmir' fame was more than just a distant poet luring the valley with his verses.

ABOUT seven to eight years ago, in an exclusive mushaira (poetry symposium) arranged by the Cultural Forum in Srinagar's Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), Rahat Indori's sharp tongue had aroused resentment in the audience that had just been wooed by his wit and charm a few minutes ago. *"Kashmiriyoon ko apni soch mein tabdeeli laani hogi"* (Kashmiri will need to modify and change their way of thinking), the timeless Indian poet had said while touching upon the contentious topic of the conflict in the Valley.

Zareef Ahmad Zareef, who had been a participant at the symposium, remembered the audience's murmurs of discomfort. "People were disappointed at the frivolous statement the man had made," the valley's prominent poet-historian told Kashmir Observer. "No Kashmiri acquiesced to what Indori had said and some asserted in protest that the establishment needs to be civil for the people to accept it."

Quickly realising his misspoken mistake, the poet had apologised with a clarification. *"I was trying to put forward my point of view, but you're Kashmiris and the real prey of the system. You know better,"* Zareef recollects Indori's response to the live listeners he had upset.

However, continuing in a voice powered by grittiness, astuteness, and enveloped in warmth, poet Indori had later kept inspiring awe from his audience at SKICC.

"That day," Zareef says, "the poet proved that he knew a lot about Kashmir and its history."

As per his memory of the mushaira, Rahat Indori had said: *"Development and progress has only taken place by the virtue of love and passion. Force and oppression has never achieved anything but aggravated the pain of people. If Kashmiris are given their basic rights and due justice, why would they have a problem with India? Didn't they join hands after the Partition, with India? But when Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was jailed in 1953, they began to hate the political establishment in the mainland."*

"There're no two ways about that he was an intellectual for India," Zareef says.

The same witty man who once drew and handled the 'militant mood' in Kashmir breathed his last on August 11, hours after he tweeted about his COVID-19 positive status.

The 70-year-old 'people's poet' had been admitted to Sri Aurobindo Institute of Medical Sciences, Indore, where he passed away after suffering from a cardiac arrest.

The man had had a stunning 50-year poetic career, and was one of the biggest mushaira stars in the subcontinent. Indori's words had always tickled the conscience and pushed for self-introspection. He had been undoubtedly one of the most loved and popular contemporary Urdu poets in India.

"Zulfon ki shayari (poetry of romanticism and beauty) was not really his style," Zareef continues. "His pen always flowed with words reflecting the societal realities of his time. He was *'waqt shenaaz'*, a



'mushaira shayaar', a 'maqbool'."

The late lyricist would perform as if he controlled his audience and he really did, Zareef says. "He belonged to the rare tribe of poets who could churn heart-searching poetry by gauging the vibe of the audience. The old and young, the happy and grumpy, everyone resonated with his shayari. Even if he has passed away, he is immortal. Artists like him will always be immortal."

In recent times, college activists and anti-CAA protestors had used two lines from his poem titled 'Agar khilaf hai, hone do' as a headliner to their ideology of resistance.

"Sabhi ka khoon shaamil hai yahan ki mitti mein, kisi ke baap ka Hindustan thodi hai" (Everyone's blood is mingled in this earth. Hindustan is no one's ancestral property) – were the lines from the poem that decorated posters and banners in the protests that shook India in the months of November and December last year.

Indori had claimed to have written this poem around 35 years ago. "I don't remember the exact year or the context in which it was written," he said in an interview. "I've recited this ghazal at many mushairas and had even forgotten about it, but I don't know what has happened in the last three to four years that like a crop, these words have risen again." He had also reportedly said that he hadn't written this poem 'as a Muslim'.

Indori had also made a powerful display of his understanding of the Kashmir conflict in the poster-world of Bollywood. Through his poetic lyrics for Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *Mission Kashmir* (2000), he had touched a chord with many Kashmiris who identified with his rhymes.

He had also penned down the words for the movie's chart-busting '*Bumbro Bumbro*' song, which was inspired from prominent Kashmiri poet Dina Nath Nadim's iconic original poem of the same name.

His lyrical poem '*Dhuan Dhuan*', which was also used in Chopra's movie, received praise for being sensitive to the Kashmir conflict.

Speaking about how Kashmiris identified with Indori's words, Kashmiri journalist and poet, Rashid Maqbool, says, "The man was someone who we can

call an *awaami shaayar* (people's poet). He had a special style of rendition, choice of words, expressions, and selection of topics. He was fearless and engaging. He would not just perform his poems but bring them alive."

A painter-turned-professor-turned-poet, Indori was known for his sharp-witted one-liners on live stage performances. Before his talent was spotted by the Mumbai film industry, he was a pedagogist of Urdu literature at the Indore University.

Shaakhon se toot jaye, woh pattey nahi hai hum, aandhi se koi keh de, ki aukaat mein rahe

(We aren't the leaves that break away from its branches. Tell the storm to mind itself)

In 2015, during the "award wapsi" movement that took shape in the backdrop of the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, poet Indori had extended his support by saying, "If I had some government award, I would have returned it in protest."

His unique punchlines, delivered with his trademark expressions, were also very popular with TikTok users and those who did not even understand Urdu poetry.

Earlier this year, when the Chinese video-making application was functional in India, his poem "Bula-ti hai magar jane ka nahi" went viral on social media, making him an almost-cult figure among young Urdu/Hindi-speaking people in the subcontinent.

People began using a few lines from the poem for making memes and it continued to trend on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok.

"Late Rahat Indori will be remembered for his free, fair and fearless poetic expressions," Ghulam Nabi Azad, seasoned congressman from J&K, said.

Due to his viral inquilabi poetry and online mushairas, countless souls were actually attached to the late poet, Rashid Maqbool says.

"Poet Indori never took a pro-establishment stand," Maqbool says. "He was always on the other side of the line. Thus, whenever he would talk about honour, self-respect and stubbornness against the elite, it would touch the hearts of Kashmiri. We could always identify with his poetry."

Beirut: Intellectual Capital Of Arab World Bleeds

The blast was the culmination of years of mismanagement and neglect by its elite

Fawaz Turki | Gulf News



Beirut was once the Arab world's most fondly regarded city and arguably its intellectual capital, since the mid-1950s

The city of culture

The city buzzed with the ideas of boots-on-the-ground, Antonio Gramsci "organic intellectuals" anxious to put in their two-cents worth. Bookstores proliferated in every neighbourhood. (One street off

Martyrs Square was lined exclusively with them.) Dozens of newspapers and periodicals, in Arabic, English and French, sold off the ubiquitous news-stands.

Movie theatres were everywhere, featuring both fluff from the US, like Pillow Talk, starring Doris

Day and Rock Hudson, and art-house, New Wave productions from France, like Alain Resnais's Hiroshima Mon Amour.

Heck, you could even splurge on an issue of Cahier du Cinema for 2 Liras — a king's ransom knocked off a teenager's weekly allowance — and later, sitting at Faisal's across from your friends, talk about the work of directors like Goddard, Truffaut and Rivette, showing yourself off as a budding cineaste.

Whichever way you looked, there was constant preoccupation with the life of the mind. It was as if ideas were not a luxury, a frivolous pursuit, but a rigorous need in one's quotidian life.

And it was all, I say, laid-back — zestful, engaging, fun. Beirut was a city so laid-back in those days that when, on July 15, 1958, 1,700 US Marines stormed its beaches, ready for combat, weapons cocked, backed by warships in the Mediterranean — there to save incumbent President Camille Chamoun from being deposed — they encountered, well, Gee, a whole bunch of Beirutis languidly sunbathing on the beach and teenagers in swimsuits playfully offering to help them set up their equipment.

Propulsive Mediterranean rhythm

That was Beirut then, an urbane city that beat with the propulsive rhythm of the Mediterranean Sea, on whose shore it sat, and the timeless resolution of Mount Lebanon, at whose foot it lay. Beirut then was living a belle époque.

But — yes, there's a but — Beirut, like the rest of the country it was a capital of, was overripe with anarchic compulsions, political, class and sectarian compulsions, simmering beneath the garden surface of a belle époque — as those that acted as the backdrop to Europe's own belle époque showed in 1914 — always have a cruel, preordained equifinality to them.

In short, there had been hotness in the blood and the Lebanese people called for it on the streets. By 1975, these folks had turned on each other in an orgy of self-hate that lasted 15 years and left Lebanon's national soul bruised and mortally wounded.

When the dreaded nitrate explosion devastated the city last week, visiting irremediable suffering on its denizens, the Lebanese people's wounds had not yet healed and their broken spirit had not mended from the conflict. It made for a tragedy all the more crushing, not just for the Lebanese people but for all peoples in the Arab world.

— Fawaz Turki is a journalist, lecturer and author based in Washington. He is the author of *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile*



“CLEARLY THE INTEREST WE HAVE BEEN GETTING has exploded,” said J Allen Weston, the executive director of the suburban Denver-based group. “That is really the only way to describe it.”

INTEREST IN HOMESCHOOLING HAS ‘EXPLODED’ AMID CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Agencies

As parents nationwide prepare to help their children with more distance learning, a small but quickly growing number are deciding to take matters entirely into their own hands and begin homeschooling.

Some are worried their districts are unable to offer a strong virtual learning programme. For others who may have been considering homeschooling, concerns for their family's health amid the coronavirus and the on-again, off-again planning for in-person instruction are leading them to part ways with school systems.

Mindy Kroesche, a freelance writer and editor from Lincoln, Nebraska, had been leaning toward homeschooling her 12-year-old son, who has autism and

ADHD diagnoses that made middle school a challenge. But she always felt her 10-year-old daughter was “built for school.” Now with the pandemic raging, she is pulling them both out for the year.

“We just saw that with her wearing a mask for the entire day, that would make learning more difficult for her,” she said. “It was going to be such a different environment. We didn't think it would be as beneficial for her.” Homeschooling applications are surging in states including Nebraska, where they are up 21%, and Vermont, where they are up 75%. In North Carolina, a rush of parents filing notices that they planned to homeschool overwhelmed a government website last month, leaving it temporarily unable to accept applications.

There were about 2.5 million homeschool students last year in

grades K-12 in the US, making up about 3% to 4% of school-age children, according to the National Home Educators Research Institute. Brian Ray, the group's president, is anticipating that their numbers will increase by at least 10%.

“One day the school district says X and four days later they say Y,” Ray said. “And then the governor says another thing and then that changes what the school district can do. And parents and teachers are tired of what appear to be arbitrary and capricious decisions. They are tired of it and saying we are out of here.” Interest in homeschooling materials also has been surging, driven in part by parents who are keeping their children enrolled in schools but looking for ways to supplement distance learning.

The National Home School Association received more than

3,400 requests for information on a single day last month, up from between five and 20 inquiries per day before the coronavirus. The group had to increase the size of its email inbox to keep up.

“Clearly the interest we have been getting has exploded,” said J Allen Weston, the executive director of the suburban Denver-based group. “That is really the only way to describe it.” Some parents in rural parts of Nebraska are turning to homeschooling because staffing and limited access to home internet leave districts unable to offer a virtual learning option, said Kathryn Dillow, president and executive director of Nebraska Home Schools, a support and advocacy group.

Homeschooling applications continue arriving in Nebraska, where the number of homeschoolers already had risen to 3,400 as of

July 14, up from 2,800 at the same time a year ago, said David Jespersen, a spokesman for the Nebraska Department of Education.

Jespersen said there is “a lot of confusion” and that “parents are delayed in making their decision” because so much is changing.

Regardless of the final number, Jespersen doesn't expect that the increase will bust districts' budgets because homeschoolers will still remain a small fraction of about 326,000 students spread over the state's 244 school systems.

Most other states don't have homeschooling numbers, either because they aren't collected at the state level or it's too early. But all indications point to increases across the country.

“Now is when the reality sets in,” said John Edelson, president of Time4Learning, an online curriculum provider, which has seen

business explode. “People have postponed the decision, but we are at this great inflection point. And it is hard to see what the angle is going to be, but it is definitely up.” In Missouri, calls and emails pour into the homeschool advocacy group Families For Home Education each time a district releases its reopening plan, said Charyti Jackson, the group's executive director. She said families are in a “panic” about virtual starts to the year and hybrid plans in which students attend classes parttime and study at home the rest.

“They are asking, ‘What am I supposed to be doing with my children when I am working full time?’” she said.

For the families who only plan to homeschool for a semester or two, some in small groups or pods, her advice is focused on how to make sure students can

transition back to public schooling smoothly when the pandemic ends. That's trickier for students who receive special education services and high schoolers who need to meet their district's graduation requirements.

There also are some indications the exodus to homeschooling could continue well into fall. Christina Rothermel-Branham, a psychology and counseling professor at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, said she is going to attempt remote learning through her local school district for her 6-year-old son. But she said the virtual learning she oversaw in the spring was “very monotonous” and that she plans to switch to homeschooling if the first month goes poorly.

“If there is a lot of stress between the two of us it is probably going to get him pulled out,” she said.

This Is How Parents Can Ensure, Help Kids Eat Well

Agencies

Parent's choice and preferences for sugar, salt in their diet can be a way to understand how the kids develop their food habits, according to a recent study from the University of Oregon.

Young children naturally like sugar and salt in food and develop food preferences based on what their parents serve them, but new research suggests how parents view self-regulation also is a contributing factor.

Food systems with calorie-dense and nutrient-poor meal offerings are a major factor contributing to global obesity and are a major challenge to parents of young children, notes study lead author T. Bettina Cornwell, Phillip H. Knight Chair and head of the Department of Marketing in the University of Oregon's Lundquist College of Business.

The research, published online ahead of print in the Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, explored the underlying



ing dynamics of parental food preferences and how they are passed along to children by example at family mealtime.

“A parent's preference for sugar, fat, and salt in their diet influences the amount of junk food they provide children in a typical week and in turn, this influences the child's preference for sugar, fat, and salt,” Cornwell said.

“We show that regularly providing three- to five-year-old children with junk food influences their preferences for the same tastes. It also makes them less willing to eat vegetables,”

the researcher added.

In the research, the four-member team developed two studies to explore how rigidly set parents are toward strategies of growth, learning, and self-control. These mindsets, or lay theories, underlie everyday ideas about behavior, Cornwell said. At play is how limited or unlimited self-control is seen and whether it is fixed or malleable.

In the first study, researchers used self-report surveys from the parents of 81 preschool children to assess whether the frequency of exposure to junk food helps transmit parental tastes to the children. A solid connection was found, Cornwell said.

The second study dug deeper to see if parents' lay theories influenced how often parents exposed their children to junk food and what their children ate at school. Researchers drew from survey responses from 122 parent-child pairs and direct observations of preschoolers choosing vegetables during their lunchtime.

Again, the researchers identified strong results. Children

who were often exposed to fast and highly processed food at home were less likely to eat vegetables at preschool.

“A parent's preference for sugar, fat, and salt in their diet, as well as their views of self-control, come together to influence their choice to regularly give a child junk food,” Cornwell said.

The researcher added: “Parents with a lower preference for sugar, fat and salt and with a growth mindset regarding developing self-control tend to limit the amount of junk food they provide to their children.”

The overall findings, Cornwell said, are clear: What parents do at home when it comes to meal selection influences the food choices their children make away from home.

Parents, she said, should explore their own beliefs about self-control to understand how they influence their children's developing food preferences. Doing so, she said, may help parents improve their own diets in a way that benefits how their children eat.

Study Reveals How Smokers Are At Hip Fracture Risk

Agencies

Smoking has been linked to a higher risk of bone fracture, but researchers have now identified certain lung-related factors—such as smoking or passive smoke—may help to predict an individual smoker's fracture risks.

“Hip fractures are associated with significant morbidity and mortality in smokers with lung disease, but whether lung-specific factors are associated with fracture risk is unknown,” said study authors from the University of Pittsburgh in the US.

According to the researchers, the goal was to determine whether lung-specific factors are associated with incidents of hip fracture and if they improve risk discrimination of traditional fracture risk models in smokers. The findings were published in the Journal of Bone and Mineral



Research. In the study of 9,187 adults who currently or formerly smoked, there were 361 new hip fractures reported over a median follow-up of 7.4 years. Known risk factors associated with experiencing a hip fracture included older age, female sex, osteoporosis, previous spine and hip fracture, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes. The study suggested that the incorporation of lung-specific risk factors into fracture risk assessment tools may more accurately predict fracture risk in smokers.

“We need to look beyond traditional risk factors when making osteoporosis screening and management decisions in our patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD),” said study lead author Jessica Bon from the University of Pittsburgh.

“A former smoker with frequent COPD exacerbations or significant emphysema on chest CT scan may be at greater risk of fracture than would be expected based on age or sex or other underlying comorbidities alone,” Bon noted.

Study Reveals Drivers Who Keep Windows Down Exposed To 80 Pc More Air Pollution

Agencies

Car users from the world's least affluent cities are exposed to a disproportionate amount of in-car air pollution because they rely heavily on opening their windows for ventilation, finds a first-of-its-kind study from the University of Surrey. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year and nine out of 10 people breathe air with high levels of pollutants.

In a study published by the Sci-

ence of the Total Environment journal, a global team of researchers led by Surrey's Global Centre for Clean Air Research (GCARE) investigated air pollution exposure levels for commuters in 10 different global cities — Dhaka (Bangladesh), Chennai (India), Guangzhou (China), Medellin (Colombia), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Cairo (Egypt), Su- laymaniyah (Iraq), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Blantyre (Malawi), and Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania).

The research team investigated PM2.5 and PM10 exposure levels inside vehicles during peak hours in the morning and evening, as well as off-peak hours in the middle of

the day. The scientists measured how exposure levels changed when drivers used recirculation systems, fans and simply opened the windows. The study discovered that drivers in some of the world's poorest cities experienced higher levels of in-car pollution.

Irrespective of the city and car model used, a windows-open setting showed the highest exposure, followed by fan-on and recirculation. Pollution exposure for windows-open during off-peak hours was 91 per cent and 40 per cent less than morning and evening peak hours, respectively. The study also found that

the windows-open setting exposed car passengers to hotspots of air pollution for up to a third of the total travel length.

The study found that commuters who turn on the recirculation are exposed to around 80 per cent less harmful particles than those who open their car windows. Car cabin filters were more effective in removing pollution than fine particles, suggesting that if new cars had more efficient filters, it could reduce the overall exposure of car commuters.

Professor Prashant Kumar, Director of GCARE at the University of Surrey, said: “To be blunt, we

need as many cars as possible off the road, or more green vehicles to reduce air pollution exposure. This is yet a distant dream in many ODA countries. Air-conditioned cars are unattainable for many poor and vulnerable commuters across the world, but our data is clear and coherent for all 10 participating cities.

“We must now work with our global partners to make sure they have the information needed to put in place programmes, policies and strategies to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and find realistic solutions to these serious problems.”



With no European backing, US goes it alone to renew Iran ban

Agencies

United Nations: As the UN Security Council (UNSC) gears up for a vote on a resolution proposed by the administration of US President Donald Trump to extend an arms embargo on Iran, Washington is increasingly finding itself isolated without even a little help from its European allies.

An opinion piece published by Bloomberg said the Europeans are "disinclined to help the US" at the 15-member Security Council.

"Having needlessly antagonized European leaders from the start of his presidency, Donald Trump cannot now rely on them to back the US in any effort to prevent the Islamic Republic from acquiring powerful new weapons," the report said.

The US has circulated a revised resolution to keep in place a UN arms embargo on Iran, which is set to expire on October 18 under UNSC Resolution 2231 that enshrined the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal.

The Trump administration was forced to water down its first proposal, which required other countries to join the US in sanctioning individuals and entities as well as interdicting cargo to and from Iran.

The new draft is just four paragraphs compared to the original seven-page, 35-para-

graph resolution.

It also calls for the weapons ban on Iran to be extended "until the Security Council decides otherwise."

The Bloomberg piece predicted that Germany, France and Britain "will more than likely back, whether by acclamation or acquiescence, the efforts of China and Russia to sell tanks, missiles and fighter jets" to the Islamic Republic after the embargo expires.

"This would be the diplomatic equivalent to cutting one's nose off to spite one's face. The European leaders will in effect be acting as unpaid agents for Chinese and Russian weapons makers, since their own arms producers will still feel constrained by American sanctions. In exchange for betraying their principles, they'll merely enjoy a measure of Schadenfreude: the sight of the Trump administration's humiliation in the Security Council," it added.

In case of a failure to renew the Iranian arms embargo, the US will likely try to trigger the so-called snapback of the UN sanctions, which had been in place against Iran prior to the nuclear accord's inking.

This is while Washington forfeited its right to invoke the provision in 2018, when it pulled out of the nuclear accord — officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Lebanon parliament approves sweeping powers for the army

Agencies

Beirut: Lebanon's parliament has approved a state of emergency that grants sweeping powers to the army, citing the exceptional circumstances in the country

would enable security forces to crack down on a public raging with anger against the ruling class following the blast.

The huge explosion - one of the biggest non-nuclear blasts in history - was fueled by some



following a massive explosion in Beirut last week.

The cabinet had declared a two-week state of emergency on August 5, the day after the Beirut blast that left at least 200 dead and some 6,000 injured. Parliament on Thursday voted for the emergency declaration eight days in, as is legally required, though it could have also voted it down.

The state of emergency allows the army to curb free speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, as well as to enter homes and arrest anyone deemed a security threat.

Judicial proceedings are to take place in the country's military courts, which Human Rights Watch and other rights groups have shown do not conform to standards on due process.

Rights groups have raised serious concerns about the state of emergency, saying it

2,750 tonnes of dangerous chemicals left in storage at Beirut's port for nearly seven years, with the knowledge of top security and political officials.

'Room for protest'

Citing the "militarization of the state", parliamentarian Osama Saad was the only one out of the 119-member chamber, a reduced number after the resignation of nine MPs since the explosion, to oppose the state of emergency.

Speaker Nabih Berri responded the army had "not taken steps that people fear, nor suppress television [channels] and despite the chaos in the media it did not intervene and left room for protest", according to local media. Sessions are not televised and, therefore, statements by lawmakers are carried by local media.



Trump has left US 'in tatters', Biden and Harris say

Agencies

Washington: Presumptive US Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and running mate Kamala Harris have launched a stinging attack on President Donald Trump, saying he has left the nation "in tatters" as Americans are "crying out for leadership" to overcome the triple crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustice and a ravaged economy.

Making their first appearance as running mates at a Delaware high school, Biden and the newly-minted vice presidential nominee vowed to end Trump's presidency and "rebuild this country."

Harris said, "This is a moment of real consequence for America. Everything we care about, our economy, our health, our children, the kind of country we live in, it's all on the line."

The 55-year-old California senator and a daughter of im-

migrants attacked the US president as an incompetent leader, saying Trump "just isn't up for the job," as the country is at the crossroads.

She said "Trump inherited the longest economic expansion in history from Barack Obama and Joe Biden. And then, he ran the US economy straight into the ground."

"yet we have a president who cares more about himself than the people who elected him," she said.

"The case against Donald Trump and Mike Pence is open and shut," said the former California attorney general as she blasted Trump's "failures of leadership" on containing the coronavirus pandemic.

Harris also tapped into the nationwide protests over racial disparities and police violence, saying "we're experiencing a moral reckoning with racism and systemic injustice that has brought a new coalition of conscience to the streets of our country demand-

ing change."

The first debut of the Democratic duo came as Biden led Trump in most national polls and in swing states like Florida and Wisconsin.

The former vice-president, who will face Trump in November's election, promised that a Biden-Harris administration will do what it takes to "turn the corner on this pandemic."

Biden, 77, announced Harris as his running mate on Tuesday afternoon, thrilling black lawmakers and activists and drawing enthusiasm for the Democratic ticket.

He said, in their first joint appearance on Wednesday, Harris' story as the child of immigrants and a woman of color who fought her way to the top ranks of US legal and political circles would inspire the country.

"Her story's America's story," Biden said. "She's worked hard (and) she's never backed down from a challenge."

Joe Biden raises \$26 mn in 24 hours after Kamala Harris VP announcement

Agencies

Washington: Joe Biden raised \$26 million in the 24 hours after he named Kamala Harris as his running mate, doubling his previous one-day record and signaling enthusiasm among Democrats following the selection of the first Black woman on a major party's presidential ticket.

"It's really palpable, the excitement," Biden said Wednesday.

The campaign hopes the haul is the beginning of a prolific fundraising push in the final stretch before Election Day. Democrats are close to matching, if not surpassing, the massive \$300 million cash stockpile President Donald Trump and Republicans reported in July.

Harris is expected to play a key role in that effort. She joined Biden in Delaware on Wednesday for their first fundraiser together as running mates and talked to grassroots donors about how her parents'

activism inspired her interest in politics.

"This is a campaign that really fuels my hope because it is about knowing that this is fighting for something and not against something and it's fighting for the best we are as a nation," Harris said. "It's fighting for the best of who we can be."

With large in-person events out of the question because of the pandemic, the campaign has an aggressive schedule of online fundraisers planned for Harris. That could play to one of her political strengths and offset an area where Biden has sometimes struggled.

Harris already has a robust network of donors in her native California, a state that has long been referred to as the ATM of the Democratic Party. She can rake in cash from Wall Street. And Harris, who is also of Asian descent, has the potential to bring new money into the Democratic fold because of the historic nature of her candidacy.

"To have someone on the

ticket whose mother is from the south of India is a dream come true," said Swadesh Chatterjee, a businessman from North Carolina who also raises money for political candidates. "You will see more fundraising from the Indian American community."

Lisa Hernandez Gioia, who was a deputy finance director for Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign, called Harris a "fundraiser's dream."

"Donors already have an eagerness," she said. "She adds the star power that will be like an afternoon shot of espresso to the campaign's fundraising."

Before it was clear he would win the Democratic nomination, Biden was never a particularly successful fundraiser. As a longtime senator from Delaware, a small, solidly blue state, he never had to cultivate a national network of donors. And party fundraisers have long grumbled that he lacked the same touch with donors that he has shown when working a rope line.

China Says Frozen Chicken Wings From Brazil Test Positive For Coronavirus

Agencies

Beijing: Consumers in the Chinese city of Shenzhen have been urged to exercise caution when buying imported frozen food after a surface sample of chicken wings from Brazil tested positive for coronavirus, according to a statement from the local government.

The positive sample appears to have been taken from the surface of the meat, while previously reported positive cases from other Chinese cities have been from the surface of packaging on imported frozen

Virus tests of people who have possibly come into contact with the product, and tests of related products, all came back negative, the statement said. Consumers should be cautious when buying imported frozen foods and aquatic products, the government added.

Three packaging samples of imported frozen seafood tested positive for Covid-19 in Yantai, a northern city of China's Shandong province, the city government said on its official Weibo account on Tuesday. State television on



seafood.

The chicken came from an Aurora Alimentos plant in the southern state of Santa Catarina, according to a registration number given in the statement.

Wednesday reported that the outside of an Ecuador frozen shrimp package tested positive for the virus in a restaurant in Wuhu, a city in China's Anhui province.

Google turning phones into earthquake detectors

Agencies

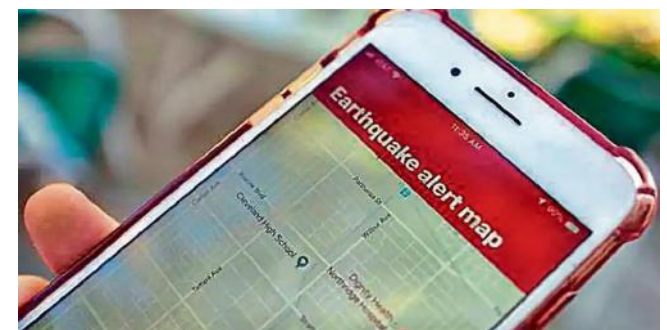
California: Google added an earthquake alert system in California on Tuesday, saying it is working on letting Android-powered smartphones double as tremor detectors.

Android phones will receive warnings triggered by a "ShakeAlert" earthquake early-warning system implemented on the West Coast by

needed," principal software engineer Marc Stogaitis said in a blog post.

People anywhere with smartphones powered by Google's Android operating software were also invited to let handsets be part of a crowd-sourced network for detecting earthquakes.

Smartphones are typically equipped with tiny accelerometers that sense movement



the US Geological Survey and partners.

ShakeAlert uses signals from hundreds of seismometers across the state to trigger warning messages that "an earthquake has begun and shaking is imminent," according to the system's website.

"We saw an opportunity to use Android to provide people with timely, helpful earthquake information when they search, as well as a few seconds warning to get themselves and their loved ones to safety if

and can catch shaking caused by earthquakes, according to Stogaitis. "This means your Android phone can be a mini seismometer, joining millions of other Android phones out there to form the world's largest earthquake detection network," Stogaitis said.

Phones that detect what might be earthquake activity can automatically send a signal to a data centre, where computers quickly determine whether a quake is happening, according to Google.

"Don't Complain, Do Something": What Kamala Harris Learnt From Her Mother

Washington: Taking the center stage of American politics for the first time after becoming the presumptive vice-presidential nominee of the Democratic party, Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris remembered her mother Shyamala Gopalan, saying it was she who taught her not to sit and complain about things during the time of problem but do something to improve it.

Presumptive Democratic party presidential nominee Joe Biden on Tuesday named 55-year-old Harris as his vice presidential running mate, making history by selecting the first black woman to compete on a major party's presidential ticket.

Making her first appearance along with Biden in Wilmington in Delaware, Harris said her mother had a great role in her life.

"My mother, Shyamala, raised my sister Maya and me to believe that it was up to us, and every generation of Americans, to keep on marching. She'd tell us, Don't



sit around and complain about things, do something," Harris during her appearance in Wilmington, Delaware.

Harris, whose father is from Jamaica and mother an Indian, is currently the US Senator from California.

"You know, my mother and father, they came from opposite sides of the world to ar-

rive in America, one from India and the other from Jamaica, in search of a world-class education," she said.

Harris' mother Shyamala was a breast-cancer specialist who emigrated from Tamil Nadu in 1960 to pursue a doctorate in endocrinology at the University of California Berkeley. Father Donald J Harris, who migrated from British Jamaica in 1961, is a Stanford University emeritus professor of economics.

"What brought them together was the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, and that's how they met as students in the streets of Oakland, marching and shouting for this thing called justice, in a struggle that continues today," Harris said.

"And I was part of it. My parents would bring me to protests, strapped tightly in my stroller. And my mother, Shyamala, raised my sister Maya and me to believe that it was up to us, and every generation of Americans, to keep on marching," she said.

Top Muslim Brotherhood leader dies in Cairo prison

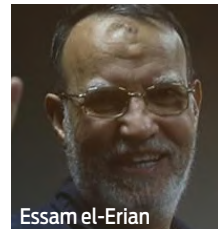
A senior leader of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood movement has died of a heart attack in the notorious Tora Prison in Cairo, Egyptian security sources have said.

Essam el-Erian, who was sentenced to several life sentences following the military coup against Egypt's first democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi, died at the age of 66.

El-Erian had been moved to a prison hospital after suffering a heart attack and died during treatment, two prison sources told Reuters news agency.

"We were informed of his death by prison authorities ... they told us the death was natural," a lawyer representing the Muslim Brotherhood, Abdel Moneim Abdel-Maq-soud, said in a statement to local media.

He said he received a call on Wednesday from the prison authority informing him of el-Erian's death.



"I don't know whether he died in prison or in hospital," he told Anadolu news agency. "I informed his family of his death to start the funeral procedures."

According to Abdul-Maq-soud, he and el-Erian's family have not been able to see him for about six months after the authorities suspended visits to

prisons, claiming a precautionary measure to combat the coronavirus.

El-Erian had complained in previous court sessions of being prevented from treatment and being subjected to medical negligence. Egypt's public prosecutor had no immediate comment.

Relatives of other high-profile Islamist prisoners at Tora had previously raised concerns about their health, saying they were being held in poor conditions without adequate healthcare. Egyptian authorities have denied mistreating prisoners or neglecting their health.

N E W S M A K E R S

Amid Covid, Some Conflict Actors "Sponsor Opportunistic Terror": India At UN

UNITED NATIONS: India at the UN said on Wednesday that some conflict actors are exploiting the current uncertain climate to press their agendas through misinformation and even sponsor opportunistic terrorist attacks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely impacted the initiatives that contribute to peacebuilding and exacerbated conflict situations, India said in a statement at a high-level open debate of the UN Security Council on 'Pandemics and the Challenges of Sustaining Peace'.

"We are in the midst of



ing operations, highlighted that the pandemic has impacted adversely almost all initiatives which usually go on to contribute to peacebuilding.

"In some ways, it has served to exacerbate conflict situations to the extent that we now have to tackle more strife and conflict as well as a growing humanitarian crisis rather than address some of the other important issues relating to peacebuilding.

"This is where our current challenge lies. How do we prioritise between various needs?" it said. India underlined the need for national governments to support and engage local peacebuilders to help design and lead COVID-19 sensitisation and response efforts "to help mitigate further conflict, prevent violence, adapt and sustain peace processes, and rebuild social cohesion."

Also of "vital importance" is that efforts are focused towards preventing a "lapse and relapse" into conflict.

"Poverty and lack of opportunity pose some of the most formidable barriers to sustainable peace. Development is, therefore, critical and should have the attention of the international community," it said.

In the context of the pandemic, India suggested that the immediate focus of the international community should be on ensuring that the humanitarian needs of the community, which are in a conflict, are met so that lack of availability of minimum needs itself does not become a matter of greater conflict.

Further, India underlined that if peacebuilding has to endure then it should rest on institutions and not on individuals.

"Consequently, strengthening of national institutions combined with strengthening of democratic structures should not be compromised in the face of the crisis brought about by the pandemic," the country said, adding that "it is only when institutions are strong, and other factors, like addressing equitably the needs of the conflicted communities and strengthening of human rights, can be effective."

Ram Temple Trust Head Mahant Nritya Gopal Das Tests Positive For Coronavirus

LUCKNOW/MATHURA: The head of the Ram temple trust, Mahant Nritya Gopal Das (80), tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday and was rushed to the Medanta hospital in Gurgaon, officials said.

According to the officials, Das was rushed to the Gurgaon hospital on instructions from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

"A team of doctors tested him for COVID-19 after the district administration was informed in the morning that he was feeling uneasy," Mathura District Magistrate (DM) Sarvagya Ram Mishra said.

He added that the process to identify those who had come in contact with Das in the recent past has started.

Adityanath has spoken to Mishra as also to Dr Naresh Trehan, the chairman and managing director of

the Medanta hospital, and requested for immediate medical attention to Das, the officials said.

Das, who is also the president of the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Nyas, was at the Sri Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura till 1.30 am. He had performed the "abhishek" of the deity at the Bhagwat Bhavan from 11 pm to 1 am, Gopeshwar Nath Chaturvedi, a member of the Sri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan, said, adding that till then, he had not complained about his health.

On August 5, Das shared the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. PTI



A WOMAN in Kashmiri attire at the Full Dress Rehearsal for Independence Day in Srinagar

PM Unveils New Tax Platform, Says Tax Paying To Become Seamless, Painless, Faceless

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched a platform to honour the honest taxpayers of the country. He said that it will be a new milestone in the structural reforms initiated by the government.

"The government is now focusing on making tax-paying seamless, painless, faceless. Faceless as it shouldn't matter who is paying tax and who is tax officer," said PM Modi in his video conference address.

"The 'Transparent Taxation - Honoring The Honest' platform will bring in faceless assessment, faceless appeal, and taxpayers' charter. Faceless assessment & taxpayers charter come in force from today, whereas faceless appeal service will be available from September 25," PM Modi said.

"The taxpayer will now be given the respect they deserve. The taxpayer will now be trusted, not



looked at with doubt. The (tax) department will have to carry out the steps and processes in a time-bound manner," PM Modi said.

Asking people to pay taxes due to them, Modi said while it is the responsibility of tax officers to deal

with taxpayers with dignity, people should also consider paying taxes as their responsibility.

Fundamental reforms were needed in Indian tax system, he said, adding India is among the nations with lowest corporate tax rates.

The Budget for fiscal 2021 had announced a "taxpayer charter", which is expected to have statutory status and will empower citizens by ensuring time-bound services by the Income Tax Department. This has come into effect now.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes or CBDT has carried out several major tax reforms in direct taxes in the recent years, the statement pointed out. Last year, corporate tax rates were reduced from 30 per cent to 22 per cent, and for new manufacturing units, the rates were reduced to 15 per cent. Dividend distribution tax was abolished.

Supreme Court Allows Prashant Bhushan, Others To Withdraw Plea On Contempt Law

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Thursday allowed former Union minister Arun Shourie, veteran journalist N Ram and activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan to withdraw their plea challenging the constitutional validity of a legal provision dealing with criminal contempt.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra was informed by senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, who was representing the petitioners, that they want to withdraw the plea as several petitions on the same issue are pending before the apex court and they don't want "this to be entangled" with them.

The bench, also comprising Justices BR Gavai and Krishna Murari, allowed the petition to be withdrawn with liberty to the petitioners to approach the appropriate judicial forum, except the apex court.

During the brief hearing conducted through video-conferencing, Dhavan said that at this stage the petitioners want to withdraw the plea with liberty to approach the top court again, maybe after two months.

The petitioners had challenged the constitutional validity of a legal provision dealing with criminal contempt for "scandalizing the court", saying it was violative of freedom of speech and right to equality.

Earlier, on August 8, a reliable official source had said that the apex court administration had called for an explanation from officials concerned over the listing of the plea for hearing on August 10 before another bench of the top court com-



prising Justices D Y Chandrachud and KM Joseph.

However, on the same day, the matter was dropped from the list of business.

Later, the matter was listed for hearing before a bench headed by Justice Mishra, who is already dealing with two separate contempt cases against Bhushan.

The top court sources had said that along with the fresh petition, Shourie, Ram and Bhushan also moved an application seeking stay on the proceedings in the two contempt cases pending against the activist lawyer.

"It is a cardinal principle of law that a coordinate bench cannot stay the proceedings or on-going cases which are pending before other similar bench. This would have created a problem as one court cannot stay the proceedings of other court having the same jurisdiction," the source had said on August 10.

The petition had challenged the validity of Section 2(1)(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 as being vague, unconstitutional and incompatible with the basic features of the Constitution.

The provision defines what constitutes criminal contempt and says that if by way of publication of words, the dignity of the courts is lowered and if they scandalize the courts then the offence of contempt of court is deemed to have been committed.

The petition alleged the provision violated the freedom of speech and expression.

The filing of the plea challenging the validity of the provision assumed significance in view of the fact that a bench headed by Justice Mishra on July 22 had issued a show cause notice to Bhushan after taking note of a petition urging it to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against him for his alleged tweets against the judiciary.

The apex court had on August 5 reserved its verdict on the suo motu contempt case against Bhushan.

The top court is also seized of another criminal contempt case against Bhushan which was initiated in 2009 over his alleged comments against former CJs in an interview given to a magazine.

The top court on August 10 had said further hearing was required in the 2009 criminal contempt case against Bhushan and journalist Tarun Tejpal to examine whether comments on "corruption" against judges per se amounted to contempt or not.

Zydus Cadila Launches Cheapest Remdesivir In India

Drug firm Zydus Cadila on Thursday said it has launched Remdesivir under the brand name Remdac, used to treat patients suffering from severe symptoms of COVID-19, in the Indian market. Priced at Rs 2,800 per 100 mg vial, Remdac is the most economical Remdesivir brand in India, Zydus Cadila said in a regulatory filing.

The company said the drug will be made available across India through the group's strong distribution chain reaching out to government and private hospitals treating COVID-19 patients. "Remdac is the most affordable drug as we would like to enable patients to have access to this critical drug in the treatment of COVID-19," Cadila Healthcare Managing Director Dr Sharvil Patel said.

Through the course of this pandemic, the company's efforts have been focused on supporting people in this healthcare crisis, whether it is through developing vaccines, ramping up production and distribution of critical drugs and therapies, making diagnostic tests available or exploring new treatment options, Patel added.

In June this year, Zydus had entered into a non-exclusive agreement with Gilead Sci-

ences Inc to manufacture and sell Remdesivir, the investigational drug, which has been issued an emergency use authorisation by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to treat patients suffering from severe symptoms of COVID-19.



The active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) for the drug has been developed and manufactured at the group's API manufacturing facilities in Gujarat. Zydus Cadila's vaccine candidate ZyCoV-D is now in phase II of the clinical trials.

Shares of Cadila Healthcare, the listed entity of the group, were trading at Rs 387 apiece on BSE, 0.44 per cent higher against their previous close.

REMDAC IS THE MOST AFFORDABLE drug as we would like to enable patients to have access to this critical drug in the treatment of COVID-19," Cadila Healthcare Managing Director Dr Sharvil Patel said.

Setting An Example Of Communal Amity, Muslims Form Human Chain To Protect Temple



BENGALURU: Youth, including those from a minority community, decided to protect a temple when a mob was going on a rampage here after being irked over a social media post on an allegedly communally sensitive issue.

A video of the youth quickly forming the human chain to protect the Hanuman temple on Shampura Main Road has gone viral, even as the mob was indulging in arson.

The human chain was formed on Tuesday night as a result of some quick thinking while violence sent shock waves across DJ Halli, KG Halli and neighbouring areas of Pulakeshinagar.

"We saw the rioters coming in groups towards the temple and their intention seemed to damage it. Then we decided to form a human chain to protect it," a youth who wished not to be named, said.

He expressed fear that any damage to the temple

could have complicated things further.

On Tuesday night, a mob had gone on the rampage at Pulakeshinagar irked over the social media post allegedly put out by a Congress legislator's relative, with the government terming the violence as a well-planned act.

Three persons were killed when police opened fire to quell the mob and scores of others, including over 50 police personnel, sustained injuries in the violence that stretched till the wee hours of Wednesday.

The mob had set on fire the DJ Halli Police Station, besides damaging Pulakeshinagar Congress MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy's property for his nephew Naveen had allegedly posted some objectionable content in the social media about a week ago.

State Revenue Minister R Ashoka had dubbed the violence pre-planned with an intention to spread it in other parts of the city. Naveen has also been arrested.

NEWS MAKERS

28-Year-Old UP Man Bludgeoned Father To Death For Snoring



PILIBHIT (UTTAR PRADESH): Did all work and no sleep lead to a case of patricide?

A 28-year-old man in Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit district has killed his father for disturbing his peaceful slumber with his snoring.

Naveen, the elder son of Ram Swarup, apparently bludgeoned his father's head in with a club when he began snoring. The

65-year-old victim was rushed to the Purnapur community health centre where doctors declared him brought dead. His body was sent for post-mortem.

Naveen has been arrested by the police after Manoj filed a written complaint against his elder brother. The accused has been booked under Section 302 (murder) of IPC.

According to reports, the incident took place in Sondha village on Tuesday night. Manoj was at his maternal uncle's house with his mother on the night of the incident.

Seramau North SHO Pushkar Singh said that the accused was known to abuse and physically assault his father for his snoring habit. IANS

Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan are expecting their second child



Ever since Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan's little one stepped into the world, the media has been obsessed with Taimur Ali Khan, giving the little prince true royal status.

The star parents have once again, announced that they are expecting their second child.

"We are very pleased to announce that we are expecting an addition to our family! Thank you to all our well wishers for all their love and support. Saif and Kareena," read their official statement.

Since then, social media too, has been celebrating, in a way it knows best - through memes!

Modi Longest Serving Non-Congress PM

Narendra Modi has become the longest serving non-Congress prime minister and the fourth longest serving overall, the party noted on Thursday.

"Today, PM Narendra Modi becomes the fourth longest serving PM in the history of India! He now also holds the distinction of being the longest serving non-Congress PM. Vajpayee ji served for 2,268 days, with all his terms put together. Today PM Modi has surpassed that duration," BJP IT department in-charge Amit Malviya tweeted.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Manmohan Singh, all from the Congress, are the three longest serving Indian prime minister in that order.





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