

Maximum : 28°C
Minimum : 16°C
Humidity : 67%
SUNSET Today 06:50 PM
SUNRISE Tomorrow 06:08 AM

News Digest

3 Killed In Twin Highway Accidents

Banihal- Three people were killed and two others injured on Saturday when two Kashmir-bound load carriers skidded off the road and plunged into a gorge along Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in Ramban district, police said. A mini load carrier, carrying poultry birds to Kashmir, rolled down into about 400-feet gorge near Digdole, at 4.40 am, killing 32-year-old driver Roof Ahmad and a co-passenger Mohammad Usman, a police official said. He said a large number of chicken also perished in the accident. Bodies of both the deceased, hailing from Magerkote village of Ramsoo, were recovered and handed over to their families for last rites after completion of legal formalities, the official said. In another accident, a goods-laden truck plunged into over 100-feet gorge at Chamalwas near Banihal, resulting in the death of a 19-year-old youth and injuries to two others, including the driver. The truck was also on ● P-02

Four People Injured In Bear Attack

Srinagar: At least four people on Saturday were attacked and injured by a bear in Lolab area of north Kashmir's Kupwara district. According to reports, a bear appeared in Lalpora village of Lolab on Saturday afternoon and attacked and injured four people before the Wildlife Department officials assisted by locals were able to tranquilize the beast. Two of the injured identified as Faisal Ahmad Ganale of Darpora and Sajad Ahmad Mir of Lalpora received injuries in face and foot and were hospitalised. The other two persons have received minor injuries and were discharged after receiving first-aid treatment, reports said.

Man Plots Murder Of His Wife To Remarry

Jammu: A man was arrested for allegedly plotting the murder of his wife to get married for the second time in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Saturday. Shanaz Akhtar was stabbed to death inside her house at village Mohra in the border district on August 30 and the roles of her husband Zulfiqar Ali and his helper Mohammad Aslam were under suspicion, Senior Superintendent of Police, Rajouri, Chandan Kohli said. "During investigation, it came to the fore that Ali told the helper of his vehicle (Aslam) that he wants to marry for the second time and assured him a handsome amount of money in helping his wife get killed," he said. After hatching the conspiracy, the SSP said it also came to light that the woman was stabbed with a knife by Aslam in presence of her husband. Both the accused have been arrested and further investigation into the matter is on, the officer said.

Minor Boy Dies Of Drowning

Srinagar: A minor boy on Saturday died of drowning in the interiors of Dal Lake in Rainawari area of the city. Six-year-old Ibrahim Ahmad Sheikh drowned in the interiors of Dal Lake at Dug Mohalla area of Rainawari in Srinagar on Saturday, an official said. He was taken out of the river and shifted to Gousia Hospital Khanyar where doctors declared him brought dead on arrival, he said.

Indian, Chinese Defence Minister Talks Remain Inconclusive

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: As the situation in eastern Ladakh remains tense, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has conveyed to his Chinese counterpart Gen. Wei Fenghe that China must strictly respect the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and not make attempts to unilaterally change its status quo.

In the first highest level face-to-face contact between the two sides after border tension erupted in eastern Ladakh in early May, Singh told Wei during their talks in Moscow on Friday that China must work with the Indian side for complete disengagement of troops at the earliest from all friction points including Pangong Lake.

Asserting that India is determined to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, Singh also conveyed that China's actions amassing a large number of troops, its aggressive behaviour and attempts to alter the status quo in Ladakh were in



Chinese Army 'Abducts' 5 Villagers

Amid the border tension between India and China, five people from Upper Subansiri district have reportedly been 'abducted' by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). Five persons belonging to the Tagin community ● P-02

Ladakh Situation 'Very Nasty': Trump

Describing the situation along the India-China border as 'very nasty', US President Donald Trump has said that the Chinese are "going at it much more strongly" than a lot of people understand and he would "love" ● P-02

violation of bilateral pacts, according to an official statement released here on Saturday.

Singh conveyed to Wei that the current situation should be handled responsibly ►PAGE 02

Encounter Rages On In Kupwara Woods

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR- An encounter broke out between state forces and militants on Saturday in a forest area in north Kashmir's Kupwara district, police said.

Acting on specific information about the presence of militants in the forest area of Dana Behak in Warnow area of north Kashmir, state forces launched a cordon and search operation there, a police official said.

He said during the searches, the militants fired on the forces, who retaliated, ensuing an encounter.

The exchange of firing is going on and further details are awaited, the official said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Kupwara, Shriram Am-

Hizb Trying To Reestablish Its Base In North Kashmir: Army

Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) is trying to re-establish its base in north Kashmir, the Army said on Saturday, a day after three militants of the outfit were killed ● P-02

barkar was quoted by a local news agency KNO as saying that more reinforcement have been rushed to the spot and the operation will continue throughout the night.

He also refuted the rumors about the killing of a ►PAGE 02

Ease Of Doing Business Ranking

J&K Fails Again To Figure Among Top 20 States, UTs

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu & Kashmir has yet again failed to figure among top 20 States/ Union territories in the ease of doing business ranking released by the Government of India on Saturday.

According to the state business reform action plan ranking-2019 released by Union Commerce and Industry ministry, J&K figures at 21st slot in the ease of doing business ranking.

This means Jammu & Kashmir has failed to make much



File Photo

improvement in the ranking despite tall claims by state's bureaucrats that they have minimized the regulatory burden and simplified procedures for doing business.

In 2018, J&K had figured at 22nd position among 36 States/ UTs in the ranking. Interestingly, all the neighbouring states/UTs figure much above than J&K in the ranking.

According to the ranking, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana Punjab figures at 7th, 12th, 16th and 19th position, respectively.

The hill states like HP and Uttarakhand, which have similar geographical features like Jammu and Kashmir, have shown impressive performance and figure at 7th and 11th position, respectively. ►PAGE 02

Kashmir Can't Be Removed From UN Agenda: Pak

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday said that the "India-Pakistan question" will remain a part of the United Nation Security Council's agenda till the people of the valley are granted an "impartial plebiscite".

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a series of tweets, said that the resolution over Kashmir is one of the oldest items on the UNSC's agenda.

"The question remains on the agenda since India has never implemented UNSC resolutions on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute," the ministry said.

The statement highlighted that India continues to deny Kashmiris' inalienable right to self-determination enshrined in ● P-02

J&K Govt Issues 12.44 Lakh Domicile Certificates

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government said on Saturday that 12.44 lakh domicile certificates have been issued across 20 districts of the Union territory till the end of August.

According to an official spokesperson, 17, 18,887 lakh applied for the issuance of the certificates of which 12, 43,996 were issued the domicile till August 31 with two-thirds of them issued within seven to 15 days. He said the certificates issued include 2.86 lakh in Kashmir division and 9.45 lakh in Jammu division. ● P-02

...LOC HEATS UP

Pak Firing Kills Soldier, Injures 2 Others

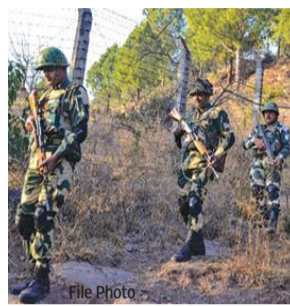
Srinagar: A soldier was killed and two others injured on Saturday as India and Pakistan troops exchanged heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kupwara district.

Sepoy Bupinder Singh was killed while his two colleagues Lance Naik Venkatesh and Sepoy Shajal were injured on Saturday afternoon when Pakistani troops attacked their posts in Naugam sector of the frontier district, officials said. The injured soldiers, he said were removed to the army's Badamibagh cantonment hospital for treatment.

The Indian army, officials said gave a "befitting" answer to the ceasefire violation by the Pakistani troops.

Defence ministry spokesman Col Rajesh Kalia told news gathering agency GNS that details of the cross-LoC clash were awaited.

Meanwhile, Pakistani troops engaged in firing and intense mortar shelling in three sectors



File Photo

along the LoC in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said.

The firing and shelling from across the border in Shahpur, Kirni and Degwar sectors started around 9.15 am.

Indian Army personnel guarding the LoC gave a strong and befitting response to the cross-border fire, the spokesman said.

He said the exchange of fire was going on when last reports were received. There was no report of any casualty on the Indian side, the spokesman said.

Two Hizb Men Found Dead In Gurez

The state forces on Saturday recovered bodies of two Hizbul Mujahideen militants from Kishanganga River near the Line of Control (LoC) in Gurez Sector of Bandipora district. The bodies of Nisar Ahmad Rather from Dadsara village of Tral and Sameer Ahmad Dar from Dogripora village in Pulwama were found by the police and army along with ammunition at Tulail village in the frontier area, a police ● P-02

Carjacking Triggers Alert On Jammu Highway

JAMMU: All checkpoints along Jammu-Pathankot highway have been put on alert and security strengthened following an incident of carjacking by unidentified armed persons in the neighbouring Punjab, a police official said on Saturday.

The director general of Punjab Police had sounded an alert in his state, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir after three persons snatched a private car from its owner after injuring him with a firearm in Dinanagar area of Gurdaspur on Friday evening.

"After receipt of communication from the Punjab DGP, all the checkpoints have been alerted and security strengthened as a preventive measure to deal with any situation," the police official said.

He said the patrolling in the areas bordering Punjab was also intensified during the night. ● P-02

LG Sinha Inaugurates SCERT

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday inaugurated the State Council of Education, Research and Training (SCERT) on the lines of NCERT to assist the administration in implementing policies for human resource development, an official spokesperson said.

The LG also announced union territory-level awards for the teaching fraternity in Jammu and Kashmir from next year.

In an online event, the LG, while addressing scores of teachers and students from across the union territory, greeted the teaching fraternity on the occasion of Teachers' Day, which is ● P-02

In FOCUS Kashmir's Banned Stones—Part II: Penalties, Nexuses And Costly Homes

Sanika Athavale

After Kashmir witnessed mass socio-political detentions and a total political reshuffle in August 2019, works that were never finished, half finished, or nearly finished in the former state's offices were brusquely shifted to New Delhi and the eager stone miners' wait for their clearances got longer amid complicated red-tapism.

The pandemic and the suspension of 'normal' since the outbreak of Covid-19 has further stretched the sarkari offices' working timelines,

that the common citizenry already mocks for being sloth-paced.

As it has been established that none of the stone-quarry holders have been successful in procuring environmental clearances yet, it's understood that no mine has had the permission to operate. Legally.

But, on the contrary, government officers from departments overlooking civil works, planning, and infrastructure have been pulling up contractors for not completing tendered jobs.

"It's baffling," remarked Zeeshan Rehman, the acting chairperson of the Senior Contractors Coordination Committee (J&K).

"After raising my issue of non-availability of raw materials," he continued, narrating his own experience, "I received official permission to ply tippers. But what good is that? I may rent and drive a tipper around, but where will I get my 'aggregate' from?"

Shafeeq Hussain Bhat, a self-employed tipper driver, confirmed that in spite of a ban on the extraction of stones, quarries are operating because of high demand from official quarters.

Unassociated with the mines and their legal problems, he brings his vehicle to the road whenever he gets an order.

He loads the aggregate, what he



File Photo

calls 'maal', onto his lorry after paying the quarry, and delivers it to its fi-

nal destination where he receives his payment from the civil contractors.

Many "royalty-hunters" have caught him and his peers since their covert trips began. "They seize our vehicles - only to be released as per the whims of the police officials, and fine us anything between Rs 15,000 and 30,000."

He said that he lost about one lakh rupees in such penalties since last year's SRO-powered ban.

"On a good day," Bhat continued, "I earn anywhere between Rs 1500 and 2000. My troubles are very serious. There're about 700 tippers in northern belt of Pampore - where I come from. They're all in very deep stress."

He has understood, from the

changes in the industry's modus operandi, that the 'royalty system' has stopped and a new model of 'penalties' has been put in its place.

Unsorting the clutter of the new process, while trying to explain it, he said, "They're not taking royalties anymore. That system was straightforward. I had receipts that let me proceed with my trips. The miners are ready to pay their royalties like they've been for so many years."

But the authorities, he said, are not ready to operate like that anymore for reasons best known to them.

"The government," Bhat informed, "has banned stone crushers but is ironically demanding the completion of civil tenders with a ban on the production of the raw material. Hence, like this, we are ►PAGE 02

From Front page...

Congress Demands High-Level Probe Into Temple 'Land Grabbing' Attempt In Jammu

JAMMU: The Congress in Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday demanded a high-level probe into alleged attempts by the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) to grab prime land of an ancient and historic temple in the heart of the city.

It also sought sacking of JMC Mayor Chander Mohan Gupta and registration of an FIR in the case.

The case came to light after Suresh Kumar Sharma, a retired district and sessions judge, recently approached the local court to restrain the BJP-led JMC from grabbing the prime piece of land of PanchvaktraMahadev temple.

Sharma, who was appointed as the caretaker of the temple by the J&K High Court in December 2008, said the JMC has fraudulently claimed that the temple's property belonged to it and subsequently, the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) in joint collaboration with the JMC invited

bids for multilevel car parking system and commercial complex at the property of the temple.

We demand registration of an FIR and a high-level probe into the temple land grabbing case besides sacking of the JMC mayor, the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) said.

A group of the party's senior leaders led by vice-president Raman Bhalla visited the temple complex where they staged a sit-in along with Sharma and other members of the temple management.

The expose has hurt the religious sentiments of the people because PanchvaktraMahadev temple is the most revered shrine of Jammu province.

It appears that the BJP leaders, who are managing JMC affairs, have joined hands with influential land-mafia to grab the temple's land in the name of constructing a parking lot," the party said.

Meanwhile, the Vishwa Hindu

Parishad (VHP) said the matter raised by the caretaker of the historic temple is a very grave misconduct and demanded clarification into initiation of tendering process without the consent of the temple management.

Now that the tender stands withdrawn by the NHIDCL on September 3, it is demanded that NHIDCL and Jammu Development Authority should clarify how they initiated tendering process without taking a formal consent from the temple property caretaker, Working President of VHP, J&K, Rajesh Gupta said.

He said the caretaker of temple property and devotees associated with the temple are apprehensive of some nefarious plan by some influential people to grab temple land for ulterior motives under the garb of this project.

VHP stands by their apprehension and warns the authorities from taking up any such move and seeks all details of this project to be made public, he said.

Hazratnizamuddin Dargah To Reopen From Today

NEW DELHI: The famous HazratNizamuddinDargah here will open after over five months on Sunday, but there will be no Qawwali evenings at the shrine due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the dargah's caretakers said.

Safety measures like use of sanitisers and face covers as well as social distancing will be strictly followed at the dargah of Sufi saint Hazrat-Nizmuddin, which was closed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, they said.

"We have also covered the

graves of HazaratNizamuddinAulia and Amir Khusro (in the dargah complex) with plastic sheets so that people do not touch them while paying obeisance, as it could lead to people getting infected with the virus," NazimNizami, one of the caretakers of the shrine, said.

The entry and exit points of the dargah will be separate, and markings have been made on the floor to ensure social distancing by devotees, he said.

"We will also deploy men at the gates of the dargah to en-

sure that people enter wearing face covers," Nizami said.

Two big sanitiser dispensers have been installed at the main entrance of the dargah. Small dispensers and sanitiser bottles have been kept in the premises for devotees.

"In view of the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Qawwali evenings which are hugely famous among followers of the sufi saint will not be held for the time being. We will ensure that people do not sit in the courtyard of the dargah as they used to do before, and leave after pay-

ing obeisance," Nizami said.

He said that crowd management at the shrine will be further improved after assessing the footfall in the coming days.

The dargah located in HazaratNizamuddin area of south Delhi was closed with the announcement of COVID-19-induced lockdown in March.

Under the 'Unlock' process, religious places in Delhi started opening after June 8, but the dargah remained closed due to increase in COVID-19 cases, caretakers of the shrine said.

Sushant Case: NCB Arrests Late Actor's Personal Staff Member

MUMBAI: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday arrested DipeshSawant, a member of Sushant Singh Rajput's personal staff, in connection with a drugs probe linked to the actor's death, officials said.

The NCB said with the latest action, the total number of arrested in this "ongoing investigation" has risen to seven.

They said Sawant, who was being interrogated since 10 PM last night, has been arrested under sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act around 8 PM on Saturday.

"He was subjected to interrogation and confrontation with ShowikChakraborty, Samuel Miranda, ZaidVilatra and Kai-

zan Ibrahim.

"His statement was recorded under section 67 of the NDPS Act and on the basis of enough corroborative evidence, he (Sawant) has been placed under arrest," a senior NCB officer said.

Sawant will be produced before the local Esplanade court at 11 AM on Sunday, he said. "His role is same as that of

Samuel Miranda that was to procure and handle (drugs). Sawant has some corroborative evidence which we need for further cross examination (of other accused)," NCB Deputy Director (operations) K P S Malhotra told reporters outside the agency's office.

A senior NCB officer had earlier said Sawant's role was that of a "witness" in the case.

Indian, Chinese Defence...

and that neither side take any further action that could either complicate or escalate matters, it said.

The statement said Singh advised it was important that the Chinese side strictly respect the LAC and should not make attempts to unilaterally change the status quo.

"The two ministers had frank and in-depth discussions about the developments in the India-China border areas as well as on India-China relations," said the statement released by both the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defence.

Singh conveyed that the two sides should continue their discussions, including through diplomatic and military channels, to ensure complete disengagement and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquility along the LAC at the earliest, it said.

The statement said the Chinese Defence Minister also conveyed that China too desired to resolve the issues peacefully.

The talks in the Russian capital, lasting two hours and 20 minutes, took place days after tensions flared up again in eastern Ladakh after China unsuccessfully attempted to occupy Indian territory in the southern bank of Pangong lake when the two sides were engaged in diplomatic and military talks to resolve the four-month-old border row.

Following the fresh confrontation, India occupied a number of strategic heights on the southern bank of Pangong lake and strengthened its presence in Finger 2 and Finger 3 areas in the region. China has strongly objected to India's move. However, India has maintained that the strategic heights are on its side of the LAC.

"The defence minister categorically conveyed India's position on the developments along the LAC including in the Galwan valley in the Western Sector of the India-China Border areas in the last few months," the statement said.

"He emphasised that the actions of the Chinese troops, including amassing a large number of troops, their aggressive behaviour and attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo were in violation of the bilateral agreements and not in keeping with the understandings reached between the Special Representatives of the two sides," it added.

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held over two-hour talks on July 5 following escalation in border tension triggered by fierce clashes in Galwan Valley on June 15 in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35. At the talks with Wei, Singh also clearly stated that while the Indian troops had always taken a very responsible approach towards border management, but at the same time there should be no doubt about "our determination to protect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

In a reference to the outcome of the two informal summits between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2018 and 2019, Singh said both sides should take guidance from the consensus by the leaders that maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas was essential for further development of ties and the two sides should not allow differences to become disputes.

Wei said that both sides should "scrupulously implement the consensus reached between Modi and Xi and continue to solve the issues through dialogue and consultation, strictly follow the various bilateral agreements, strengthen the regulation of frontline troops and not undertake any provocative actions that might escalate the situation," according to the statement.

"The two sides should focus on the overall situation of India-China relations and work together to de-escalate the situation as soon as possible, and maintain peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas. The Chinese defence minister suggested that both sides should maintain communication at all levels including between the two ministers," the statement added.

In Beijing, a statement released by the Chinese Defence ministry said Wei told Singh that recently the relations between the two countries and the two militaries have been seriously affected by the border issue, and it is very important for the two defence ministers to have a face-to-face and candid exchange of views on relevant issues.

Gen. Wei also claimed that the responsibility for the border standoff lies "entirely" with the Indian side, adding not an inch of China's territory should be lost, the statement said.

The Chinese military has the resolve, capability and confidence to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, it added.

Chinese Army ‘Abducts’ 5...

were abducted from the jungle near Nacho while they were out hunting, informed one of the relatives of the abducted persons here on Friday.

The villagers who have reportedly been abducted are Toch Singkam, Prasat Ringling, Dongtu Ebiya, Tanu Baker and Ngaru Diru. Two other villagers who had accompanied the abducted persons and managed to escape narrated the incident before the public. However, the relatives have not yet made any communication with the Indian Army regarding the incident.

The incident has created panic among the villagers of Nacho.

The victims' relatives residing here said they will be leaving for Nacho on Saturday morning to discuss with the army officials and ascertain the incident.

The family members and relatives have appealed to the authorities concerned to take serious note of the incident and initiate steps to bring the five back to the country.

No further information had been received from the army officials and the district administration at the time of filing this report.

Ladakh Situation ‘Very...

to get involved and help" ease the tension.

Indian and Chinese troops are engaged in a bitter standoff in multiple places in eastern Ladakh for four months. Tensions flared up again in the region after China unsuccessfully attempted to occupy Indian ter-

ritory in the southern bank of the Pangong lake six days ago when the two sides were engaged in diplomatic and military talks to resolve the border row.

"While we're at it, we're talking about China and India are going at it pretty good on the border, as you know. It's been very nasty, Trump told reporters on Friday at a White House news conference in response to a question on Indian-Americans and the US-India relationship. Trump reiterated that he is talking to both India and China about the situation.

And we stand ready to help with respect to China and India. If we can do anything, we would love to get involved and help. And we are talking to both countries about that, he said.

His comments came on a day when Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held talks with his Chinese counterpart Gen. Wei Fenghe in Moscow with a focus on easing escalating border tension in eastern Ladakh. They met on the sidelines of a meeting of the defence ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

When asked if China is bullying India, he said that he hoped it is not the case but noted that China is "certainly going at it".

I hope not... But they (China) are certainly going at it. They are going at it much more strongly than a lot of people even understand, Trump said in response to a question.

Kashmir Can’t Be Removed...

UNSC Resolutions.

"India-Pakistan question" will remain on the agenda of UNSC until Kashmiris are granted their inherent right to self-determination through a free & impartial plebiscite under UN auspices as guaranteed to them by the relevant #UNSC Resolutions," it said.

The statement by Pakistan comes three days after India asked UN to remove permanently the issue of Jammu and Kashmir under the outdated agenda item of the India-Pakistan question' from the Security Council's agenda, saying such "irrational exuberance" has no takers in a dignified world.

The item was first inscribed on the agenda of the UN body in its formal meeting on Jan 20, 1948, and since then the council has adopted 16 resolutions on the valley.

J&K Govt Issues 12.44 Lakh...

"The domicile certificates issued to the Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) holders include over 8.56 lakh in Jammu division and around 2.39 lakh in Kashmir division," the official spokesperson said.

Of the total applications received till August-end across the UT, he said over 4.58 lakh are pending, including 3.46 lakh in Jammu division and 0.88 lakh in Kashmir Division.

The process of issuing domicile certificates in the Union territory was started in the last week of June, 2020.

The application for the issuing of the domicile certificate can be submitted in tehsildar offices, even as eligible persons can also apply online.

"The online facility has also been made available to avoid gatherings in view of Covid-19," the official spokesperson added.

Two Hizb Men Found Dead...

officer said. The duo, he said might have died of drowning while crossing the river.

He said that both of them were affiliated with Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.

"While Nisar was missing since February 2018, the whereabouts of other was unknown from March 2019," the officer said.

He said Nissar's Adhaar card was also recovered.

Meanwhile, police have registered a case and started further investigation in this regard.

Encounter Rages On...

militant in the ongoing operation.

"There is no fresh update from the spot while more reinforcement has been rushed and the searches will continue during the night", he said.

Hizb Trying To Reestablish...

in an encounter with state forces in Baramulla district.

Addressing a joint press conference with Deputy Inspector General of Police (North Kashmir Range) Muhammad Sulaiman Choudhary at Pattan, Commander 10 Sector of the Rashtriya Rifles of the Army Brigadier N K Mishra said it was after a long gap that militants belonging to the HM were killed in north Kashmir where, in the recent years, only the ultras from Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad had been neutralised.

"The activity of the HM outfit was very less here (in north Kashmir). It seems that Hizbul is trying to re-establish its base in north Kashmir," the Army officer said.

However, he said the state forces were alert and ready to foil all the plans of the outfit aimed at its revival in the north Kashmir.

"If anyone (among the militants) wishes to join the mainstream, they are always welcome, but if anyone wants to become a militant, he will not be given any opportunity," Brigadier Mishra said. The DIG North Kashmir Range said the three militants killed on Friday in Yeddipora area of Pattan in north Kashmir's Baramulla district were affiliated with the HM outfit.

"Two of the slain militants were locals and were identified as Shafkat Ali Khan of Rawatpora, Delina and Hanan Bilal Sofi of old town Baramulla. The identity of the third one is being ascertained," he said. Choudhary said two AK-47 rifles, four magazines, one pistol and two pistol magazines, besides incriminating matter, were seized from the site of the encounter.

He said the militants were hiding in a house, holding 12 civilians, including children, hostage. The Army officer said that the operation was a deliberate one as the first priority was to evacuate the civilians.

An Army Major and two Special Police Officers (SPOs) of J-K Police were injured in the gun-battle, but their condition is said to be stable.

17 More Covid-19 Deaths...

bilateral community acquired pneumonia, the doctor said.

A 50-year-old man from Nai Basti Jammu, who was admitted to the GMC on September 2 and diagnosed with bilateral community acquired pneumonia, died at 9.20.a.m, the doctor added.

An 80-year-old man from Bafliaz in Surankote tehsil of Poonch district, who was admitted to the Sub District Hospital (SDH) Surankote on Friday evening tested positive for covid-19. He was shifted to GMC Jammu but died enroute, officials said.

Also an accident victim from Akhnoor who died in the GMC Jammu yesterday also tested positive for the virus posthumously, they said.

Among those who died in Valley includes a 32-year-old woman from Fetehpura Anantnag, a 65-year-old from Lalbazar, a 56-year-old from Indra Nagar, a 65-year-old man from Beerwah Budgam, a 65-year-old woman from Anantnag, a resident of Ganderbal and a 75-year-old from Doabgah Sopore.

With these deaths, officials said, 773 people have succumbed to the virus in Jammu and Kashmir so far. Among them, they said, 682 were from the Valley while 91 others from Jammu division.

Srinagar district with 233 deaths tops the list followed by Baramulla (104), Budgam (65), Pulwama (56), Anantnag (54), Kupwara (54), Jammu (59), Kulgam (37), Shopian (28), Bandipora (26), Ganderbal (25), Kathua (8), Rajouri (5), Doda (5), Poonch (5), Udhampur (4), Samba (2) and Ramban (1). (With GNS inputs)

Highest Single-Day Spike...

reported 739 new cases of Covid-19, the remaining 512 were confirmed by the officials in the Kashmir valley, officials said. Among the fresh cases include 86 travelers.

Giving district-wise break, officials said, Srinagar reported 181 new cases of coronavirus, Baramulla 51, Pulwama 40, Budgam 69, Anantnag 35, Bandipora 12, Kupwara 54, Kulgam 3, Shopian 4, Ganderbal 63, Jammu 520, Rajouri 22, Kathua 27, Udhampur 72, Samba 23, Ramban 19, Doda 27, Poonch 11, Reasi 2and Kishtwar 16.

Also, the officials said 489 more patients were discharged from various hospitals in the Union Territory after recovering from the disease. Among them, they said 123 were from Jammu while 366 from Valley.

Carjacking Triggers Alert...

"A close vigil is being maintained to nab the assailants if they try to enter Jammu and Kashmir," the official said.

LG Sinha Inaugurates SCERT...

observed as a mark of respect for the nation-builders, underscoring their indispensable role in the overall development and progress of our great country, he said.

At the event, Sinha formally launched the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme through online mode and also dedicated projects, worth Rs 20 crores, of the School Education Department, accentuating overall education infrastructure in the UT, the spokesperson said. He said the SCERT was also inaugurated on this occasion through electronic mode.

The SCERT will function in the union territory on the lines of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), which is the apex institution of educational research and training at the national level.

During the event, the LG took note of the efforts of the teaching fraternity during the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic and said they have shown the society that tough times can be used as an opportunity. The LG said healthcare and education are the cornerstones of development and a society is judged by its achievements in these two sectors. A community is considered great or otherwise depending upon its ability to provide healthcare and education to its most marginalised sections, Sinha said, adding that doctors and healthcare providers hold special status all over the world.

Our civilisation places the providers of education - teachers, even a step higher and we revere them as 'guru', 'acharya' or 'ustad', he said.

In his address, the LG invoked 15th century poet Saint Kabir Das, saying his first bow is to the 'guru' and not God, because it is the guru who showed him the way to God, the spokesperson said.

Outlining that the union territory has embarked on a new mission and a new path of progress, the LG said the Union government has put peace and prosperity of the people of this land on top priority.

This is reflected in a large number of decisions taken in the last one year, Sinha said, stressing that the road ahead is full of opportunities to realise the potential of this region and exhorted upon the officers to put in their best efforts for laying a new foundation for all-round development.

ACB Probes Rs. 40.63-Cr...

and a consequence of which HUDCO will not fund any other project in J&K till the matter is settled.

"Considering that the Government has 70% holding in the capital of the organization, steps are being taken to secure control over the Corporation to ensure that it is run in a fiscally prudent manner maintaining high standards of propriety," the official spokesperson said.

He said with an aim to have complete oversight of the Government over the functioning of the organizationand to run the organization in a professional manner, it has been decided to bring in necessary amendments to Article of Association (AoA) or By-Laws of the Cooperative.

"Further, the entire matter will be thoroughly investigated by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to pinpoint any criminal misconduct which may have been committed in the said case," he added.

J&K Fails Again To Figure...

The ranking of States/UTs is based on the implementation of Business Reform Action Plan started in the year 2015. Till date, State Rankings have been released for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017-18. The Business Reform Action Plan 2018-19 includes 180 reform points

covering 12 business regulatory areas such as Access to Information, Single Window System, Labour, Environment, etc.

It is worthwhile to mention here that Andhra Pradesh retained the number one ranking. Uttar Pradesh improved to reach the second spot from 12th spot in the 2018 ranking while Telangana slipped from second to third position. (KNO)

Kashmir’s Banned Stones...

forced to operate. Also by the punch of our hungry stomachs, we're forced to earn. We leave at night in the name of Allah to be eventually caught by the government for breaking 'rules'. Karein toh kya karein!" As an obvious consequence of such sly operations, the final price of the raw material has doubled, in some areas, tripled.

A trip which used to previously cost Bhat Rs 3000 for 200 cubic feet, costs him Rs 6000 now.

"Even diesel prices have skyrocketed," he said. "That factor cannot be ignored. What we paid Rs 50-55 for, is now worth Rs 80 per litre."

After talking to the industry insiders as part of the fact-finding exercise, Kashmir Observer was able to break up the spiked price into five main components that intelligibly tells one the reasons behind the increase: rampant and high penalties, ban on explosives, opportunity cost, risk, and an overall crunch in regular supply.

After the 2019 Pulwama attack, Hilal Ahmad, a quarry holder from Pampore, alleged that stone quarries were asked to stop blasting rocks for their business.

"As per my information," Hilal detailed, "in the official report that investigated into the material used in the highway bombing, none of the materials that we, stone crushers, use to blow up rocks, were listed."

But soon after the fateful incident, he said, the miners were stopped from using explosives for extraction. "The implicit ban on explosives has resulted in the employment of manual labourers for the job, making the process of extraction more expensive."

Most of the stones processed in northern pockets of Pampore are utilised in official projects, Hilal alleged, but after the ban on explosives and extraction, the government's progress in its own projects had stopped.

"Since the work was pending, the Deputy Commissioner of Pulwama District said that he could allow us to extract and crush stones if we used people for breaking rocks instead of explosives," Hilal said. "He was essentially asking us to invest Rs 1000 in place of the regular amount of Rs 100. It was infeasible."

Kashmir Observer tried to contact Dr Raghav Langer, Deputy Commissioner of Pulwama District, for his comments, but repeated calls and texts went unanswered.

Acting on pressure from contractors who've accused the administration of pressuring them, some stone-quarry holders sold their old stock.

"For example," Hilal explained, "if a contractor needed to build a 4-km road stretch, I was able to provide him material for 2 km from my own reserves. Now, the government says that it will not pay the contractor until the full road has been completed."

So, he said, just like that a lot of payments are stuck.

"We've been delegitimized, our clearances are taking many years to come, we cannot even legally operate to produce the materials for their projects, and our income is being blocked by uncooperative official moves," the man lamented.

"How will any of this be sorted out unless the government realises that it is contradicting itself everywhere? This incompetent attitude has hurt our community beyond description and we are facing grave issues."

The government has reportedly given the contractors a 'death period' for completing their tendered projects.

On failing to do so, the deposit handed over by the contractors (in some cases amounting to crores) while taking up the project will remain in the treasury of the concerned department. Lost forever in an paradoxical circus of legal orders and legal tenders.

Kashmir's Divisional Commissioner, PK Pole told Kashmir Observer that "sand and bricks were available to complete the tenders", insinuating that the complaints were unwarranted.

"No two contracts are the same and not all projects require just sand and bricks - although these two industries are facing serious issues of their own," Zeeshan Rehman underlined. "Bajri is an essential commodity in construction."

In short, said Bashier Khan, former President of Hot Mix Plant Owners, the parameters of pricing have collapsed.

"Ab yeh loot ka maal ban gaya hai (a black market for this has been formed)," he stressed.

Many players associated with mining business 'regretted' how the final burden of such cost escalation fell on the backs of the common people. "Those who had hoped to build new homes and were in process, have been worst-hit," Khan rued. "Budgets worth Rs 4-5 lakhs are proving insufficient to build regular Kashmiri homes amid this price boom."

This blackmarketing of crushed stone 'aggregate' since its year-old ban has formed an intricate and dark nexus of illegal cash flow in Kashmir. "These mines and their operations need to be scrutinised very thoroughly," said Nadeem Qadri, an environmental lawyer based in Pampore.

In Baramulla, Qadri said, he highlighted a case of illegal extraction and it turned out to be "a deep nexus of the Department of Geology and Mining".

There're a lot of cement factories owned by elitist bigwigs of the Valley in Pampore belt, Hilal remarked.

"My peers and I have a hunch that most of them are working without environmental clearances and here they are asking those who carry a 20 kg hammer every day to break rocks (stone miners), for these 'big' documents," he said.

To be continued...

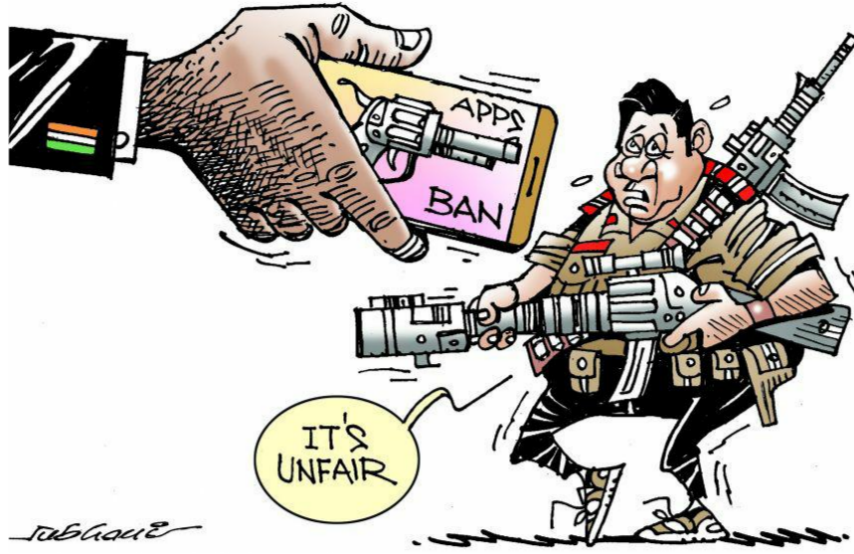
3 Killed In Twin Highway...

way to Kashmir from Jammu and all the three of its occupants were residents of Pampore area of Pulwama district, the official said.

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NO HOLDS BARRED



It appears Saudi Arabia will continue to move closer to India, ignoring Pakistani demands for support on Kashmir. Pakistan, meanwhile, is unlikely to give up on its diverse partnerships and return to Saudi Arabia's orbit.

Earlier this month, the long-simmering tensions between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia came to a boil when Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi publicly criticised the kingdom for its perceived lack of support for Islamabad's interests in the disputed Kashmir region. During a televised interview on August 4, Qureshi said Islamabad expects the Jeddah-based Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to convene a meeting on Kashmir. Otherwise, he said, Pakistan would be "compelled" to "call a meeting of the Islamic countries that are ready to stand with us on the issue of Kashmir". Qureshi's comments have widely been viewed as a veiled threat to create a new bloc that would rival the Saudi-dominated OIC.

In response, Saudi Arabia withdrew a \$1bn loan it had extended to Pakistan in November 2018, when the country was in dire economic straits and required foreign reserves to avoid a possible sovereign default. The kingdom has also refused to renew a deferred oil payments scheme that was part of the same package.

In a bid to control the damage, on August 17, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa rushed to Riyadh. However, the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) did not grant an audience to Bajwa, and the powerful military chief abruptly returned to Islamabad after holding a short meeting with Saudi Deputy Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz.

Soon after General Bajwa landed in Pakistan, Qureshi left for China, sending a clear message to the kingdom that Islamabad is diversifying its alliances and re-evaluating the value of its strategic partnership with Riyadh.

The latest diplomatic spat between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan should be seen in the broader context of recent strategic realignments in the Middle East and the Muslim world. For some time, Pakistan has been struggling to keep to its traditional policy of maintaining neutral relations with rival Muslim powers. While Islamabad is concerned about the deepening strategic and economic cooperation between its arch-rival India and a group of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia, Riyadh is equally frustrated by Pakistan's overtures towards Muslim-majority states it views as hostile, such as Turkey, Malaysia and Qatar.

Furthermore, the proposed Iran-China deal that is due to make both Islamabad and Tehran important nodes in Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative is expected to change the dynamics of Pakistan's relations with Iran. Saudi Arabia, which views Iran as the main threat to its regional and global ambitions, is concerned about the possible emergence of a new partnership between Iran and Pakistan under the stewardship of China.

Pakistan's balancing act may be failing

Pakistan's strategy to keep good relations with everyone is no longer working in an increasingly polarised Muslim world.

Abdul Basit & Zahid Shahab Ahmed



After India's August 2019 move to revoke Indian-administered Kashmir's semi-autonomous status, Pakistan expected Arab states to ferociously endorse its Kashmir policy. However, Saudi Arabia - and its Gulf allies, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) - failed to take a strong stance against India, frustrating Islamabad.

The Gulf states have balanced their dealings with Pakistan and India in the past. But now, it seems, they are openly moving closer to India and away from Pakistan.

This new strategy was on display during MBS's

February 2019 tour of South Asia. The Saudi Crown Prince not only made the unprecedented move of visiting India directly after Pakistan, but also promised to make larger investments in India than he did in Pakistan. After signing a memorandum of understanding valued at about \$20bn to help prop up Pakistan's economy, MBS said in New Delhi that he expects Riyadh's investments in India "to exceed \$100bn in the coming two years".

A few weeks later, in March 2019, the UAE also made it clear that it is seeking closer ties with India at the expense of Pakistan, when it invited India's Foreign

Minister Sushma Swaraj as a guest of honour to the OIC summit it was due to host. Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi pulled out of the summit in protest, but failed to make the UAE rescind its invitation to India.

Today, Saudi Arabia has several reasons to value its deepening partnership with India more than its historic ties to Pakistan. While the annual trade between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia stands at around \$3.6bn, Saudi-India bilateral trade is worth more than \$30bn. This trade differential partially explains, despite persistent Pakistani requests, why Riyadh has avoided raising the Kashmir issue beyond mere tokenism. Unlike Pakistan, Saudis do not take a zero-sum view of their growing economic cooperation with India. In fact, economic overtures towards India are part of MBS's post-oil economic diversification efforts.

Furthermore, the new government in Pakistan is moving closer to Turkey and Malaysia - two countries that Saudi Arabia views as challengers to its prominence within the Muslim world. Last December, Pakistan caved in to Saudi pressure and pulled out of the Kuala Lumpur summit, which was perceived by many as an attempt to replace the Saudi-controlled OIC. The embarrassment it suffered over the affair made Islamabad more eager to carve out some autonomous policy space to safeguard its vital strategic interests without perpetually depending on its Arab allies. As a result of Pakistan's efforts to be more autonomous, which moved it closer to Riyadh's rivals in the Muslim world, Saudi Arabia started to perceive Pakistan more as a potential rival than a loyal ally. This too likely makes the Saudi leadership less eager to lash out at India over Kashmir.

While Pakistan is undoubtedly well aware of Saudi Arabia's move away from itself and towards India, given its economic dependence on the kingdom, it cannot afford to sever its ties with Riyadh completely. This is why Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan recently played down his country's differences with Saudi Arabia, claiming that the "rumours" about a rift between Riyadh and Islamabad are "totally false".

Amid ongoing strategic realignments in the Middle East and the wider world, we are likely to see many more ups and downs in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in the coming days. It appears Saudi Arabia will continue to move closer to India, ignoring Pakistani demands for support on Kashmir. Pakistan, meanwhile, is unlikely to give up on its diverse partnerships and return to Saudi Arabia's orbit. While some friction seems unavoidable, the two long-time allies can prevent further fraying by assuming a pragmatic approach and working to strengthen ties in areas of convergence, such as security.

Al Jazeera

Imposed Mediocrity

In the absence of resources especially a fast internet connection, the government is denying students in Jammu and Kashmir the scope to excel

Sobiya Sabit and Jyotsna Bharti

In a competitive world which does not spare the slackers; Kashmiri students are running the race on a 2g internet connection

In Kashmir, a slow internet connection has been seen as a blessing and as a cruel joke as well. Memories of absolute communication clampdown has made many appreciate the unappreciable. This is also because in the awareness of the magnitude of loss suffered by Kashmiris, even little respite is welcomed. This has been particularly true in the context of the education sector.

Students in Kashmir are relying on a poor internet connection to keep up with course work. The semblance of availability often obscures the ill effects of an education marred by the absence of resources. This is why no one has quantified or comprehended the sheer impact of the loss that students have suffered here.

In a competitive world which does not spare the slackers; Kashmiri students are running the race on a 2g internet connection. They're being forced to feel thankful for having the privilege of being allowed to attend school lectures. However, a 2g connection is only going to curtail a student's academic growth to that one lecture when the video doesn't buffer.

On contrary, students around the world and including India have had a different experience. The availability of a fast internet connection has made unending learning avenues available for students all over. However, these learning resources and extra aids do not come easy to Kashmiri students, who have to make do with a slow connection.

Testimonies from students outside Jammu and Kashmir are enough of



a proof of the difference between the learning curve of students outside and students within J&K.

Online courses are often long and are not downloadable. Most lectures have study materials and assignment worksheets as PDFs which are very hard to download on a low speed internet connection. For students with a steady internet connection, revisiting lectures has been a blessing. However, Kashmiri students do not even have the pleasure of this revisiting.

For people who can inculcate some discipline, online education is a fortune. They will make the most out of it. Many ambitious students are getting the time

to enroll in skill based courses online and can even attend advanced classes of different universities. On the other hand, for Kashmiri students, even the attempt to surf for these courses is going to be a herculean task.

Additionally, considering job wars, it has become particularly important to upgrade ones skills and better ones profile. Here too Kashmiri students are suffering. Not only is there a dearth of jobs, there are also limitations in the path to make oneself employable.

Fortunately, the plight of Kashmir students has not gone totally unnoticed. Ryan Jena a Journalism student from Bengaluru shared her views thus:

"A world without the internet is like a world without meaning. I say this because of the progressively rushing world around me. I've had the privileges to access the internet anytime I'd want. As an institution, our college would provide an adequate amount of internet to us, students, and also personally I have the liberty to access the internet for my projects and my personal browsing purposes. I've been taking up workshops online, ever since the lockdown has commenced. This time has given us all enough time to retrospect and I've been working on myself; as a budding writer, photographer and a self-taught musician. The internet has definitely been helpful during this lockdown and much before that too. My heart goes out for those who don't have these privileges, which I think is every individual's right".

Extra-curricular activities are also a far cry for students in Kashmir. While students outside Kashmir have started taking online classes to pursue art and music, it is bound to seem like an arduous task for kids in Kashmir, who are already burdened by a slouchy internet connection.

Therefore, Kashmir students have suffered much more than students from other states. It is a pity that they will have to enter competition on the same footing as their counterparts in other cities while they have been denied opportunities available to others.

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Enraged Vyath: Remembering 2014 Floods

Kashmir witnessed one of its worst floods since late 19th century, in September 2014. Most parts of Srinagar city were inundated in water. Kashmiris came together for help in absence of any visible government on the ground.

Faheem Jeelani

Fates of Kashmir and Habba seem to be entwined. Born into a poor peasant family in 16th century Kashmir, the mystic poetess - the empress of Kashmir - HabbaKhatoon needs no introduction. Married early at age 16, Habba or Zoon was left withered atrophy at her in-laws. A cruel mother-in-law and an indifferent husband could never harmonize with her feelings. But Habba's bosom was filled with love, and promptly, as in a fairy tale happens, the royal emperor, Yusuf Shah Chak, who was once contemplating by the stream, heard her heart-wrenching pathos. Their eyes met. It's those split-seconds when you disposes yourself of plan or ambition. When you give yourself completely to the golden fate filled moment. The emperor fell for the damsel and married her. The wind man had other plans in store though. The earth that delighted at her bare feet and wind that played with her long hair, soon conspired against this celestial love. Yusuf was captured by the Moghal King and sent to Bihar, where he later died. Leaving Habba again behind. Left to lament his loss, the night wind carried her voiceless cries for years, till she died an unknown death. Waiting for her Yusuf!

On Oneness

While I was in Kashmir in mid September that year, trying to do my bit, the overwhelming human spirit in us swelled my eyes numerous times. Young university students had hastily set up a relief camp on KU campus. With no fanfare and gimmicks to take mileage out of, they went about their work quietly; requesting people like me, who were visiting, not to take pictures. Brave human stories were coming out from all over. As it was, nature's fury had fist cuffed the bourgeois



in uptown Srinagar. Partisans, shikarwalahs, factory workers, cart pullers, jobless youth- without giving two hoots for their own lives, went on about rescuing people from submerged parts of the city. Food supply from rural Kashmir (parts which were dry like Ganderbal, Sopore, Baramulla, Shupiyan) to Srinagar city was immediately ensured. The absence of government and state machinery was literally never felt.

On Uncertainty

The mood in Delhi was sombre. Amidst packing relief items, bound for Kashmir, I filled a carton of white shroud.

It is unexplainable to put that moment in words, to foresee a fellow countryman being draped in white cloth for his final journey. Kashmir had just witnessed the most devastating floods in more than a century. That week had been probably one of the longest weeks of my life. Almost no communication was possible with folks back home. We'd spaced out; thousands of us expats in Middle East and elsewhere.

Home Bound

With almost 20-30 flights being operated every day by various airlines, the ATC at Srinagar airport must have been going through some harrowing time. Not

that it crossed my mind once. I wanted to be home as early as possible. I got a late afternoon flight.

Just as we entered into the Valley through the Pir Panchal mountains near Banihal, tragedy below was visible. Brown muddy water had submerged almost the entire valley. Due to many aircrafts scurrying for whatever little landing space Srinagar airport has to offer, it gave our pilot a chance to take a detour along Srinagar, till he could land.

He took a right, and kept hovering above The Dal, and the boulevard. Amidst the harkened solitude of this bygone lake; the Lydia air played its tune too. Or was

it only me that heard it, in the voyage of my longing. Turning back, we flew across towards the mountains of Gulmarg and Yusmarg. Thin craggy peak of Tatakoti was lit under this mild afternoon sun. It looked like a thin jar, carrying an immortal drink. Like meditating sufis, the mountains were calm, quiet. Tiny little hamlets, straight out of a Charlotte Bronte novel - must have been near Shupiyan - had visible impression of impending fall. Swathed under balmy afternoon Kashmir sun, where thin line of lean poplars run with an air of flourish, a land yellow in summer, its funereal brume rolling over paddy fields, you felt a deep sorrow, the kind of melancholy you feel when you're with a pretty woman and the sun is going down. Kashmir the cursed damsel, with a thousand scars perched in her bosom - its air breathing fey, ruined, her fate star-crossed. There is something austere too about her beauty. You can't help but, fall in love with her.

On one of those nights, when communication had snapped, those long sad nights, when eerie silence from thousands of kilometers far, became too heavy, driving late night over a freeway, thoughts and mind securely placed in my sad land, I envisioned Kashmir as a woman. Battered and shredded. You write sad pathos over her, while admiring her beauty too. The descriptions of paradise satisfy the hunger for beauty. We, narrators of flimsy imagination, prose and poetic, know the sky will never forgo its many evidences. A confined woman, that we love, and we believe she loves us too, living or dead.

FaheemJeelaniGundroo is an ICT Engineer based in Dubai, with interest in travel, history and current affairs. He can be reached at: faheemjeelani@gmail.com

Ertugrul, Esra Bilgic And The Frustrations Of Pakistani Men

If you're a Muslim man quite enraged by Esra Bilgic's real life, here's why this Turkish woman has you simultaneously enchanted and exasperated

In the middle of a global pandemic, the state-run PTV began airing a Turkish historical fiction drama series, Ertugrul, which experienced such a meteoric rise in popularity in the country that it became part of the national discourse, causing several debates regarding the authenticity of our cultural histories.

Read that sentence again. Understand that it is true. Imagine the events that must have aligned in a very precise fashion for it to have happened. And then realise this is not even what this piece is about because something even more fascinating - or absurd depending on how you view it - occurred.

Pakistani male fantasy came to life. Playing the wife of the titular character on the show is Turkish actor Esra Bilgic whose portrayal of Halime Hatun has led to a dedicated male following in our country.

It did not take long for her fans to look her up on Instagram, and then be promptly disappointed by the fact that she, in fact, did not dress or behave like the wife of a Muslim warrior from the thirteenth century.

Ever spurred on by their commitment to religiosity and piety, Muslim men from Pakistan who had looked up a Turkish actress on a photo and video sharing platform, felt it their spiritual duty to educate her, or advice her, or berate her - depending on their self-confidence - on the ethics of being a pious Muslim woman.

The catch here? It is very unlikely that she would have developed the massive male fan following that she had developed in such a short time in Pakistan if she did follow their code of conduct.

It is understandable if men would have felt slightly mystified, slightly horrified by this beautiful, Muslim woman who played by their rules on TV but "broke" them on social media yet continued to fascinate them more than she angered them. Something quite remarkable had taken place, after all.

For years, Pakistani men had successfully maintained a dichotomy between the foreign, white woman and the Muslim, brown woman. The foreign, white woman is an object of desire and lust, at once a woman to be feared, because of her colour, and a woman to be conquered, because of her sex.

The brown woman on the other hand, is supposed to embody the brown man's ideology. She is the keeper of the private sphere, and should submit entirely to the authority of the brown man.

You might be shaking your heads right now, negation on the tip of your tongue; I assure you I want to agree with you and believe that men do not, in fact, view women like this.

However, Frantz Fanon and Partha Chatterjee have written extensively about how the encounter of men of colour with colonialism impacted gender ties in the colony, and it seems that, unfortunately both our wishes remain unfulfilled.

The dichotomy however collapsed with Bilgic who, at once possessed appearance close in proximity to European femininity, but the heritage and ideology of the



brown, Muslim woman. She was almost white and Muslim enough. She was not to be feared, yet possessed all the desirability. And thus began the crisis that led to the barrage of comments on her Instagram posts.

She was the ultimate Pakistani male fantasy. A miracle happened and she became real. Now Pakistani men do not know how to deal with the paradox of the dichotomy their misogyny had created.

For it had been easier with Pakistani actresses. These brown, Muslim women, who digressed, did not possess a local male following of such vigour and had to get used to their characters being questioned over the slightest digressions from expected behaviour. "Is this the Islamic Republic of Pakistan?" has almost ascended to idiomatic status on Pakistani twitter, regularly used to caption pictures where Pakistani actresses show even the slightest bit of skin or are seen in close proximity to male colleagues.

There is a very simple logic to this: good, pious women are not supposed to stray so far from the private sphere that they enter the showbiz industry.

It had been similarly easy with Hollywood actresses. It is an open secret that men enjoy displays of sensuality by these foreign, white women, in whose life choices they do not expect their ideologies to be reflected, and thus feel no emotional stake in their "characters".

The logic to this is equally simple: men can easily separate the flesh from the humanity here that they cannot empathise with, and are thus free to lust after these women.

With a Turkish actress, it gets complicated. They want this woman to be Muslim and they need this woman to remain desirable. If she agrees to the former and reigns in her European femininity, she becomes as fa-

miliar and as "ordinary" as the brown woman; erasing the charm that makes her desirable. If she tries to do the latter and dials back her "Muslim-ness", she becomes as unacquirable and as foreign as the White woman; losing the empathy that had evoked an emotional response.

She was the ultimate Pakistani, male fantasy. A miracle happened and she became real. Now Pakistani men do not know how to deal with the paradox of the dichotomy their misogyny had created.

And it is absolutely hilarious. Of course, there was also the odd comment on the male lead's Instagram, warning him against keeping dogs as pets indoors, since that is against religious tradition in Pakistan. But neither the quantity or quality of the sentiment could compare to the emotionally charged moral bombardment in Bilgic's comments section, that I can only hope she did not read.

There is, after all, a difference between your role model not acting in the way you want him to, and not knowing how you want your object of desire to act. So while Ertugrul has caused much debate about culture, and provided much entertainment amid a lockdown, it just feels a little unfair to not pay attention to the cultural development and entertainment value it has provided off-screen.

If you are a Pakistani man, spare a thought as to why this Turkish woman has you simultaneously frustrated and enchanted. If you're a Pakistani woman who has shouldered the burden of this ungrateful, Pakistani man's piety, look at him grapple with his own misogyny.

... Dawn



FURTHER, THIS ANALYSIS SUPPORTS THE incorporation of anonymised cell phone location data into modelling strategies to predict at-risk counties across the US before outbreaks become too great,"

Press Trust Of India

Publicly available cell phone location data could be used to better estimate COVID-19 spread, and inform decision-making when it comes to shutdowns and re-opening, according to a US study.

The research, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, shows that counties in the US with a greater decline in workplace cell phone activity during stay-at-home orders showed a lower rate of COVID-19 infections.

"It is our hope that counties might be able to incorporate these publicly available cell phone data to help guide policies regarding re-opening throughout different stages of the pandemic," said the study's senior author, Joshua Baker, an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

"Further, this analysis supports the incorporation of anonymised cell phone location data into

modelling strategies to predict at-risk counties across the US before outbreaks become too great," Baker said.

The researchers, including the study's lead author Shiv T Sehra, an assistant professor at the Harvard Medical School, used location data from cell phones -- which were de-identified and made publicly available by Google -- to analyse activity across up to 2,740 counties in the US between early January and early May 2020.

This data was broken up into locations where the activity took place, ranging from workplaces, to homes, retail stores, grocery stores, parks, and transit stations, they said.

Roughly between 22,000 and 84,000 points of data were analysed for each day in the study period. The idea was to compare where cell phone activity took place as a proxy to show where people, themselves, spent their time.

This data was compared between two time periods: the first

in January and February, before COVID-19's outbreak in the US, then mid-February through early May, during the virus' initial surges and when stay-at-home orders were enacted.

The researchers noted an increase in time spent at home, while visits to the workplace dropped significantly, along with a decline in visits to retail locations -- such as stores and restaurants -- and transit stations.

They saw that in counties

where there was initially a higher density of cases, visits to workplaces, as well as retail locations and transit stations, fell more sharply than counties less affected by COVID-19.

At the same time, in these counties, there was a more prominent spike in activity at homes, the researchers said.

They saw that the counties where workplace activity fell the most had the lowest rates of new COVID-19 cases in the days that followed.

Lag-times of 5, 10 and 15 days were observed to allow time for COVID-19's incubation period, but the lower infection rates held across the range.

Baker hopes more work can be done to vet cell phone data to see if they can be specifically used to predict COVID-19 hotspots and guide decision-making.

"It will be important to confirm that cell phone data is useful in other stages of the pandemic beyond initial containment," Baker said.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION IIND, RAJBAGH, SRINAGAR
Tender Notice
NIT No. STD

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allied material at various Receiving stations of Sub Division

				Last date of submission of
	Supply, Installation, Testing and commissioning of			

Bidders are advised to study the Bidding Document carefully. Submission of e Bid against this SBD shall be deemed to have been done after careful study and examination of the procedures, terms and conditions of the Standard Bidding Document with full under of its implications by the bidder.
The tender document is available <http://jktenders.gov.in>. Interested bidders may view or download the e seek clarification and submit their e on line up to date as per the details mentioned in the table below:

Date & Time of downloading of Standard Bidding Document	Document can be downloaded over
Sale of Bid Document (Start)	
Bid submission (start) date and time (submission of and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	
Bid submission (End) date and time (submission of e and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	
bid opening date & time (only of the technically qualified	Will be communicated to the technically qualified bidders
Venue of opening of technical & financial e	The office of Executive Engineer, STD
Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	

Bid document as stated in the above table through e Challan/Treasury Receipt/pledged II,Rajbagh, Srinagar to be credited to M.H Power payable at Srinagar. The scanned copy of the e /Treasury Receipt must be enclosed along with the e Bids. No demand Draft shall be accepted.
Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR / FDR only, pledged to the Executive Engineer, STD erest would be payable on Earnest Money deposited with the Department.
bid (complete) shall have to be submitted to the office of the Executive Engineer, STD Rajbagh, Srinagar only from the bidder who is declared LI after opening of fina
The date and time of opening of financial bids shall be notified on web site <http://jktenders.gov.in>. This is conveyed to the qualified bidders mail address. The financial bids shall be opened accordingly online on the same web site
at the office of the Executive Engineer, STD
Bids will be electronically opened in the presence of bidder's representatives, who choose to attend at the identified venue date and time mentioned in the above table or any subsequent day to the convenience of the Tender Opening Committee. An autho of bidder' representative will be required to be produced.
The Department reserves the right to cancel any or a Bid process without assigning any reason thereof .The decision of department will be final and binding.
In the event of date specified for e Bids opening being a holiday/closed day for department's office then the due date for openin shall be the following working day at the same time and place.
All the required documents excluding Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded by the e Bidder electronically in the PDF format, whereas Price Schedule/BOQ should be up loaded electronically in the same BOQ sheet provided with the SBD.
bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature DSC)'class III(b) As per InformationTechnologyAct 2000,to participate in online bidding.
ments shall be required to be submitted only by the Lowest Tenderer along with original CDR and e Challan/Treasury Receipt instantly after opening of e NIT pledged to Executive Engineer, STD
The Name of the Work/Job along with e reference should be superscripted in bold letters on the envelope and the Name/Firm should be clearly written on the cover.
The name of the bidder and e NIT no. shall be clearly written on the details can be seen in the bidding documents.
other information regarding e tendering process can be had from the office of


DIPK-NB-2185/20

Study Suggests Selfish, Deceitful People Do Not Reach Positions Of Power At Workplace

Agencies

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According to new research, people having selfish, deceitful, and aggressive personal-ity traits are not likely to reach positions of power as much as those who are generous, trust-worthy, and generally nice in the workplace.
That's the clear conclusion from research that tracked dis-agreeable people from college or graduate school to where they landed in their careers about 14 years later. The paper was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.
"I was surprised by the consis-



tency of the findings. No matter the individual or the context, disagreeableness did not give people an advantage in the competition for power—even in more cutthroat, 'dog-eat-dog' organizational cultures," said Berkeley Haas Prof. Cam-eron Anderson, who co-authored the study with Berkeley Psychology Prof. Oliver P. John, doctoral student Daron L. Sharps, and Assoc. Prof.

Christopher J. Soto of Colby College.
The researchers conducted two studies of people who had com-pleted personality assessments as undergraduates or MBA stu-dents at three universities. They surveyed the same people more than a decade later, asking about their power and rank in their workplaces, as well as the culture of their organizations.
They also asked their co-workers to rate the study par-ticipants' rank and workplace behaviour. Across the board, they found those with selfish, deceitful, and aggressive per-sonality traits were not more likely to have attained power than those who were generous, trustworthy, and generally nice.
That's not to say that jerks don't reach positions of power. It's just that they didn't get ahead faster than others, and being a jerk simply didn't help, Anderson said. That's because any power boost they get from being intimidating is offset by their poor interpersonal relationships, the researchers found. In contrast, the research-ers found that extroverts were the most likely to have advanced in their organizations, based on their sociability, energy, and assertive-ness—backing up prior research.
"The bad news here is that organizations do place disagree-able individuals in charge just as often as agreeable people.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (JSD) PHE. DIVISION, PULWAMA
xenphepulwama@gmail.com
NOTICE INVITING
NIT S. No. (SHORT)
For & on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir (UT) tenders in single cover system are invited on Item Rate Basis from Registered PWD Contractorswhose registration cards are valid in terms of standing rules & are active for the following works:

	onstruction of Pump Operator Quarter for WSS								
	onstruction of Pump Operator Quarter for WSS								
	onstruction of Chowkidar Quarter for WSS								
	Providing & Laying of nallah muck at tube well site Kisrigam for development of source by mechanical rig								
	Providing, laying & fitting of 100/65mm dia pipes along Inderwali road affected due to of road by PMGSY Department.								

The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (BOQ), terms and conditions of contract can be seen/downloaded from the departmental web site (jktenders.gov.in) as per the dates shown below:

> Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "download bid submission".
> To participate in bidding process bidders, must get digital signature certificate (DSC) as per information technology 2000 bidders can get digital certificate from approved option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website
> The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital signature.
> Bids must be accompanied by bid security deposit & cost of tender document as specified in column (4&5) of the above table. Bid security will be in the Executive Engineer, PHE Division Pulwama and the cost of tender document shall be deposited in the Treasury under neer PHE Division Pulwama. (Name of work to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt)
All other terms and conditions will remain same as laid down in PWD form No.25

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Iran Eyes Military Exports As Arms Embargo Expires: Defense Minister

Agencies

Tehran: Iran's defense minister has said that the country eyes arms sales as UN sanctions on the Islamic Republic expire in October.

Speaking to Tehran-based 'Iran' newspaper in an interview published Saturday, Brigadier General Amir Hatami said the Islamic Republic is among the handful of countries which can indigenously manufacture more than 90 per cent of its military needs.

"We will surely be able to export more military equipment than we need to import," he said.

"Therefore, we will surely use our legal right [to sell arms] in dealing with our al-

1988 invasion of Iran and the country's lack of crucial military equipment, the defense industry was one of the first and most critically targeted sectors by the bans.

Despite being heavily impaired by the absence of US assistance and equipment - which formed the backbone of Iran's pre-revolutionary armed forces - Iran's defense industries were quick to adapt and begin local production of defense-related needs.

The country has consequently managed to produce a wide array of hardware over the years, including its own tanks, armored personnel carriers, missiles, radars, boats, submarines, unmanned aerial vehicles, and fighter planes.



lies once the restrictions are lifted," he said.

The arms restrictions are to be lifted as part of Security Council Resolution 2231, which has endorsed the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal.

The US led a failed bid to extend the arms restriction on Iran in August. Iran has faced widespread economic sanctions and arms bans ever since it overthrew the country's US-backed regime during the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

In the midst of Iraq's 1980-

Hatami elaborated on some of the defense ministry's latest achievements.

The minister said Iran is currently focusing on increasing the quantity and quality of its missiles, "specifically their maneuverability and variety, in a way that can surprise enemy air defenses".

Iran's land and seaborne cruise missiles, he said, can attain ranges of 1000 and 1400 km respectively. He added that the range of Iran's airborne cruise missiles will soon reach 1000 km.

French President Says Defend "Right To Laugh" As Charlie Hebdo Attacks Trial Begins

Agencies

Paris: The right to mock and caricature, even religion, is an essential part of being French. President Emmanuel Macron said at a naturalisation ceremony on Friday, days after the start of a trial of the accused accomplices in an attack by Islamist gunmen on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015.

In the Paris Pantheon, a mausoleum to France's heroes, Macron handed five new citizens their French papers in a solemn ceremony to mark the 150th anniversary of the Third Republic.

"At the start of the trial of the attacks of January 2015, I say that to be French is to defend the right to laugh, jest, mock and caricature, of which Voltaire maintained that it is the source of all other rights," Macron said.

More than a dozen defendants went on trial this week for their role in the killing spree in the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, where 12



people died. This week, the magazine republished the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad that had sparked the ire of Islamist militants.

Welcoming five new citizens from Britain, Algeria, Cameroun, Peru and Lebanon, Macron said immigrants have long been a force for good in France, and noted that the Third Republic was proclaimed from Paris city hall by the son of an Italian immigrant, Leon Gambetta, on Sept. 4, 1870.

"He was, like you, a son of immigrants, French of mixed blood. It was he who resuscitated the republic, this reign of freedom," Macron said.



UAE To Open Embassy In Israel Within 3-5 Months: Official

Agencies

Abu Dhabi: A senior Emirati official says his country will open an embassy in the occupied territories within three to five months in the wake of a deal between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel to establish full diplomatic relations.

Israel Hayom newspaper quoted the unnamed UAE Foreign Ministry official as saying that the Israelis could get a visa to travel to the Persian Gulf Arab state after the opening of the diplomatic mission.

"I think the Israelis will be able to obtain travel visa to the UAE from an embassy that will open in Israel after three to five months from now," he said, adding that Abu Dhabi is also considering opening "a consulate in Haifa or Nazareth that works alongside the embassy".

"We aspire to a peace agreement with Israel, but peace is in reality with all Israelis, and it is very important for us to be available to the Arab population of Israel, whom we consider an important partner for warm peace," he further claimed.

Earlier this week, the Israeli foreign ministry said both the regime and Emirati officials had discussed opening embassies during talks in the UAE that also involved Ameri-

can authorities.

In a joint statement issued by the White House on August 13, Israel and the UAE announced that they had "agreed to the full normalization of relations."

The UAE announced a few days later that it was scrapping its economic boycott against the Tel Aviv regime, allowing trade and financial accords between the two sides.

On August 31, the first direct flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi took a joint US-Israeli delegation to the UAE capital for talks with the Emirati officials to finalize the normalization deal.

All Palestinian factions have unanimously condemned the UAE-Israel agreement, describing it as a stab in the back of the oppressed nation and a betrayal of the Palestinian cause against the occupation.

Serbia, Kosovo to open embassies in Jerusalem al-Quds

In another development on Friday, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tel Aviv and Pristina have agreed to establish diplomatic ties and Kosovo, along with Serbia, will open embassies in occupied Jerusalem al-Quds.

The remarks came shortly after US President Donald Trump made a similar an-

nouncement in Washington, where he met with leaders of Serbia and Kosovo as they agreed to normalize economic ties between them.

"Kosovo will be the first country with a Muslim majority to open an embassy in Jerusalem," Netanyahu said.

Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi welcomed Netanyahu's announcement about what he called "the genuine intention to recognize Kosovo and establish diplomatic relations."

I welcome the announcement of Israeli PM @netanyahu about the genuine intention to recognize #Kosovo and establish diplomatic relations. Kosovo will keep its promise to place its diplomatic mission in #Jerusalem

— Hashim Thaçi (@HashimThaciRKS) September 4, 2020

Separately, Trump took to Twitter to claim more Islamic and Arab nations will "soon" forge ties with Israel.

Another great day for peace with Middle East - Muslim-majority Kosovo and Israel have agreed to normalize ties and establish diplomatic relations. Well-done! More Islamic and Arab nations will follow soon!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) September 4, 2020

17 killed, 20 injured as six air-conditioners explode in Bangladesh mosque

Press Trust Of India

Dhaka: A gas leak in an underground pipeline caused six air conditioners to explode almost simultaneously in a mosque during Friday evening prayers on the outskirts of Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, killing 17 people, including a child, and injuring 20 others.

Worshippers were at Friday evening prayers when the blast sent a ball of flames through the Baitul Salat mosque in the central district of Narayanganj, officials said.

At least 17 people including a seven-year old boy, succumbed to their injuries at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery here, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

About 20 victims are undergoing treatment at the hospital and are stated to be in critical condition. Fire officials suspect accumulated gas from a leaked pipeline triggered a spark and all six air conditioners on the ground floor of the mosque exploded. "A gas pipeline passes beneath the mosque. We are suspecting that gas leaked from the pipeline and accumulated inside as the windows were closed. The explosion was probably triggered due to sparks when someone tried to switch on or off the ACs or fans," Narayanganj Fire Service's Deputy Assistant Director Abdullah Al Arefin was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

According to reports, the

mosque committee had recently filed a complaint over leakage of the gas pipeline of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited.

Narayanganj Fire Service and police have already initiated investigation into the blast while the company formed another probe body to look into the incident.

Narayanganj Superintendent of Police (SP) Md Zayedul Alam visited the victims at the institute and said action will be taken if they found evidence of negligence against anyone in its inquiry.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed concern over the incident and issued directions to ensure all possible medical care for the victims.

Rescuers search Beirut rubble for 3rd day, with nation transfixed

Agencies

Beirut: Rescue workers continued to dig through the rubble of a Beirut building for a third day on Saturday, still hoping to find someone alive more than a month after a massive port explosion shattered Lebanon's capital.

About 50 rescue workers and volunteers, including a specialist team from Chile, had yet to locate anyone after sensors on Thursday detected signs of breathing and heat. But they said they would continue while there was a small chance of finding a survivor,

already reeling from a crippling economic crisis.

Rescue efforts dominated local and social media, as the Lebanese were transfixed, desperate for some good news.

The ruined building where the search was continuing lies between the residential districts of Gemmayze and Mar Mikhael, among the hardest hit areas by the blast and home to many old buildings that crumbled as the shockwave ripped through.

Work was slow, rescue workers said, as the badly damaged building was at risk of collapse.



and had narrowed their search.

"Always in search operations like this, you can neither lose hope nor absolutely say there is hope," George Abou Moussa, director of operations in Lebanon's civil defence, told Reuters. The August 4 blast killed about 190 people, injured 6,000 more and devastated whole neighborhoods. The authorities held ceremonies on Friday to mark a month since the explosion tore into a city

"The building is really crumbling, it's scary and there's a lot of danger to the team," Abou Moussa said.

Workers were using shovels and their hands to dig, while mechanical diggers and a crane lifted heavy debris.

Emmanuel Durand, a French civil engineer who was training local university students, volunteered his services and was working with the rescuers to monitor the structure.

Blazing tanker sparks fears of new Indian Ocean disaster

Agencies

COLOMBO: A Panamanian-registered oil tanker burned out of control for a second day off Sri Lanka on Friday, raising fears of a major new oil spill in the Indian Ocean.

Greek and 17 Filipino — were taken off the vessel.

The Sri Lankan navy said there was no immediate danger of the tanker breaking up, despite reports of a two-metre crack in the hull above the water line.

Rear Admiral Y.N.



Sri Lankan navy and Indian coastguard vessels fired water cannon while an air force helicopter dropped water on the drifting New Diamond.

Just a week after a huge oil slick hit the Mauritian coast, Sri Lankan authorities are preparing for the worst as the navy warned it could take five days to put out the blaze on the 330-metre-long New Diamond.

ship was carrying 270,000 tonnes of crude from Kuwait to India when the engine room exploded on Thursday, killing one Filipino crewmember. The other 22 crewmembers — five

Jayarathne said the metal had cracked in the intense heat as the fuel tanks burned when the fire spread from the adjoining engine room.

The fire has not yet touched the crude however.

"It will take another four to five days to completely put out the fire," Jayaratne said. "Thereafter we should be able to tow it away and let the owners decide what they want to do."

The ship was heading for the eastern Indian port of Paradip when it issued a distress signal 60 kilometres from Sri Lanka's east coast.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI Becomes Oldest Pope In History

Vatican City: At the age of 93 and nearly five months, Benedict XVI officially became the oldest pope in history on Friday, even if the record is complicated by the fact that he stepped down in 2013 and holds the status of "pope emeritus".

Benedict was the first pope to retire in 700 years -- citing his diminishing strength -- after eight years in office.

He was succeeded by Argentinian Jorge Bergoglio, 10 years his junior and who adopted the name Francis.

Born on April 16, 1927, Benedict -- whose civilian name is Josef Ratzinger -- officially broke the previous longevity record held by Italian Leo XIII who died in 1903 at the age of 93 years, four months and three days, according



to the calculations of the Italian episcopal journal, Avvenire, and the magazine Famiglia Cristiana.

"34,111 days in the service of God, the world and the ecclesiastical community," wrote Famiglia Cristiana, referring to Benedict.

Aside from Benedict's retired status, Vatican experts say the record could also be disputed because, going back 1,400 years, the ages of previous popes may not al-

ways be completely accurate.

The previous record holder, Leo XIII, is known for having written the first encyclical on social problems.

Unlike Benedict's relatively short reign as pontiff, the Italian aristocrat led the church for more than 25 years. By comparison, Pius XI was pope for 31 years and John Paul II for 26 years.

And the first-ever pope, Peter, reigned for at least 34 years, said French historian, Christophe Dickes. Benedict lives "hidden from the world" in a former convent inside the Vatican grounds.

Often in a wheelchair, he has appeared increasingly frail recently.

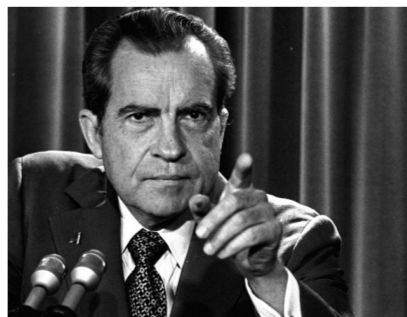
But the author of dozens of books, who was nicknamed "God's Rottweiler" as a cardinal, is still mentally sharp, according to people close to him.

Newly declassified tapes reveal Richard Nixon's hatred towards Indians

Newly declassified White House tapes disclose former US president Richard Nixon speaking disparagingly about Indians and reveal the bigotry he and his national security adviser Henry Kissinger held that influenced US policy toward India and South Asia under his presidency.

"As Americans grapple with problems of racism and power, a newly declassified trove of White House tapes provides startling evidence of the bigotry voiced by President Richard M. Nixon and Henry Kissinger, his national security adviser," Gary Bass, professor at Princeton, wrote in an opinion piece "The Terrible Cost of Presidential Racism" in The New York Times.

"The full content of these tapes reveal how U.S. policy toward South Asia under Mr. Nixon was influenced by his hatred of, and sexual repulsion toward, Indians," Bass, author of "The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide", writes.



Richard Nixon, a Republican, was the 37th President of the United States, serving from 1969 until 1974.

Bass says that the declassified White House tapes reveal a "stunning" conversation between Nixon, Kissinger and the then White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman in the Oval Office in June 1971 in which Nixon asserts in a "venomous tone" that Indian women are "undoubtedly the most unattractive women in the world."

Covid-19 pandemic: Mexico states run out of death certificates

Mexico City: The coronavirus pandemic has hit Mexico so hard that the governments of several states ran out of death certificates.

Officials said Friday the federal forms started running out about 15 to 20 days ago in at least three states — Baja California, the State of Mexico and Mexico City.

Authorities say a million new forms have been printed and are being distributed. The certificates are printed with special characteristics because falsification has been a problem in the past.

Mexico has suffered the fourth-highest level of COVID-19 deaths in the world.

N E W S M A K E R S

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Leaves Russia For Iran



MOSCOW: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday left Moscow for Iran where he will meet his Iranian counterpart and discuss bilateral defence ties, a day after he urged the Persian Gulf countries to resolve their differences through dialogue based on mutual respect.

Mr Singh was in Moscow on a three-day visit to Russia to attend a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defence ministers. He also held bilateral talks with his counterparts from Russia, China and the Central Asian countries.

"Leaving Moscow for Tehran. I shall be meeting the Defence Minister of Iran, Brigadier General Amir Hatami," Mr Singh said in a tweet.

India on Friday said that it was "deeply concerned" about the situation in the Persian Gulf and called upon the countries in the region to resolve their differences by dialogue based on mutual respect.

A series of incidents in the Persian Gulf involving Iran, the US and the UAE in recent weeks have flared up tension in the region.

"We are deeply concerned about the situation in the Persian Gulf," Mr Singh said in his address at a meeting of the SCO here.

"We call upon countries in the region - all of which are dear and friendly to India, to resolve differences by dialogue based on mutual respect, sovereignty and non interference in internal affairs of each other," he said in his address at the combined meeting of defence ministers of the SCO, Collective Security Treaty Organisation and Commonwealth of Independent States member states.

Last month, Iranian navy briefly seized control of a Liberian-flagged oil tanker in what the US said were international waters near the Strait of Hormuz, which links the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman to the south and the Arabian Sea beyond.

Iran has threatened to disrupt oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz if the United States tries to strangle its economy.

The SCO, seen as a counterweight to NATO, has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations which accounts for almost 44 per cent of the world population stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Indian Ocean and from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea.

The aim of the SCO is to maintain peace, stability and security of the region.

Iran has observer status in the SCO, which was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the Presidents of Russia, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

India and Pakistan were admitted as observers of the grouping in 2005. Both the countries were admitted as full members of the bloc in 2017.

Railways To Begin Recruitment Process For 1.40 Lakh Posts From Dec 15



The Indian Railways will start conducting computer-based examinations for around 1.40 lakh posts from December 15, Railway Board Chairman V K Yadav said Saturday.

Around 2.42 crore applications have been received for these posts, he said.

These are, 35,208 posts in non-technical popular categories (NTPC) like guards, office clerks, commercial clerks and others, 1,663 posts for isolated and ministerial categories such as stenographers and teachers, and 1,03,769 for level-one vacancies such as track maintainers and pointsmen.

The railway board chairman said the exams could not be conducted till now due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The computer-based exams will begin from December 15 for the three categories of posts and a detailed schedule will be announced

very soon," Yadav said.

"We invited applications for recruitment in various categories for 1,40,640 posts. These were notified in the pre-COVID period. Scrutiny of these applications was completed, but due to COVID-19 pandemic a computer-based examination could not be completed," Yadav said.

Railway Recruitment Boards are committed to holding computer-based tests for all notified vacancies and have been actively assessing the ground situation amid the pandemic, a statement from the Railways said.

Yadav said that since now the experience of holding examination for the JEE and NEET is there, it was felt that the Railways too can start the process which had to be stopped due to coronavirus pandemic.

Standard operating procedures for conducting the examination are being framed.



A BOY PULLS UP his fishing rod from the waters of Dal Lake in Srinagar on Saturday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Antibodies Against Coronavirus Stay In Body For At Least 60 Days: Study

NEW DELHI: A sero survey conducted at a leading hospital in the city over five months has found that the prevalence of antibodies, in a person who has recovered from coronavirus infection, persists for 60-80 days.

The survey found that antibodies persisted in the recovered patient's body for at least 60 days, depending on when the participant was infected or came in touch with infected people.

The participants of the sero survey, jointly done by the Max Hospital and Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, under the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), will again be tested to assess how long the anti-bodies last in the person who contracted COVID-19, said Shantanu Sengupta, the IGIB scientist who conducted the study.

A total of 780 samples were used for the serological testing which include hospital workers and individuals who visited the hospital during the pandemic.

"Our study results confirm that anti SARS-CoV-2 antibodies could remain for more than 60 days in the body. This is a step forward towards better understanding of the infection



recovery and re-infection pattern. There is a need for larger follow-up studies to further assess how long the antibodies remain stabilised in the body," Mr Sengupta said.

Sujeet Jha of the Institute of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism Max Healthcare, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, said, "This study, being a longitudinal study, would help us to understand if asymptomatic or symptomatic seropositive individuals are protected for COVID-19 and if yes, for how long," said.

In total, 448 staff --- physicians (59), nurses (70), administrative staff (15), front office (12), catering (17), housekeeping (46), security (9), laboratory (45), pharmacy (8), general duty assistant (28), engineering (21), home care (5), research (19),

and others (94) from different hospital units participated in the study.

There were 65.8 per cent males and 34.1 per cent females among the hospital staff.

From the general population -- those who visited the hospital -- 332 individuals (77.1 per cent males and 22.9 per cent females) also participated in the study.

"We observed an increasing trend of seropositive cases amongst the hospital staff, over a period of four months, from April to July which was expected and is a reflection of the increased spread of the infection in these months."

Among the HCWs (healthcare workers), the seroprevalence increased from April (2.3 per cent) to July (50.6 per cent). The cumulative seroprevalence observed in the study is 16.5 per cent (74/448).

"The prevalence observed in the general population is 23.5 per cent (78/332)," the study said.

The sero survey conducted in the city from June 27 to July 10 found that nearly 23 per cent people had antibodies against coronavirus.

Another survey conducted in the city last month saw the number going up to 29 per cent.

Congress Demands Clarity Over Situation In Ladakh, Reminds Of "Rajdharm"

NEW DELHI: The Congress today urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to take the nation into confidence on talks with China on the border row in Ladakh, saying people want to know about the outcomes of the repeated conversations with the Chinese side.

The Opposition party's demand comes a day after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart General Wei Fenghe held an over two-hour-long meeting in Moscow with a focus on easing escalating border tension in eastern Ladakh.

Congress's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it was "Rajdharm" of the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister to take the nation into confidence on the important issue.

Listing the various levels of talks held with the Chinese from the Foreign Ministers' level and Corps Commanders' level to the Defence Ministers' discussions, Mr Surjewala asked what is the outcome of these talks.

"What is the conversation about, what is happening. Will Prime Minister Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh take the country into



confidence?" he asked.

Mr Surjewala also referred to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's remarks that it was an "unprecedented" situation at the India-China border and "we've never had this sort of a situation since 1962", to underline the seriousness of the issue.

"The important part is what is the outcome of the repeated conversations with the Chinese counterparts by our government... How will we ensure that Chinese transgressions

are defeated," Mr Surjewala said in a video posted on his Twitter account.

He said people want answers to questions such as how the Chinese will be repulsed to "reclaim our motherland".

"We hope Prime Minister Modi and the Defence Minister will come forward and take the nation into confidence. That is the true Rajdharm. We will await an answer," he said.

Later, at an online briefing, Congress leader Rajeev Shukla said, "We hope that the issue can be resolved through talks."

He, however, demanded that the government should give a clear picture of the situation.

"Conflicting statements coming from the government is a matter of worry for us," he added.

The tension between the two sides had escalated manifold after the violent clashes in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35.

"Ayodhya Mosque To Be Of Same Size As Babri Masjid": Trust Formed For Construction

LUCKNOW: A mosque that will come up in Ayodhya pursuant to the Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi case will be of the same size as Babri Masjid, said an office-bearer of the trust formed for its construction.

The five-acre complex in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village will also house a hospital, a library and a museum among others, the office-bearer said, adding that retired professor and noted food critic Pushpesh Pant will be consultant curator of the museum.

"...the complex of the mosque, which will be built in Dhannipur, will also have facilities like a hospital, a museum at the Indo-Islamic Research Centre. The mosque will be on 15,000 square feet, while the rest of the land will have these facilities," Athar Hussain, the secretary and spokesperson of Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), told PTI on Saturday.

"Yesterday, noted food critic Pushpesh Pant gave his consent to curate the museum," Mr Hussain said.

The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board has formed the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), a trust, for the construction of the mosque on the five-acre plot.

Mr Hussain said Professor SM Akhtar of Jamia Millia Islamia will be the consultant architect of the project.

Mr Akhtar, the Head of the



Department of Architecture at Jamia Millia Islamia, told PTI earlier that the entire complex will "bring together the ethos of India and the spirit of Islam".

The Uttar Pradesh government allotted the five-acre plot in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village for the construction of the mosque on the directive of the Supreme Court.

After a protracted legal tussle, the Supreme Court had on November 9 last year ruled in favour of the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya, and directed the Centre to allot an alternative five-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a "prominent" place in the holy town in Uttar Pradesh.

The mosque in Ayodhya was demolished on December 6, 1992 by "kar sevaks" who claimed that an ancient Ram temple stood at the same site.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the "bhoomi puja" ceremony to begin the construction of the Ram temple on August 5.

India Witnessing A 'V-Shaped' Economic Recovery: Finance Ministry

The finance ministry on Friday said the country is witnessing a 'V-shaped' economic recovery and attributed the steep 23.9 per cent contraction of the economy in the June quarter to "stringent lockdown" that was put in place to curb spread of coronavirus infections.

Among the major economies, India witnessed the steepest decline in the GDP growth in the April-June quarter following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The higher contraction has resulted from the stringent lockdown that India enforced in the April-June quarter. India enforced the most stringent lockdown as reflected in the Government Response Stringency Index developed by Oxford University," the ministry said in its Monthly Economic Review for August.

The US economy contracted by 9.1 per cent while UK and France witnessed a contraction of 21.7 per cent and 18.9 per cent, respectively. Spain, Italy and Germany saw their economies contract 22.1 per cent, 17.7 per cent and 11.3 per cent, respectively, in the June quarter, as per the report.

The Euro area registered a contraction of 15 per cent while Japanese economy contracted 9.9 per cent. Relative to these advanced nations, India's GDP contraction at 23.9 per cent is slightly higher, the report said.



On the positive side, the report said that stringent lockdown has enabled India to restrain the pandemic-induced death rate to be one of the lowest in the world. India's case fatality rate was at 1.78 per cent as on August 31 as compared with 3.04 per cent in the US, 12.35 per cent in the UK, 10.09 per cent in France, 1.89 per cent in Japan and 13.18 per cent in Italy.

Further, the report said the country was witnessing a V-shaped pattern of recovery as is seen in various high-frequency indicators.

The indicators are auto sales, tractor sales, fertiliser sales, railway freight traffic, steel consumption and production, cement production, power consumption, e-way bills, GST revenue collection, daily toll collections on highways, retail financial transactions, manufacturing PMI, performance of core industries, capital inflows and exports, it added.

India's manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) at 52.2 moved into the expansionary zone in August for the first time since the lockdown, presenting much required recovery prospects for the manufacturing sector, it added.

NEWS MAKERS

Final Arguments On MJ Akbar's Defamation Case To Be Resumed On September 8

NEW DELHI: A Rouse Avenue court in Delhi on Saturday adjourned to September 8 the final arguments on former union minister MJ Akbar's defamation case against journalist Priya Ramani in connection with sexual harassment allegations made against him.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Vishal Pahuja adjourned the matter as the arguments remained inconclusive during the hearing today.

Senior advocate Rebecca John, who is representing Ms Ramani, told the court that a true imputation made in public good is not defamation and said that Ms Ramani's alleged defamatory tweets and the Vogue article written by her



were her truth and her case is an affirmative defence.

Ms John also read the complaint filed by Mr Akbar, who had called Ms Ramani's allegations as a figment of her imagination and fabricated non-events.

Ms Ramani was summoned in the defamation case filed by Mr Akbar. The defamation charge was framed against her on April 10, 2019, which Ms Ramani pleaded

not guilty and claimed trial.

"I pleaded not guilty and also pleaded my defence," senior advocate John said adding that her defence was supported by two defence witnesses.

During the arguments, Ms John took the court through the files pertaining to Mr Akbar's cross examination.

Mr Akbar had filed a defamation case against Ms Ramani for accusing him of sexual misconduct.

He had on October 17, 2018, resigned as the union minister after his name cropped up on social media after the #MeToo campaign raged on in the country. Ms Ramani had accused Akbar of sexual misconduct, a charge denied by him.

Face Masks With Exhale Valves May Hamper Covid-19 Mitigation Efforts: Study

Face masks with exhale valves and face shields may not be as effective as regular masks in restricting the spread of aerosol droplets, and could potentially hamper COVID-19 mitigation efforts, researchers, including those of Indian origin, have found.

The scientists from Florida Atlantic University in the US used qualitative visualisations to test how face shields and masks with valves perform in impeding the spread of aerosol-sized droplets.

They found that widespread public use of these alternatives to regular masks could potentially have an adverse effect on mitigation efforts.

For the study, published in the journal Physics of Fluids, the re-

searchers employed flow visualisation in a laboratory setting using a laser light sheet, and a mixture of distilled water and glycerin to generate the synthetic fog that made up the content of a cough-jet.

They visualised droplets expelled from a mannequin's mouth while simulating coughing and sneezing.

By placing a plastic face shield and an N95-rated face mask with a valve, the researchers including Siddhartha Verma, lead author and an assistant professor at Florida Atlantic University, were able to map out the paths of droplets and demonstrate how they performed.

Results of the study show that although face shields block the initial forward motion of the jet, the



expelled droplets move around the visor with relative ease and spread out over a large area depending on light ambient disturbances, the researchers said.

Visualisations for the face mask equipped with an exhalation port indicate that a large number of droplets pass through the exhale valve unfiltered, which significantly reduces its effectiveness as a

means of source control, they said.

"From this latest study, we were able to observe that face shields are able to block the initial forward motion of the exhaled jet, however, aerosolised droplets expelled with the jet are able to move around the visor with relative ease," said Manhar Dhanak, a professor, and co-author of the paper.

"Over time, these droplets can disperse over a wide area in both lateral and longitudinal directions, albeit with decreasing droplet concentration," Dhanak said.

To demonstrate the performance of the face shield, researchers used a horizontal laser sheet in addition to a vertical laser sheet revealing how the droplets cross the horizontal plane.