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News Digest

3 Die After Vehicle Falls Into Gorge

Jammu- Three people were killed and four others injured after a vehicle in which they were travelling skidded off the road and rolled down a deep gorge in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, officials said on Wednesday. The Tata mobile vehicle was on its way to Kumat in the district from Kastigarh when the incident occurred at Chellai Chuchatar Tuesday night, the officials said. Police and locals reached the spot and shifted the injured to a hospital here.

4 Grenades Found In Rajouri

Jammu: Four hand grenades were found near a field in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Wednesday, police said. A bomb disposal squad of the Army destroyed the hand grenades at the spot, they added. A villager from Mehrikalakote informed the police about the hand grenades, after which a team from the Kalakote police station rushed to the spot. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Rajouri, Chandan Kohli said. Police is investigating the matter, he added.

Bear Injures Man In Handwara

Srinagar- An elderly man on Wednesday was critically injured in an attack by a bear in north Kashmir's Kupwara district. 65-year-old Wali Mohammad Sheikh of Dolipora village in Tehsil Villgam was outside his home when the bear attacked him during the wee hours today, official said. In the surprise attack, the elderly man sustained serious injuries. SHO Villgam Mohammad Suleiman told news agency GNS that the injured has been shifted to a Srinagar hospital for advanced treatment.

Boniyaar Teen Drowns In Jhelum

Baramulla: A teenager on Wednesday drowned in river Jhelum in Boniyar area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district. 14-year-old Shahid Ahmad, of Khudalan locality of Nowshera in Uridrowned in Jhelum while taking a bath with his friends on Wednesday afternoon, news agency KNO reported. His friends, the report said informed the passerby about the incident and sought their help. "A few local youth jumped into the river to rescue the boy but couldn't spot him," an official said. He said that police also reached the spot and launched a search operation to trace the boy.

Man Held For Assaulting Naib Tehsildar

Baramulla: A Naib Tehsildar in Kreeri area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district was on Wednesday injured after he was allegedly thrashed by a local youth when he was removing the encroachment in Wanigampayeen area. ANaib Tehsildar along with other officials reached Wanigampayeen area to remove illegal encroachment where he was attacked by a local youth with axes, leaving him injured, officials told KNO. They said the official has received minor injuries and his condition is stable. Meanwhile, police have arrested the accused in connection with the case and identified him as Muhammad Ashraf of Wanigampayeen on basis of a complaint lodged by ● P-02

Parliament Passes J&K Official Languages Bill, 2020

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Parliament on Wednesday passed a Bill for inclusion of Kashmiri, Dogri and Hindi in the list of official languages in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, in addition to the existing Urdu and English.

The Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill, 2020 was passed by Rajya Sabha through voice vote. Lok Sabha had cleared the legislation on Tuesday. Replying to a debate on the Bill, Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said it was a long-standing demand of the people of Jammu and Kashmir that the language they speak should be included in the list of official languages.

The minister pointed out that around 74 per cent people in the Union Territory spoke Kashmiri and Dogri languages.

He said that according to 2011 census, only 0.16 per cent population in Jammu and Kashmir spoke Urdu, while 2.3 per cent spoke Hindi.

Reddy said the government would

Bill Against Constitutional Propriety: NC

National Conference Member of Parliament from Anantnag retired Justice Hasnain Masoodi on Wednesday said the Jammu and Kashmir official Languages Bill, 2020 is against the constitutional propriety because the law is a consequence of the J&K State Reorganization Bill which is under the judicial scrutiny of Supreme Court of India. While speaking on the J&K official languages ● P-02



Huge Anomaly Corrected: Jitendra Singh

Hailing the passage of the Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill in Parliament, Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said a huge anomaly stands corrected with official recognition being accorded to Kashmiri and Dogri. He said it was a "gross injustice" to not have included these two languages, which are spoken by over 73 per cent of Jammu and Kashmir's population, in its ● P-02



also take steps to encourage other local languages like Punjabi, Gurjari and Pahari in the region. Participating in the debate

on the Bill, Naresh Gujral (SAD) termed it "unfortunate" that Punjabi was not included in the Bill ● PAGE 02

IT HURTS THE FEELING OF THOSE WHO ARE SETTLED there. I would urge the government to reconsider because language is the basis of cultural heritage of the community."

IFJ, IJU Ask J&K Govt To 'Stop Persecuting' Journalists



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Four days after a Kashmiri journalist was reportedly thrashed and abused by police over a news story, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its India affiliate Indian Jour-

nalists Union (IJU) on Wednesday asked Jammu and Kashmir authorities to stop "persecuting" journalists for doing their jobs.

Auqib, an accredited journalist with Kashmir Observer, was verbally summoned by the Cyber Police station on September 18 over his story titled, 'The real cyberbully: Police in Kashmir question Twitter Users' which appeared in 'Article 14' a New Delhi based web portal.

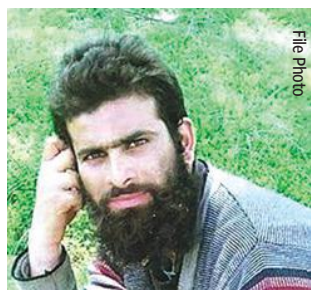
According to Auqib, he was slapped twice by a masked cop outside the room of Superintendent of Police of the Cyber Wing, Tahir Ashraf Bhatli when ● PAGE 02

Militant Killed In Budgam Encounter Had Saved 19 Soldiers During 2014 Floods

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The militant killed in an overnight encounter by the government forces in central Kashmir's Chrar-i-Sharif quarter was once hailed by the authorities after he rescued at least 19 army soldiers during the devastating floods of 2014.

26-year-old Asif Muzaffar Shah, a resident of south Kashmir's Pulwama district was killed in an encounter by a joint team of army, police and CRPF in Nowhard village of Chrar-i-Sharif on Tuesday. However, his death in the gunfight has also revealed an unheard story of his wit, valour and courage.



Coming from a modest family, Shah was the eldest among two siblings. He completed his graduation in Arts subject from Government Degree College Pulwama. His father was a retired teacher of Zaf-

fran Public High School, Samboora, while his mother is a housewife.

Before taking up arms this year in August, Shah was running a cosmetic and stationary shop at Kakpora area of the district to support his family, including his ailing mother, a close neighbor told Kashmir Observer.

However, prior to joining militancy, Shah, according to him had won widespread accolades for saving nearly 19 soldiers, who were caught in ravaging floods of 2014 in Samboora.

"When the gushing waters were sweeping villages one after another, two army ● PAGE 02

Protests In Leh After BJP Leader Terms Sixth Schedule Demand 'Nonsense'

Auqib Javeed

SRINAGAR: Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) National General Secretary Ram Madhav On Wednesday faced a strong protest in Leh after his party leader termed the demand of sixth schedule by social, political and religious groups of the Union Territory as 'Nonsense'.

According to reports, scores of people under the banner of People's Movement for Sixth Schedule for Ladakh, an amalgam of different political parties and socio-religious organizations this evening staged a demonstration against BJP General Secretary of Ladakh, Ashok



Koul's statement that the demand of sixth schedule for the UT was 'Nonsense'. The protests, reports said happened at a time when BJP

National General Secretary Ram Madhav arrived in Leh town.

The protesters were chanting slogans against Koul ● PAGE 02

J&K Posted Revenue Surplus Of Rs 7,595 Cr In 2017-18: CAG

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir had marked a revenue surplus of Rs 7,595 crore in 2017-18, while the total expenditure increased to Rs 51,294 crore, a CAG report said on Wednesday.

Its 'Own Tax Revenue' also showed a steady increase, particularly in tax on sale of goods and services and GST which increased from Rs 4,579 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 7,104 crore in 2017-18, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) said in the report presented in Parliament. The report on the finances for

the year ended March 31, 2018 revealed Jammu and Kashmir had a revenue surplus which increased from Rs 2,166 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 7,595 crore during 2017-18.

"The Fiscal Deficit (FD) decreased from Rs 6,177 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 2,778 crore in 2017-18. The State had a Primary Deficit of Rs 1,610 crore in 2016-17 and Primary Surplus of Rs 1,885 crore during 2017-18," it said.

The report said the growth rate of revenue receipts decreased from 17.31 per cent to 15.56 per cent, which was higher than the growth rate of GSDP during 2017-18. Share in Union taxes ● PAGE 02

Govt Employee Booked For Securing Job On Fake Papers

JAMMU: The Crime Branch of Jammu and Kashmir Police on Wednesday registered a case against an employee of the Power Development Department (PDD) for allegedly securing his job on fake and fabricated documents, a spokesman of the investigating agency said.

A criminal case was filed against Sadhu Ram, a resident of Bishnah area of Jammu, after documentary evidence prima facie established that he had procured the government job on the fake name of Kaka Ram, the spokesman said.

The matter came to light after a written complaint was lodged by Radha Krishan. The accused had also changed his date of birth from 1954 to 1958. ● P-02

AC Approves Election To Panchayat Bypolls

SRINAGAR: The Administrative Council (AC) which met under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Wednesday approved the proposal of the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj to issue a notification for conducting elections to vacant Sarpanch/Panch constituencies.

The detailed schedule will be finalised by the election authority, an official spokesperson said Wednesday.

He said filling of the vacant constitutional posts will ensure devolution of powers and ● P-02

Mehbooba's Detention: Daughter Iltija Moves SC Seeking To Amend Plea

SRINAGAR: Iltija Mufti, the daughter of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, has approached the Supreme Court seeking to modify her petition challenging the detention of her mother under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA).

Mehbooba, the president of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), was arrested on the eve of the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and its bifurcation into Union Territories on August 5 last year.

In her application before the Supreme Court, Iltija said it has been filed praying for permission to amend the writ petition seeking inter alia a writ of habeas corpus.

"The amendment sought is to include grounds of challenge and additional prayers for challenging the orders of confirmation (dated February



26) and subsequent extensions (May 5 and July 31) of the detention order (of Mehbooba) impugned in the writ petition," the application reads.

The writ petition has challenged Mehbooba's detention on several grounds. It contends that the grounds and the dossier for detention are "stale, vague and that they ● PAGE 02

In FOCUS Humour Mills Go On Overdrive After Late Night Boom In Srinagar

SRINAGAR: It's a sonic boom! It's a pressure cooker bursting! It's a quake! And yes, the late night boom that reverberated across the city and several parts of south Kashmir on Tuesday was indeed a quake, seismologists later confirmed. But before that, social media humour and rumour mills were already on overdrive with messages facetious, flippant and sometimes funny.

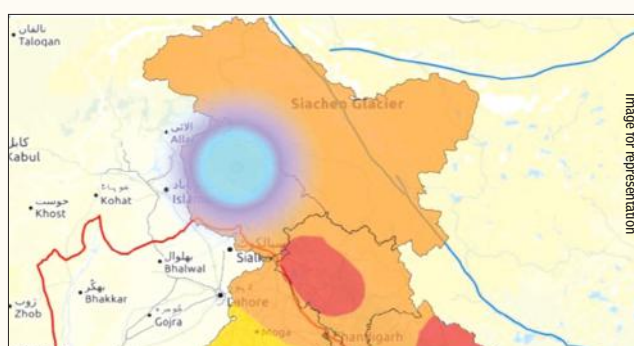
The National Centre for Seismology (NCS) confirmed that a 3.6 magnitude earthquake was recorded around 9.40 pm at a shallow depth of 5 km. No one was quite sure till then what caused the loud noise and sudden shaking of houses in Srinagar this was followed by another after 10 minutes.

Twitterati was unstoppable by then, using references from popular culture and current events for a series of posts.

One post blamed 'Rishi', a character from the 2,184-episode Hindi TV soap Saath Nibhana Saathiya which ran on Star Plus for seven years. She put an empty pressure cooker on the gas stove and it eventually burst, it said, provoking mirth all around.

Amid continued tensions along the Sino-India border, another said it was "a missed call by China" and attached a string of smiles.

"Friends, we in #Kashmir are now in the era of municipality-limited earthquakes. 2-second tremor in 15 wards, with epicentre under galli no. 420," said a tweet



amid confusion over whether it was an earthquake or an aircraft breaking the sonic boom barrier.

The first post that appeared said in Kashmiri that there was an earthquake type feeling but the same is not confirmed by the officials.

"It wasn't an earthquake but earthquake-like, it wasn't a blast but blast-like, aur humari zindagi essi confusion mein rahi ki us may iqrar kiya k inkaar (And our life continues in this confusion as there was no confirmation nor a

denial)," said another.

One Twitter user posted a picture of "Jadoo", the blue ET-style alien from Hrithik Roshan starrer Koi Mil Gaya and attributed the boom to his presence near "Ghantaghar" at the city centre Lal Chowk.

A notification in August issued by the Indian Air Force about night exercises also started doing the rounds of WhatsApp and people said it could be a war exercise.

Even a tweet from Deputy Commissioner Shahid Choudhury failed to put a lid on humour.

Some netizens, tongue firmly in cheek, said the Jammu and Kashmir administration was testing the restoration of 4G internet service, resulting in shocking the entire Union Territory. ● PAGE 02

Observer Monitoring Desk

NEW DELHI: Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Member Parliament Farooq Abdullah has said that the people of Kashmir don't want to be called Indians today and that they would rather prefer to be ruled by China, instead of India.

"To be honest, I wonder whether they (Modi govt) will find somebody who will call himself an Indian today. What they did on 5th August last year, was the last nail in the coffin of India. And that's what they did. You go and talk to anybody; they don't want to be known as Indians," Abdullah told Karan Thapar in an exclusive interview.

The firebrand mainstream leader also said that the people of Kashmir have lost faith from the Modi-led government.

"We had joined Gandhi's India, not Modi's India," he said.

The NC Patron went on to say that

the people of Kashmir would prefer to be ruled by Chinese than India.

"Today, when China is advancing on the other side, you know many of you talk to them they would have rather Chinese coming in. I am honest about it. I am telling you what people do not want to listen," he said.

Abdullah also described the Kashmiris as slaves who were being treated like second class citizens.

In the 44-minute interview, the NC patron rubbished Bharatiya Janata Party's claim that the people of Kashmir have accepted the August 2019 changes just because there have been no protests.

He said if the soldiers on every street and Section 144 were to be lifted, people will come out in their tens of lakhs.

Abdullah told The Wire that the new domicile law was intended to flood the Valley with Hindus and create a Hindu majority. He said this has further embittered the Kashmiri people.

Asked as to how Kashmiris view the Central government and, in particular, Prime Minister Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, Abdullah said they were deeply disillusioned. He said they had no trust in the Central government. The trust that once bound Kashmir to the rest of the country has completely snapped, he added.

Abdullah revealed details of his meeting with the Prime Minister roughly 72 hours before August 5, 2019 when the constitutional changes in Kashmir were announced.

He had met the Prime Minister seeking assurances about the continuation of Articles 370 and 35A. He asked the prime minister why there were so many troops in the Valley and whether this was because of any perceived military threat.

Abdullah suggested the prime minister deliberately went out of his way to give him the impression the massive increase in troops was for security

purposes. He said Modi did not say a word about Articles 370 and 35A. Consequently, Abdullah emerged from that meeting believing the two Articles were not in danger.

When asked, he agreed that the prime minister had misled and deceived him.

Abdullah said that on August 5, 2019, when the constitutional changes were suddenly announced, the National Conference and all other mainstream political parties stood badly discredited in Kashmiri eyes.

Speaking of himself, he said he seemed to have fallen between two stools. The Centre viewed him as a traitor and arrested him. Kashmiris, on the other hand, saw him as a servant of India and said things like this 'serves Abdullah right'. They chided him and taunted him for having said "Bharat Mata ki jai." This left him deeply shaken and upset.

However, after 7-8 months in detention his standing and that of his party

and other mainstream parties has been considerably restored in Kashmiri eyes. People now realise they are not 'servants of India', he said.

Abdullah said that the National Conference and, in fact, all the other parties that had come together to issue the Gupkar Declaration of August 2019, which was reiterated on August 22 this year, were committed to restoring the dignity of Kashmiris. He said this meant reinstating Articles 370 and 35A and restoring statehood. He said he would fight for this – but always peacefully – till his last breath.

Abdullah said that he had faith in the Supreme Court and hoped that it would stop postponing the petition his party has brought and hear it expeditiously. In the interview he, in fact, appealed to Supreme Court judges to hear the constitutional case quickly.

Asked why he had not raised this matter during the present session of parliament, which ends on Wednesday,

Parliament Passes J&K...

and urged the government to reconsider it.

The J&K Constitution included Punjabi and the first Chief Minister of J&K was a Punjabi, he said and added: "It hurts the feeling of those who are settled there. I would urge the government to reconsider because language is the basis of cultural heritage of the community."

He said 13 lakh Punjabis live in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mir Mohammad Fayaz (PDP) demanded inclusion of Gurjari, Punjabi and Pahari in the Bill, saying that the motto of Sabka Saath, Sabka

Vikas was lacking in the state.

"Include Punjabi, Gurjari and Pahari so that we win the trust of everyone in J&K," he said.

Ramdas Athawale (RPI) expressed "support to Dogri and Kashmiri languages" and in his poetic style said a day will come when Pck will come to India.

Mamata Mohanta (BJD) said the bill will facilitate integration of the UT into mainstream. Shamsheer Singh Manhas (BJP) spoke in Dogri. Surendra Singh Nagar (BJP) supported the Bill.

Bill Against Constitutional...

bill in the Lok Sabha, Masoodi, according to a party spokesperson said, "Jammu and Kashmir at the time of its Accession with the Union of India was a sovereign country having its own constitution of 1949, which continued to remain in force until 1950 unlike other constituent units of the country. The constitution of India subsequently provided for J&K to have its own constitution. Subsequently J&K constituted its constituent assembly which culminated in the constitution making the state in 1957.

As per NC spokesperson, Masoodi said the Urdu was made the official language of the state by Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1899 and then again chosen to be the official language of the state by the J&K constituent assembly.

"He said the Parliament is not competent to abrogate the constitution of the state by bifurcating it into two UTs and that the Constitutions cannot be nullified and obliterated altogether even though amendments as per the prescribed law and valid constitutional procedures," the NC spokesperson said.

He said that Masoodi while underscoring the legislative incompetence of the Parliament to amend the Constitution of the state said the constitution of the state was still in force, and Urdu which is the official language of the state under the section 145 of the state constitution is still the official language of the state.

"Constitution cannot be abrogated, and the parliament sams the authority to abrogate it. The constitution can only be changed by the constituent assembly or a referendum. By dividing a state the constitution of J&K cannot be nullified. It is still in force. The J&K official languages bill 2020law which has been brought by the government is a consequence of the J&K state reorganization act 2019, which is constitutionally suspect being challenged in the Supreme Court by 12 petitioners. The constitutional propriety demands that the J&K Official languages bill be taken back as a mark of respect for the country's judiciary and principles of parliamentary democracy," Masoodi said. Masoodi also expressed concern over the haste with which the GOI is pursuing the bill in spite of the formal admission of the state reorganization act of 2019 by the honorable SC for judicial scrutiny.

"The supreme court could decide against the measures of August 2019. By bringing such a law the GOI is anticipating the decisions of the Supreme Court. Ideally the legislature is supposed to respect the judiciary, which unfortunately is not being done here. Even in the J&K reorganization act of 2019 the legislature of J&K has been powered to frame laws on official languages matter under section 47. Here the provision of section 47 is being suspended by the president under emergency provision of section 73 of the reorganization act, which endow the resident to suspend Sec 47 by using Sec 73 for proper administration. Using emergency section of section 73 is also unreasonable because Urdu and English languages are already working official languages of J&K and there is no need to bring this bill. What will the GOI do if SC decides against the measures of 5th August and all the laws which were enacted as a consequence of it?" he said, as per NC spokesperson. He said the NC MP also said unnecessarily confusion is being created on ground by having five official languages for J&K, whereas in other states the number of official languages does not exceed two languages despite their diverse linguistic makeup. "He urged the GOI to take back the law and wait for the final verdict of the Supreme Court on the validation of the measures taken on 5th of august 2019," the NC spokesperson added.

Huge Anomaly Corrected: ...

list of official languages. The Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill, 2020 was passed by Rajya Sabha through voice vote on Wednesday. Lok Sabha had cleared the legislation on Tuesday.

Briefing the media on the bill, Singh recalled that the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir notified Urdu and English as its official languages in 1957 even though they were spoken by less than one per cent of the total population.

With the new constitutional arrangement after August 5, 2019 and Jammu and Kashmir becoming a union territory on the midnight of October 31, 2019, there have been continuous endeavours to correct the anomalies of the past, the Minister of State for Personnel said. The bill passed on Wednesday also sought to do the same, he added. Singh said a huge anomaly stands corrected with official recognition being accorded to regional languages of Dogri and Kashmiri.

Kashmiri is the most widely spoken language in the union territory. It is spoken by 53.26 per cent of the population, while Dogri is spoken by 20.64 per cent. Together, these two languages are spoken by around 73.90 per cent of the population, he said.

"Therefore, it was a gross injustice not to have included these two languages as the official languages," he said.

Singh lauded Union Home Minister Amit Shah for arriving at the decision to include these languages in the official list.

He said the home minister has also corrected another aberration by including Hindi in the list of Jammu and Kashmir's official languages. At the same time, the home minister was considerate enough not to disturb the earlier arrangement, which included Urdu and English. Thus, Jammu and Kashmir will now have five official languages, he added.

According to the 2011 Census, Singh said, the most commonly spoken languages in Jammu and Kashmir after Kashmiri and Dogri are Gojri, Pahadi and Punjabi. Gojri and Pahadi are spoken by 9.32 per cent and 8.03 per cent of the population, respectively, he said. "However, the new legislation does not, in any way, undermine the importance of these lan-

guages and the matter of the fact is that their status and official standing remains the same as it was before 5th August 2019," he said. Singh said the government is committed to the promotion, patronage and growth of all languages, including Punjabi, Gojri and Pahadi, which have a rich heritage and legacy.

"While their status will remain unaltered and same as it was before 5th August 2019, the government will make further endeavours to strengthen the mechanism for growth of these languages," he said.

BDC Member Shot Dead In...

he was attacked by the militants, the official added. Meanwhile, suspected militants on Wednesday fired upon state forces in main town Pulwama of South Kashmir's Pulwama district. Official sources said that militants fired upon on state forces in main town Pulwama. However in this incident no loss of life or injury has been reported so far. Soon after the attack, the whole area was cordoned off to nab the attackers.

India Fumes Over Erdogan's ...

remarks by the President of Turkey on Indian UT (Union Territory) of Jammu & Kashmir. They constitute gross interference in India's internal affairs and are completely unacceptable. Turkey should learn to respect the sovereignty of other nations and reflect on its own policies more deeply," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti said in a tweet on Tuesday. Erdogan, in his pre-recorded video statement to the General Debate at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, made a reference to Jammu and Kashmir, saying the issue of Kashmir, "which is also key to the stability and peace of South Asia, is still a burning issue. Steps taken following the abolition of the special status of Jammu-Kashmir further complicated the problem."

He said that Turkey was in "favour of solving this issue through dialogue, within the framework of the United Nations resolutions and especially in line with the expectations of the people of Kashmir". The Turkish President, a close ally of Pakistan, had last year also raised the issue of Kashmir in his address to the high-level General Debate in the General Assembly Hall. India has rejected any third-party intervention in the Kashmir issue and has maintained that all outstanding matters in Indo-Pak ties should be resolved bilaterally.

20 More Coronavirus Deaths...

obstruction with severe COVID pneumonia" also died due to cardio-pulmonary arrest, the doctor added. Regarding the deaths from Valley, officials said, a 57-year-old man from Kupwara died at SMHS hospital, nine days after he was admitted. They said an 82-year-old man from Chandpora Harwan died at SKIMS Bemina, one of the exclusive facilities for the management of the covid-19 patients. They said an 82-year-old man from Peerbagh Srinagar died, seven days after he was admitted at a hospital here. (With GNS inputs)

16 Security Men, Two Docs ...

Jammu division reported 646 new cases of Covid-19, while remaining 603 were confirmed by the officials from Kashmir valley. Giving district-wise details, officials said Srinagar reported 199, Budgam 62, Baramulla 80, Pulwama 25, Anantnag 40, Bandipora 41, Kupwara 61, Ganderbal 74, Kulgam 13, Shopian 8, Jammu 230, Rajouri 88, Udhampur 48, Kathua 24, Doda 61, Samba 39, Poonch 58, Ramban 44, Reasi 14 and Kishtwar 40. During the same, officials said that J&K had more than double recoveries as 2796 patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals— 1578 from Jammu Division and 1218 from Kashmir.

IFJ, IJU Ask J&K Govt To...

he was on way to meet the officer on Saturday. The SP, he said had also hurled choice abuses at him. In a statement issued today, the IFJ and IJU condemned the police's "highhandedness" and urged the Indian authorities to stop such the "violence and intimidation" of journalists. "The summoning of journalists by police and security persons has become common practice in the valley. The higher ups in the police and security agencies must sensitize the subordinates to respect freedom of expression rights of media," IJU President Geetarth Pathak said in a joint statement issued today. The IFJ said that it has documented a disturbing series of attacks and harassment of media and journalists in Jammu and Kashmir following extended internet shutdown. "The IFJ demands that authorities stop persecuting journalists and media workers for doing their jobs and ensure that any internet restrictions are lifted," the statement said. The statement further said that the journalists in the J&K region are frequently "harassed, threatened and summoned" particularly over any criticism of the Indian government revocation of article 370 which lead to the imposed internet shutdown in August 5, 2019.

"On July 31, Qazi Shibli, the editor of news portal The Kashmiriyat , was detained while Fahad Shah, editor of news portal Kashmir Walla, was summoned on May 20. The police in Srinagar also filed separate investigations or First Information Reports (FIR) against Kashmiri photojournalist Masrat Zahra and journalist Gowhar Geelani on April 18 and April 21 respectively. And, cyber police in Srinagar questioned journalist Peerzada Ashiq on April 19 in relation to the journalist's news articles'," the statement added.

Protests In Leh After BJP Leader...

and reiterating their demand for a sixth schedule to protect the regions' jobs, rights, land, environment, and rich culture and to prevent mass migration. On Tuesday, almost all social, religious and political parties, including BJP put a united front and announced boycott of upcoming Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) polls.

The political parties met Tuesday and decided to boycott the upcoming LAHDC elections till the region is granted a constitutional guarantee to protect the land and job rights of its people.

The hill council elections are scheduled to be held on October 16, the first such exercise in the region after Ladakh was carved out from Jammu and Kashmir on August 5 last year.

The combined apex body for people movement, on Tuesday unanimously announced the poll Boycott and urged all to together fight for the rights of the region and refrain from the electoral process unless the demand for 6th schedule is met. In a written statement in which leaders of 12 different political, religious and students bodies have unanimously called for Boycott of the forthcoming 6th LADHC polls scheduled to be held in October next month.

The poll Boycott joint statement was also signed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Leh district president Nawang Sawstan, whose party is currently ruling the region.

The apex body in a joint statement said: "The apex body of people's

movement for sixth schedule for Ladakh, unanimously resolved to boycott the ensuing 6th LAHDC Leh election till such time the Constitutional safeguard under 6th schedule on the line of Bodo territorial Council is not extended to Ladakh UT and its people."

The development has created rift among BJP and can have ripple-effects across Jammu and Kashmir.

On Wednesday, Ashok Koul, BJP state general secretary, J&K reached Ladakh to "pacify" his party men.

"The meeting is going on, we can't make any comments right now," BJP district President, Nawang Samstan told Kashmir Observer on phone. The development took place days after the BJP led Ladakh Hill Development Council Leh passed a resolution seeking safeguards under Article 371 of the Constitution of India or sixth schedule or domicile law to protect the tribal rights of the indigenous people of Ladakh on September 03.

Former BJP's chief in Ladakh who, resigned from the party, citing loss of power of the Autonomous Hill Councils of Leh and Kargil districts after Ladakh was made into a Union Territory in the month of May told Kashmir Observer that the people of Ladakh feel betrayed and cheated in the name of giving UT.

"It was our long pending demand for UT status but with the legislature, however, we were not provided by the legislature after August 5," Chering Dorjay told Kashmir Observer.

Dorjay said, it has been over a year of disappointment and betrayal. So political parties have decided to boycott the elections. He said the developmental activities in the region were dependent on the hill councils under LAHDC Act and they have been left powerless following the abrogation of Article 370. "The UT administration in Ladakh was not allowing the functioning of LAHDC in the way they should be. So, all the developments came under halt and the people were angry," Dorjay said.

After being given UT status last year, Ladakh has been directly ruled by New Delhi. It has two Autonomous Hill Councils, one for Leh and another for Kargil that enjoyed powers before the revocation of special statuses. Jigmet Paljor, Chief Coordinator Ladakh Students' and Environmental Action Forum, who is also one of the members of the apex body told Kashmir Observer that it's senseless to fight the elections for a body, which is powerless—while referring to LAHDC.

"We are demanding that until or unless the government doesn't empower the hill council, there is no meaning of contesting the elections," Paljor told Kashmir Observer.

Paljor said UT was a long pending demand but they expect domicile type law in Ladakh as well, that will protect their land and job rights, "We also want our culture, identity, environment and other things to be preserved and I hope the Govt will not take any step that will hurt us," Paljor added. The young students' coordinator from Ladakh said the 6th schedule is the ultimate solution for the issue and they should be granted the same. Rigzin Spalbar, former chairman of the Ladakh Hill Development Council (LAHDC), told Kashmir Observer that nothing is safe in Ladakh until New Delhi won't implement Sixth Schedule.

"The Sixth Schedule grants considerable autonomy to tribal communities," the Buddhist leader said. "The District Council and the Regional Council gets the real power to make laws."

However, on December 3, 2019, New Delhi made it clear that Ladakh may not fall under Sixth Schedule of Constitution.

The Sixth Schedule provides for the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram after setting up autonomous district and regional councils.

Since the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir no longer exists following the revocation of special status last August, the region's legislature can make laws pertaining to matters contained in the state list or the concurrent list, except the subjects mentioned in entries one and two – Public Order and Police. Over a year after the central Government read down article 370 of the Indian constitution that gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated it into two Union Territories (UT)—Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. But ever since the revocation of the special status, the Kargil district with Muslim majority showed a strong resentment against the parting away from Jammu and Kashmir. However, Ladakh and Leh district with Buddhist majority celebrated the UT status on roads. It was a long pending demand of the people of Leh that got fulfilled. But, as the new union territory administration took change, the hill council and the political leaders found themselves powerless and had a feeling of loss of ownership and special privileges, giving birth to new politics. Ever since Ladakh became a new union territory of India, the protesting youth said they have been getting anxious about their job security.

Earlier, on July 24, Ladakh had observed a complete shutdown against "discrimination in jobs and recruitment". The call for strike was given by Ladakh Students Educational and Environmental Action Forum and supported by other religious and political organisations. Most of the people feared over the "demographic change" in Ladakh and demanded domicile-type law in the cold desert as well. The political developments are gaining pace and at the same time, the anger among people is growing against "New Delhi's betrayal". According to reports, many political parties were protesting in front of The Grand Dragon, in Leh where Ashok Koul is staying.

Govt Employee Booked For...

managed a fake school leaving certificate and a fabricated permanent resident certificate from the Revenue Department through fraudulent means, the spokesman said. Taking cognizance into the matter, a preliminary verification was conducted and the documentary evidences were collected. The age of accused as per the land record of 1970 makes it clear that he was born before 1958, not in the year 1958 as mentioned in his school leaving certificate. Moreover, in the voter list records of Parliament, it is registered that the accused is a non-permanent resident of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. "It is established that the accused was not eligible to acquire a permanent resident certificate of the state and prepared fake documents like PRC and school leaving certificate," the spokesman said.

AC Approves Election To...

proper grass-root planning in the 3rd-tier of the Local Self Government. It will ensure that the non-functional Panchayats become functional.

"Earlier, general elections to 39,521 Sarpanch/Panch constituencies in 4,483 Halqa Panchayats were conducted in 2018 of which 13,257 positions are vacant due to resignation, removal, election of Sarpanch as BDC Chairpersons, death, and non-availability of candidates at the time of election. Among them, 1,089 vacancies pertain to the office of Sarpanch, whereas 12,168 are Panch vacancies," the official spokesperson said. Pertinently, the elections to the vacancies notified earlier were postponed due to security concerns and the onset of COVID-19.

day, September 23, he said he was not given time. He said he had gone to meet Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla, along with MPs from Congress, Trinamool, DMK and the Communist Parties, and the speaker had assured them time for a discussion would be allocated. But that never happened. Asked if he believed the government had intervened and told the speaker not to give time, Abdullah said he did not know but agreed that the speaker had not kept his word.

The NC MP told The Wire that in the greater interest of Kashmir, the Mufti and Abdullah families have buried their past differences and come together. He said, today, Mehbooba Mufti was politically close to both his son Omar and himself. He said that he was in touch with her frequently, every week.

In one of the more angry moments of the interview, Abdullah asked why Mehbooba Mufti has not been released. "Is she a criminal?"

he thundered.

Asked if her incarceration has begun to affect her, Abdullah asked a question in return: "How can it not? She is a human being after all."

Abdullah added that whether the National Conference will contest the next state elections is a decision that will be taken, first, democratically within the National Conference itself and he, as president, will not impose his personal thinking. The decision will also be taken in concert with all the other Gupkar parties, he said.

Abdullah said his son Omar Abdullah's announcement in a recent Indian Express article that he would not contest elections whilst Kashmir remains a Union Territory is Omar's personal decision and not the position of the National Conference. However, he added that if Omar does not wish to contest, that is his right. Of himself, he said, he would abide by whatever decision the party took collectively.

J&K Posted Revenue Surplus...

and duties and grants from the Union government together constituted 66.30 per cent of the total revenue receipts of the state during 2013-14, which increased to 71.35 per cent in 2017-18. "Total expenditure of the state increased from Rs 48,174 crore to Rs 51,294 crore. Capital Expenditure including Loans and Advances and Revenue Expenditure increased from Rs 8,362 crore to Rs 10,378 crore and Rs 39,812 crore to Rs 40,916 crore respectively during 2016-17 to 2017-18," the CAG said.

It said the cash balances were lesser than un-invested reserve funds amounting to Rs 2,164 crore, which means that the reserve funds were utilised for other than intended purpose. "The share of Revenue Expenditure in Total Expenditure during 2017-18 was 79.77 per cent which was lesser than that of 2016-17 which was 82.64 per cent. Revenue Expenditure (Rs 40,916 crore) was within the projection made by the State and more than the projection made by the 14 th FC (Rs 36,092 crore). This was mainly due to increase in salaries and pension payment," the report said. It said the percentage of developmental capital expenditure to total expenditure increased from 12.18 per cent in 2013-14 to 18.62 per cent in 2017-18, while the share of development revenue expenditure to total expenditure decreased from 49.41 per cent to 46.84 per cent during the same years. "Committed expenditure on account of salary, pension, interest payment and subsidies constituted about 67 per cent during 2017-18, as against 63 per cent in the previous year. An amount of Rs 96.08 crore was invested during 2017-18 in such companies which have accumulated losses as per latest finalised accounts," it said.

The report said the fiscal deficit was 1.97 per cent, which is within the target of 3 per cent of GDP set under the FRBM Act. With regard to Financial Management and Budgetary Control, the report said during 2017-18, in nine cases, against the approved provisions of Rs 19,852.10 crore, an expenditure of Rs 26,249.16 crore was incurred, thereby exceeding provision by Rs 6,397.06 crore. "This requires regularization from State Legislature," it said, adding there were persistent errors in budgeting, savings and excess expenditure. The excess expenditure requiring regularisation of the state legislature was Rs 1,14,061.35 crore, as on March 31, 2018, the report said. During 2017-18, the CAG said a sum of Rs 2,395.97 crore of grants-in-aid, subsidy of Rs 152.00 crore, Rs 0.43 crore of stipend and scholarship, Rs 2.94 crore as salary and Rs 301.99 crore under operating cost of procurement or sale of essential commodities through PDS were disbursed under the capital major heads of expenditure, as against the requirement of being accounted under revenue heads.

The report said there were delays in furnishing utilisation certificates against the loans and grants from various grantee institutions. "Abnormal delays were noticed in submission of annual accounts by some of the departmental commercial undertakings and Autonomous Bodies," it said.

Militant Killed In Budgam...

Cassiper vehicles from Lethpora camp got stuck in the floods at Samboora. Asif Shah demonstrated wit and courage and rescued the soldiers who had climbed the roof of the armored vehicle," said the neighbor. Shah, he said, took a large boat and rescued the soldiers, including a captain who were shouting for help atop the vehicles. "He didn't only rescue soldiers but also arranged food and clothing for them. He was a kind and religious person," he said. Shah, he said, won appreciation by the army and civil authorities for his exemplary courage. He said the army also offered to provide him a suitable job, which he turned down. "His act was also praised by politicians. But then, Shah had Kashmiri cause dear to him. He would attend pro-freedom rallies and funerals of militants. Many times, he was also arrested on charges of joining protests," the neighbor said. However, Shah's life, he said, took a U-turn when he was arrested on charges of supporting militants following the deadliest attack on state forces in Pulwama in 2019 in which over 40 CRPF personnel were killed. "He was grilled by police over the attack. He was released after several weeks only to be quizzed again by NIA," he said. Talking about Shah's tryst with arms, the neighbor claimed that four days before he went missing on August 13, he was summoned by NIA to Jammu. "However, he chose to skip the summon and take a different path," he added. Later it surfaced that he had joined ranks of a militant group Jaish-e-Muhammad. Meanwhile, Shah was laid to rest at a graveyard in north Kashmir's Handwara some 80 kilometers away from his native village by the police.

Mehbooba's Detention...

suffer from non-application of mind, malice in law and that they violate the provisions of Section 8(3)(b) of the PSA". "The detention order based on stale grounds have become staler even more since the petition was filed and the respondent administration has continued to act with total non-application of mind and the malice in law has only been reinforced and aggravated in confirming and extending the order of detention for further periods," it said. Seeking permission to allow her to attend the section of the writ petition entitled Prayers, Ilitja pleaded for issuance of the writ in the nature of habeas corpus commanding the respondents – the central and Jammu and Kashmir governments – to produce Mehbooba forthwith before the court for being set at liberty. Pleading for direction or order quashing the impugned order of detention and subsequent extension orders, the application sought appropriate compensation to Mehbooba for the "illegal detention that she has suffered" and to award costs of the litigation to the petitioner. "I have challenged her PSA order and the subsequent extensions to ensure her continued detention. Her detention is illegal and questionable in a democracy," Ilitja said, adding "a key opposition leader has been jailed for over a year without recourse to trial." She said the application has been filed to bring to the notice of the Supreme Court that the Jammu and Kashmir administration is yet to file a reply to its earlier order, which shows the respect the authorities have for courts. "We are also bringing to notice of court the treatment the former chief minister has received where she has been deliberately kept out of bounds for party people and barred from attending to her duties as PDP president," she said.

Humour Mills Go On Overdrive...

The union territory, except for Ganderbal in Kashmir and Udhampur in Jammu, has been operating on 2G internet services since the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5 last year. There were no reports of any casualties or damage to property from the tremors on Tuesday night.

Man Held For Assaulting...

the Tehsildar. "A case has been registered under FIR number 101/2020 under section 307, 353, 427 IPC at Police Station Kreeeri Baramulla in this regard," police said.

LG Okay's Regularisation/ Promotion of 550 SPs DySps

More than three decades old seniority disputes and resultant litigations put to rest

JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 23: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has regularised/promoted more than 550 officers at the level of SP and DySp, and granted/predated selection grade of DySp in favour of more than 300 officers, including about 440 serving officers. This humongous exercise has finally paved the way for the smooth career progression of the Gazetted cadre of J&K Police, putting to rest more than three decades old seniority disputes and resultant litigations, which had restrained the long-pending regularisations/promotions and release of selection grade.

The Lt Governor Manoj Sinha observed that the J&K Police has been at the forefront to tackle the challenges posed by terrorism, displaying exemplary bravery and courage while at the same time, ensuring a secure environment for law-

abiding citizens.

The JKP, however, has been besotted with seniority disputes over a long period of time. The Home Department has undertaken a comprehensive exercise, keeping in consideration the cardinal principles and judicial pronouncements, to address the issue that had been plaguing the Jammu & Kashmir Police (Gazetted) Service for the last three decades.

In the current round, more than 550 officers whose regularization/promotion was pending from different dates since 2007 at the level of SP and at the level of DySp, have been regularized/promoted, as also selection grade of Dy. SP has been granted/predated in respect of more than 300 officers. This includes nearly 440 serving SPs and Dy. SPs. The retired officers will also benefit from pay fixation. These figures need to be seen in the back-

drop of a total of 268 SP level and 575 Dy. SP level posts (including reserves). This exercise has led to the regularisation of all the officiating SPs and completing the groundwork for finalising the seniority list at the level of Dy. SP right up to the present date.

While congratulating the officers, the Lt Governor, Manoj Sinha lauded the effort of the Home Department and said the efficiency and good governance is the key to execute reform on vital fronts.

"We are proud of our Police Force. They have always shown the highest professionalism and the greatest perseverance in handling cross-border terrorism and making a concerted effort in maintaining peace in Jammu and Kashmir. I strongly feel that it's our collective responsibility to address the issue of career progression, well-being of police, and wel-

fare of their families", the Lt Governor said.

In the first phase, in September 2019, 600 plus officers were given a specific date of regularisation as DySP/SP and 153 officers were promoted/ regularised as DySP. Also, SP level regularisation was finalized up to 2007 while in respect of Dy. SP, tentative seniority as in 2009 was notified.

This tentative seniority was finalised in February 2020, setting the stage for the next round of regularisation as well as for officiating promotion on 28.02.2020 of 73 officers as SP, which had been stalled since 2015. Further, despite COVID, officiating promotions of 22 officers to DySp levels were also affected on 18.05.2020.

The resolution of these seniority disputes will pave the way for the smooth career progression of the Gazetted cadre of police i.e. at the level of Dy. SP and SP.

Div Com reviews progress on Z- Morh, Zoji-la tunnels Stresses on speedy tunnel excavation

SRINAGAR: The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole today chaired a quarterly meeting to review pace and progress made on Z- Morh and Zoji La tunnels connecting Kashmir with the Ladakh UT.

During the meeting, the Div Com emphasized that work on all projects is sustained in full swing for speedy completion of all works and targets are achieved within the stipulated time frame.

He instructed Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal and DC Kargil to ensure full support and coordination to the executing agencies so that work execution on both tunnels doesn't face any sort of hindrance or delay.

At the outset, Chief General Manager NEIL, gave a detailed PowerPoint Presentation (PPP) about Z-Morh and Zoji La tunnels, construction of approach roads, lanes, protective walls, drains besides the road and other projects.

The chair was informed that the work process was going on in full swing and against 1055 meters target 680 meters were achieved in the month of September so far.

During the meeting, the Div Com directed concerned to deploy all manpower and put all machinery into services to ensure work on tunnel excavation, bridges and approach road construction is carried out smoothly.

The Div Com said that though the dead-

line for the Z- MORH tunnel is December-21, 2023 however, a bonus up to Rs 400 crores shall be provided to the concerned agency if the project is completed before it's set deadline.

It was further informed that 14.083 km long Zoji La tunnel is constructed to facilitate all weather connectivity between Srinagar and Leh.

On this, the Div Com directed the DC Ganderbal and DC Kargil to ensure speedy forest clearance and completion of land acquisition process on war footing for the construction of Zoji La tunnel besides concerned agencies were instructed to conduct pre-mobilization, arrangements of required staff and installation of machinery.

During meeting , the Div Com also reviewed about the blasts carried out daily, construction of snow galleries, Helipad facilities, dumping sites, clearance, land acquisition for extra creeper land on WP, approach road, land hindrance at take off points, land acquisition for 3rd lane, compensation, and muck dumping sites.

Stressing on early clearance of pending liabilities of vendors, workers, hoteliers, shopkeepers and instructed ADC Ganderbal heading the concerned committee to look into the issue and submit a report within a week's time.

Prestressed Cement Units Get Govt Nod

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 23: The Divisional Level Single Window Clearance Committee, in a meeting held under the chairmanship of Director Industries and Commerce Kashmir, Mahmood Ahmed Shah, gave nod to establishment of new business units in Kashmir division worth Rs. 87.54 crore.

The Committee approved establishment of first of its kind business unit in the region, for manufacturing of Precise/Prestressed Cement products with a total project cost of Rs.35.28 crore.

Meanwhile, the Committee also accorded approval to establishment of two Controlled Atmosphere Stores, one at Industrial Growth Centre Lassipora Pulwama and another at Industrial estate Rangreth, having total investment of Rs. 17.34 crore and Rs. 34.92 crore respectively.

The establishment of these units will open a new era of opportunities at multiple levels apart from contributing towards employment generation and local economy as well.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER ANANTNAG NOTICE

Whereas an application has been received from one Mr.Mohd Anwar Kumar S/O Abdul Rouf Kumar R/O Lehiram Srigufwara Owner of Vehicle No.JK03J-0291for Hire Purchase Endorsement with JK Bank Khiram. Now it is therefore notified for General information that objection if any to the proposed cancellation / Endorsement of Hire Purchase Agreement shall be filled in writing in the Officer of ARTO Anantnag within a period of seven days from the publication of this notice in Daily Kashmir Observer News Paper.

Assistant Regional
Transport Officer Anantnag

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER ANANTNAG NOTICE

Whereas joint application has been received by this office from Mr.Mohd Jaleel Malik S/O Gh Ahmad Malik R/O Chan- yar Marwa (Party No.1st) as Transferor, (Seller) Owner of the Vehicle Alto Bearing Regd. No.JK03E-6419(Commercial/ Non-Commercial) covering under R/P No.Nill. and Mr.Tariq Ahmad Bhat S/O Sonaullah Bhat R/O Wachi Shopain(Party No.2nd) as Transferee (Purchaser) requesting for transfer of R/C & R/P of the above noted Vehicle from party No 1st and 2nd. And Cancellation /Endorsement of hire purchase agreement with Nill.Before the case is disposed off on its merit, anybody have any objection regarding the proposed transfer Army file his objection within(7) days from the publication of this notice to the office of the undersigned. No any representation / objection shall be entertained after stipulated period.

Assistant Regional
Transport Officer Anantnag

Office Of The Executive Engineer Muffasil R&B Division, Budgam

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No:91/MDb/ 5386-5404 of 2020-21 DATED: 22.09.2020

For and on behalf of the President of India, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/ Doc. (In Rs)	E/M (in Rs.)	Time of completion	Class	MH of Account
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Repairs/Renovation of ISM dispensary Building at Garind Khurd Budgam	8.46 Lacs	600/-	16920/-	20 days	DEE/ CEE	2210 Medical
2	Construction of CC drain and R/wall and Edge wall on link road taking off from Trapy road at Khag to the H/O Irshad, Fayaz Ahmad, Bashir Ahmad and others	4.40 Lacs	200/-	8800/-	15 days	DEE	District Sector

(i) Position of AAA:- Accorded

(ii) Position of funds: Available

1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	22.09.2020 4.00 PM.
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	22.09.2020 from 4.00 PM.
3	Bid submission Start Date	22.09.2020 from 4.00 PM.
4	Bid Submission End Date	29.09.2020 upto 4.00 P.M
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	30.09.2020 at 11.00 A.M in the office of Executive Engineer Muffasil R&B Division Budgam

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer Muffasil R&B Division Budgam(tender inviting authority) and Earnest money / Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer Muffasil R&B Division Budgam (tender receiving authority).

2. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer Muffasil R&B Division Budgam (tender receiving authority).

3. The earnest money in favour of unsuccessful bidder shall be released only after submission of Treasury Challan

4. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids

5. The earnest money shall be forfeited, If:-


a. Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.

b. Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.

c. Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

Sd/-
No:5386-5404
Date: 22.09.2020

DIPK-6177/20
Executive Engineer,
Muffasil (R&B) Division, Budgam.



University of Kashmir, Srinagar

(NAAC Accredited Grade A+)

NOTICE

It is notified for the information of all such backlog/mercy chance candidates of BG 1st/2nd & 3rd Year who could not download their examination forms within the prescribed date can now download their examination forms on 23/09/2020 to 25/09/2020.

The fee details for Backlog candidates:-

1	UG Professional/Non-Professional (B.A./B.Sc./B.Com./Fazila) (BBA/BCA/B.Sc.IT/MCMP)	Rs. 250/- per paper (In the name of Registrar, University of Kashmir)
2	EMF "Examination Infrastructure Maintenance & Development Fund"	Rs. 50/- (In the name of Controller of Examinations, University of Kashmir)

The fee details for Mercy Chance candidates:-

1	UG Professional/Non-Professional (B.A./B.Sc./B.Com./Fazila) (BBA/BCA/B.Sc.IT/MCMP)	Rs. 500/- per paper (In the name of Registrar, University of Kashmir)
2	EMF "Examination Infrastructure Maintenance & Development Fund"	Rs. 50/- (In the name of Controller of Examinations, University of Kashmir)

* The candidates shall retain the hardcopy of the examination form for future reference.
* The candidates shall complete the payment of fee online via debit/credit card/Rupay card/UPI (free of charges).
* In case any issue send an email to eExaminationUG@uok.edu.in and the candidate need not to approach the university

Sd/-
Asstt. Controller of Exams

No. F.(BG 1st/2nd/3rd Year Exam Form/KU/20
Dated:-23/09/2020

DIAL-EMMA



- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
06 Safar
1442

PRAYERS

FAJR	4: 57
ZUHR	12: 24
ASR	4:44
Magrib	6:31
ISHA	7:51

This Day In History

- 1493 - Christopher Columbus embarks on his 2nd expedition to the New World, setting sail with a fleet of 17 ships
- 1529 - Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and his Ottoman troops arrive in Vienna, beginning of the siege
- 1688 - France declares war on Germany
- 1706 - Treaty of Altranst dt: Charles XII of Sweden & August II of Saksen
- 1789 - President George Washington nominates John Jay for 1st Chief Justice
- 1789 - US Attorney General Office is created
- 1829 - Russia & Ottoman Empire sign Peace Treaty of Adrianople
- 1838 - Anti-Corn-Law League forms to repeal English Corn Law
- 1841 - British adventurer James Brooke obtains lands around the Sarawak river from the Sultan of Brunel
- 1850 - Papal Bull issued, establishes Roman Catholic hierarchy in England
- 1853 - France annexes New Caledonia
- 1877 - Battle of Shiroyama, decisive victory of the Imperial Japanese Army over the Satsuma Rebellion
- 1943 - Soviet forces reconquer Smolensk
- 1965 - Saudi Arabian & Egyptian accord over Yemen
- 1970 - Soviet space probe Luna 16 lands on earth after 1st unmanned round trip to moon
- 1971 - 90 Russian diplomats expelled from Britain for spying
- 1975 - OPEC announces a 15% increase in government per barrel revenues
- 1978 - USSR performs underground nuclear test
- 1979 - CompuServe began operation as 1st computer information service
- 1980 - Iraqi troops cross Iran's border, encircling Abadan
- 1981 - US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1982 - US, Italian & French peacekeeping troops begin arriving in Lebanon
- 1990 - Iraq invades the French and Dutch missions in Kuwait; French President Mitterrand called the action a violation of international law; a U.S. warship boards an Iraqi-flagged tanker bound for the port of Basrah
- 1990 - Saddam Hussein states his willingness to strike first and his intention to damage oil fields in the region if Iraq does strike
- 1993 - Norodom Sihanouk again installed as King of Cambodia
- 1994 - National League for Democracy is formed by Aung San Suu Kyi and various others to help fight against dictatorship in Myanmar
- 1996 - U.S. President Bill Clinton signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at the United Nations.
- 2001 - Crude oil and petroleum products futures fall to their lowest levels in nearly two years amid fears that a recession will reduce energy demand
- 2013 - 515 people are killed by a magnitude 7.7 earthquake in Balochistan, Pakistan
- 2015 - Stampede of people during the Hajj kills 717 people during symbolic stoning of the devil at Mina, near Mecca, Saudi Arabia
- 2015 - Pope Francis becomes the 1st pope to address the US Congress. Names Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day as his American heroes.
- 2017 - Plastic polystyrene rubbish discovered for first time only 1,000 miles from the north pole by international team of scientists
- 2018 - Pakyong Airport, India's 100th airport, is opened in the Himalayan mountains at 1,400 meters by Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- 2019 - Nancy Pelosi announces formal impeachment inquiry into US President Donald Trump, arguing that he tried to enlist a foreign power for his own political gain

From KO Archives

Pak calls for UN help in Kashmir conflict

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has asked the UN Security Council for help in finding a solution to the Kashmir crisis with India.

"Faced with an intransigent rejection of peaceful means, the Security Council has a responsibility to act," Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar told the UN General Assembly.

The UN charter gives the Security Council, created to defend worldwide peace and security, the power to act, Sattar said.

Settling the Kashmir question is "an indispensable condition for peace and stability in southern Asia," Sattar said, emphasizing that Pakistan has repeatedly sought a peaceful end to the conflict and would accept negotiation or mediation as means of resolution

New Delhi has rejected all UN-sanctioned international attempts at mediation in the Kashmir conflict. It favours bilateral negotiations. The "Muslim separatist campaign in the Indian part of Kashmir has claimed some 34,000 lives since 1969.

(Kashmir Observer, September 24, 2000)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

India-Pak
face-off at UN

India on Tuesday rejected Pakistan’s contention that the Kashmir issue is one of the most long-standing disputes at the United Nations (UN) in a fresh round of sparring between the neighbours at the world body. New Delhi asked Pakistan to instead focus on the unfinished task of tackling terrorism. Earlier in a video message on the occasion of the UN’s 75th anniversary, Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi sought fulfilment of the commitment made to Kashmiris by the UN to grant them their right to self-determination. He also criticized the UN for its inability to address the issues around the world saying the world body was being derided as “a talk shop” and its resolutions and decisions were being flouted. Qureshi also lamented the lack of international cooperation, especially in the Security Council.

But India in response sought to keep focus on the terrorism emanating from Pakistani soil. The First Secretary Vidisha Maitra termed Pakistan’s remarks on Kashmir as interference in India’s internal matters.

Such exchanges at the UN have become an intermittent ritual pursued for its own sake. And it will continue in future. Such exchanges are like the bilateral dialogue between the two countries where only their respective positions on the state are reiterated and nothing is resolved. But while the two countries have learnt to get on with the protracted conflict in Kashmir, the people of the state have to pay an unconscionable price for it on a daily basis. Around 70,000 people have lost their lives in the three decade long violent conflict in the state. These killings, in turn, have left behind a massive humanitarian fallout. What is more, this violence is not only continuing but growing stronger by the day. More and more youth are getting consumed in this fire. And there is no end in sight to this tragedy.

India, Pakistan rivalry is only adding to the deadlock. Pakistan’s efforts over the past many years to internationalize Kashmir have hardly borne any fruit. Except when there is a crisis, world doesn’t seem to care much about what is happening in the state. New Delhi largely controls the way the world looks at Kashmir. In fact, in recent years the world is now more partial towards India’s point of view on the state – albeit there has been some partial rethink on this since the revocation of Article 370 in August last year. But Kashmir continues to be largely seen more as an issue between India and Pakistan than a movement led by the people of the state. This depressing state of affairs has led to perpetuation of the bloodshed in Kashmir and undermined chances of a settlement in the foreseeable future. Only ray of hope is for India and Pakistan to talk and sort the issue between themselves.

O T H E R O P I N O N

What Labour Needs

On Tuesday, the Lok Sabha passed new versions of three labour codes, namely, the Industrial Code Bill 2020, the Code on Social Security Bill 2020, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill 2020. Amending stringent and archaic labour laws has long been on the policy agenda. Yet, there hasn’t been much movement on this issue because of the manner in which the debate has been framed — labour reform is often reduced to giving firms the power to hire and fire workers, without having to seek the government’s permission. While there is indeed a strong argument for more flexible labour markets, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the lack of basic safety nets for large sections of the labour force, and given the widespread distrust due to their unplanned and forced exit from cities, the first steps should be aimed at addressing distress and restoring the trust of the workforce, and creating some sort of social security architecture.

To be fair, firms need to be provided flexibility in order to deal with the vicissitudes of business cycles. However, doing away with standing orders for firms with less than 300 workers, which will essentially cover most firms, is tantamount to watering down the basic rights of workers in most organisations, affecting their bargaining power.

There can be no argument against the need to amend the existing labour laws in India. However, considering the extent of economic distress in the country, concerns of labour must be placed at the centre of such policy initiatives. At a time of acute precarity, instead of moving in a direction of a reasonably flexible labour market with a degree of social security, the government should not be seen to be taking steps in the opposite direction.

Indian Express

The Withering
of Arab League

The League of Arab States was founded in 1945 at the instigation and planning of Britain to protect British imperial interests.

JOSEPH MASSAD

The British made sure that the Palestine question was subcontracted to the independent Arab states to absolve itself of responsibility for what it had wrought in the country. Seventy-five years later, the league has been transformed beyond recognition in most aspects, except in its major role of serving imperial interests.

In June and July 1941, the British invaded Syria and Lebanon to end the rule of Vichy-France there, which had sent military assistance to Rashid Ali in the spring. However, the realisation that the calamity they had visited on the Palestinians by sponsoring the Zionist colonial-settler project would haunt the British for the foreseeable future, coupled with the increase in popular anti-British sentiment across the region drove London to consider how to ensure continued British imperial hegemony after the war: the project of supporting some form of Arab “unity”.

This would ensure the end of any influence that Britain’s historic rival, France, would still have in the Arab East, fortify British interests against a potential Soviet threat to the oil of the Arabian Peninsula, and subcontract the management of Palestine to this emergent Arab unity.

Arab unity

The British conquest of Syria and Lebanon was the crucial inaugural step for this plan. Hashemite Iraq sponsored the earliest efforts of this projected unity in alliance (and rivalry) with Transjordan’s Hashemite ruler Amir Abdullah.

Abdullah had designs to become the king of Greater Syria since WWI and hoped that the new British imperial plan would realise his ambitions. It did not; however, he was to reach an agreement with the Zionists to take over the central and eastern part of Palestine in 1948, over which he declared himself king.

The Syrians and Lebanese were committed to republican regimes. The historical rivalry of the al-Sauds with the Hashemites meant that they opposed Abdullah’s plans; and King Farouk of Egypt worried about Iraqi and Hashemite hegemony, and was hostile to the Saudis with whom Egypt went to war in the 19th century.

Farouk insisted that Egypt lead the
emerging Arab unity.

As a result, the project for the unification of Syria and Iraq was abandoned, and even any form of federalism amongst these states was seen as threatening the independence and sovereignty of the ruling dynasties.

Only Syria supported full unification. A meeting in Alexandria, in accordance with British plans, in October 1944 hammered out a protocol, which was diluted further in the final pact the Arab states adopted as the basis for founding the League of Arab States in March 1945. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Yemen were the founding members, as was Palestine, represented by the Palestinian leader Musa al-‘Alami.

Article two of the pact stipulated that “the purpose of the League is to draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate their political activities with the aim of realizing a close collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty...”

It also included a special Annex about Palestine: “it was on the basis of the recognition of her independence that the Covenant of the League of Nations determined a system of government for [Palestine]. Her existence and her independence among the nations can, therefore, no more be questioned de jure than the independence of any of the other Arab States...the Council of the League should designate an Arab delegate from Palestine to participate in its work until this country enjoys actual independence.”

By adopting Palestine, the league essentially spared the British any responsibility for what would befall the country in the future. The league was now ready to serve all the interests that Britain had set for it.

Nasser’s anti-imperial agenda

As British influence was replaced by American imperial interests in the 1950s, the rise of Gamal Abd al-Nasser and other Arab leftist regimes in the 1950s and 1960s subverted the foundational commitments of the league in the interest of an anti-imperial agenda.

This was something Arab rulers serving the West fought tooth and nail until they won the day after the 1967 defeat. During the heyday of Nasser’s power, the league founded the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 as the main representative organ of the Palestinian people. King Hussein of Jordan, who by the mid 1960s had strengthened his regime’s clandestine friendship and alliance with the Israelis started by his grandfather Amir Abdullah in the 1920s, challenged the PLO’s representative role constantly.

The league’s nominal commitment to Palestine was formalised in 1974 when it recognised the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” and forced Hussein to acquiesce in the new decision. The idea was to steer the PLO slowly away from revolutionary politics and bring it into an accommodation with the US and Israel.

Late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and his Camp David peace agreement with Israel in 1979 were seen as premature, and there were concerns that Sadat’s actions, taken without consultation with the league, might have weakened its efforts to realise US plans for the region.

The League’s original agenda

The league immediately suspended Egypt’s membership and imposed sanctions and a boy-

The Arab League has clearly fulfilled its imperial obligations very well since its founding in 1945, successfully quashing valiant attempts by Egypt’s Nasser to make it serve the Arab peoples, and after 1990-91 became a mere executor of US will.

cott of the country. Arab states cut off diplomatic relations with Egypt and recalled their ambassadors. The league moved its headquarters to Tunis and chose an Algerian to become its secretary general, a position occupied exclusively by Egyptians since 1945.

In August 1981, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz decided that the moment was opportune to push the league’s original agenda. He unveiled his plan (known as the Fahd Plan) for Arab recognition of Israel in exchange for Israeli withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 borders and the establishment of a Palestinian state led by the PLO, a plan that included slightly better conditions than Sadat’s 1979 deal, which only included some form of local autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza.

In the meantime, as the Americans and the Israelis had neutralised Egypt, Israel acquired a free hand to invade Lebanon and destroy the PLO’s military forces.

Upon the PLO’s defeat, the Americans announced on 1 September 1982 the Reagan Plan, which insisted that only a restoration of Jordanian control over the West Bank with non-PLO representation in some confederal form would be acceptable, under which the Palestinians would acquire a measure of autonomy but not independence.

Reagan’s plan

The Arab League meeting in Fez on 6-9 September that year countered the Americans by adopting the Fahd Plan (Fahd had become king in the meantime) officially as a basis for “peace” with Israel. King Hussein, as eager as his grandfather was to deprive the Palestinians of independence, declared his support for the Reagan Plan on 14 September 1982.

The Saudis, most concerned about the Iranian revolutionary threat to their regime, sought to gain Yasser Arafat’s endorsement of a modi-

fied version of the Reagan Plan, and wanted him to bring Egypt back into the Arab fold. Arafat obliged.

Opposition within the PLO and within Fatah, its largest guerrilla group, was swift, especially when in March 1983 Arafat agreed with Hussein to Reagan’s terms of excluding PLO officials from the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

A revolt against Arafat within Fatah ensued, supported by the Syrian and Libyan governments, and led to clashes between the dissidents and Arafat loyalists. Defeated again, Arafat was finally expelled from Lebanon in December 1983, protected from the Israelis by the French navy.

The Iranian threat

Now that Arafat opened the way, the league’s 1987 summit in Amman decided that each state was free to re-open diplomatic relations with Egypt. The official reasoning was the Saudi insistence on the dangers of the Iranian “threat” to the Arab world, which Saddam’s invasion, at the behest of the Saudis and Gulf oil families, since 1980 failed to neutralise.

The Saudis, on behalf of the Americans, insisted that the restoration of Egypt was essential to counter the Iranian threat, even if Egypt was by then an ally of Israel.

A new era began that would change the exact functions of the league. Arab League had ceased to exist as a deliberative body in the service of western imperial interests, and became the executor of US commands and orders without deliberation.

In the Israeli fold

Since the defeat of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the Saudis and other Gulf countries intensified

their campaign against the so-called Iranian threat to their regimes, a threat, they insist, that justifies an alliance with Israel.

If Egypt was returned to the Arab fold in the late 1980s as an ally of Israel to confront the Iranian threat, today the Gulf regimes and their US sponsor insist that Israel itself should be brought into that fold, or perhaps, more accurately, that the Arab world should be brought into the Israeli fold.

Executor of US will

At last week’s meeting of the Arab foreign ministers, members of the league refused to consider a resolution introduced by the Palestinian Authority’s foreign minister to condemn the recent UAE peace deal with Israel.


Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE spearheaded the campaign against the PA proposal as Jordan and the UAE had done in 1987 to rehabilitate Egypt. Bahrain’s peace deal this week has already met with adulation from Egypt and more tempered support from Jordan.

The league’s erstwhile commitment to member states “to safeguard their independence and sovereignty” has been rendered without value when the independence of Palestine and Iraq was jettisoned so easily in the interest of imperial and colonial powers.

The Arab League has clearly fulfilled its imperial obligations very well since its founding in 1945, successfully quashing valiant attempts by Egypt’s Nasser to make it serve the Arab peoples, and after 1990-91 became a mere executor of US will.

Soon perhaps, it will fulfill its final obligation by inviting the Israelis, to become a leading member of a new and expanded league, thus dissolving the Palestine question, which Britain had bequeathed to it, once and for all.

Middle East Eye

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All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, space and accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

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Society’s Hypocrisy about Rape

Living in a male dominated society makes one think about every hardship a girl has to face from the birth till the end. The attitudes in a male dominated society facilitate crimes against women like rape. Ironically, Rape is considered a “women’s issue”. However, everyone should stop and think to evaluate how a crime that a man commits is reckoned to be an issue primarily about women?

In our society, a girl is incessantly lectured about Do’s and Don’ts about her lifestyle: How they should dress up, walk, go out and comeback. So much of our society’s energy is expended on sermonizing women, when crimes against them are committed

by men. Little and scattered attempts are made to educate sons’ about the importance of respecting women and seeing them as equals.

Perhaps, if we’d spent as much time on keeping a track on the conduct of our sons’, as we spend on reprimanding daughters about coming back after sunset, we would have been in a better place.

All over the world, someone is raped on an average of every 2.5 minutes. In every 15 minutes, a rape case is registered. Many prefer keeping it a secret, either willingly or under the pressure and counsel from other members of society. It is a pity that our society has been created on principles that deem it better to let a rapist

move freely. This is primarily because even as the rapist commits a crime, it is our women who are said to lose their “honor”. How do women lose their honor if they’re merely victims of a crime not its perpetrators?

We do not even have a culture of educating children and creating awareness about these issues. Many girls don’t even know what rape means until they become victims of it. Every country spends millions on protecting its borders from enemies while women within these borders become victims of violence every day.

Our estimates collect data about the frequency of women getting raped. This is how we receive news about rape; as something that is being done

to women. Why can’t we shift the focus on how many men rape women every second? When we turn our attention from the perpetrator to victim, what does that imply and what should we do instead? These subtleties are instrumental in how a society views various issues.

Every day, women are sermonized, which is nothing but a way of telling her, “don’t get raped”. We must redirect our energy to reiterate and tell men every day, “don’t rape” — not because you have a mother, a sister, a wife or a daughter. Don’t rape because she is a human too.

Mir Seerat/ Student DMPS Sopore

Kashmiri Scholar in Wilderness: Where’s Hilal?

Part -1

100 days after he went missing in the woods of Naranag, a Kashmiri scholar’s case remains an unsolved mystery.

SANIKA ATHAVALÉ

ATOP half-white half-green crevices, slipped inside the north-western Himalayan cracks that tower above the humble town of Naranag, 400 people had searched through sticks and stones for a tangible explanation in place of words that had failed their employers. Parallely, 58 kilometres away in Srinagar, the dread that usually follows the news of an encounter – familiar to Kashmir’s (simulated) peace – was eclipsed by brow-raising curiosity after a WhatsApp forward claimed that one of the bodies from those that were made to fall in that early shower of fire, belonged to Hilal Ahmad Dar. The ‘lost’ 24-year-old PhD scholar from Bemina. Last seen in the woods. June 14, 2020.

Now dead. A militant. It had trumpeted.

This had happened nearly three months ago, and a week after the disappearance of Hilal, who was lovingly called Basit. The viral message suspended the search operation led by his elder brother, Irshad Ahmad Dar, in the jungles of Naranag. As paragraphs from the widely-shared information reached his family, it brought more grief to the already-grieving. Not only had it proclaimed that Hilal was dead, it had also made him a militant. “The family did not know which part of the ‘news’ to fear,” Mohammed Sadiq Hussain, Hilal’s maternal uncle, rued retrospectively.

On reading the message, Irshad, lovingly called Yasir, had dispersed the 400 searchers, suspended their look-out for palpable clues, and closed their large but nth expedition in the woods since June 14, so that he could dash back to Srinagar with his uncle, Sadiq. It was confirmed much later that evening that nothing even reminiscent of the ‘lost’ adult was captured by the armed forces when they hunted every house in Zadibal, Srinagar, during the gunfight of June 21.

However, two days later in a routine press conference, on June 23, Kashmir police chief, IGP Vijay Kumar stated that the ‘lost’ 24-year-old had joined the ranks of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM).

The ‘revelation’ made by the top cop acquired its space in the hyper-active Delhi-based media in the days that followed. However, the same digital news platforms and television channels missed to give the follow-up revelation equal space as the former.

“On July 26, they [police] admitted that Hilal had not been registered in their official records, as a militant. The J&K police stated that they needed more verification,” Sadiq continued.

“But the highly publicised statement that my brother had joined HM did its damage. Before their admission, when my family was hovering every street and officials’ addresses for help, they were shunned on the grounds that Hilal had become a militant. Later, the follow-up statement took care of the lags at offices but the damage to our public reputation cannot be undone,” Yasir added.

A little before the rollback of IGP Kumar’s declaration, with an appetite for proof, the police had come to Hilal’s home and returned to the thana carrying his laptop and every-other-day devices. The neighbours were also questioned. Uncle Sadiq had asserted his nephew’s innocence with such grit that he challenged the policemen to get him first, should their suspicions find validation. And they never did. Yet.

Yasir said that in a brief meeting he managed with IGP Kumar soon after the ‘militant link’ was established, the officer told him that his statement was based on sources which “may be right or wrong.”

“It has not been confirmed. But we cannot rule it out. Last year in September, right at the spot where Hilal is supposed to have paused his ‘trek’, the forces had killed two militants. So, we cannot deny the possibility but also cannot label him,” Mir Rashid, Sub-Inspector at Kangan Police Station, told Kashmir Observer while responding to a question about the IGP’s famous declaration.

But Rashid, who’s also the investigating officer for this case, added that whenever a civilian has ‘picked up arms’, there has been some form of ‘recruitment announcement’ made by rebel groups. “It could be posters, a lone pamphlet, or anything else but there has been no elaan in this case, making it harder to prove,” he informed.

Hilal’s family travels between the Srinagar and Ganderbal districts almost every day for meeting the police team in Kangan town and also for their own attempts at truth-excitation with little armies of Gujjars, Bakarwals, and trekkers. “My family has filed a missing person’s report at the Kangan Police Station,” Yasir categorically mentioned when asked if he had filed a First Information Report (FIR) and where.

Even though he has his own mobile services shop in Downtown, Yasir has had little time and no mind for it since Hilal was lost. Married and temporarily brother-less, this eldest son of deceased parents searches for his sibling all day, every day, and dreams of reunion at night.

When he was approached for details, he was walking to a post office to send the Governor a letter pleading for ‘real’ intervention. “Humein jitni madad milni chahiye police ki taraf se, nahi mil rahi (We are not getting the help we need from the police),” he said. He has written to higher-ups for transferring the case to a police station closer to him but has not heard back from them. Yet.

Yasir remembered the day when his search group was made to pause while he slid down from the peaks to the valley at its feet because of a false message. The uncle-nephew duo had concealed the fright they sensed. Women, old and young, had gathered outside their house to mourn his missing brother’s ‘tragic death’.

Tight knots of panic in their diaphragm were slightly loosened after they were assured that the message was indeed false but at the police station, when the duo asserted that the officers should’ve dealt with the news before it became the hot exchange for the day, the police counter-asserted that the news was not published by their offices.

But in any way, two days later, other official places of business would print and publish the decorated police officer’s statement about Hilal and the Hizbul Mujahideen. The police’s latest statement, however, a clarification that the missing scholar’s militant link had not been proven, would be ignored by masses and media already convinced that the boy had gone rogue.

The First Suspects Who Swear By Their Innocence

Since Hilal had accompanied a group of five young adults to Kolsar Lake, which falls under the jurisdiction of Kangan’s police machinery, Sub-Inspector Mir Rashid and his colleagues have been probing the matter.

“So far,” the investigating officer said, “we’ve thoroughly interrogated the four boys. The fifth one had gone home intimidated by the size of the mountain. We also conducted polygraph tests on all four and have applied for the court’s permission to perform a Narco test on them. We’re leaving no stone unturned and our process is completely transparent.”

But does he, the investigating officer, strongly suspect the four boys? “Not really,” he said. And as per his findings so far he has got no reason to suspect that the group was responsible for Hilal’s disappearance.

One of the boys from the trekking group, who Hilal’s family said “was the only one who knew our son”, was the scholar’s acquaintance since childhood. Named Tabish, he had assembled the trekking group after inviting some of his friends and younger brother for the hiking trip. He said that he had not invited Hilal per se, but he had requested to join them.

“The others did not know Hilal. Just my brother, me and the other boy, Towfiq, who went home early,” he solemnly stated. “Four of us, including Hilal, were from Bemina and the other two were my friends.”



They had begun their journey in the wee hours of June 14. It was a Sunday and trekking season had just started. Hilal had taken his two-wheeler for the trip, acting against the advice of his elder brother, Yasir, who had ‘pragmatically’ suggested he take the four-wheeler instead.

Tabish said that they had reached the town of Naranag at 6:30 am and started their ascent by 7 that morning. He added that as per the whispers around him, Hilal had not informed his brother that he would be leaving home even before Fajr. A minute detail highlighted from a stream of hushed gossip.

Tabish’s brother, Sahil, was the last person to have spoken to Hilal before he disappeared. The siblings maintained that throughout their journey, until his ‘tired’ stop at Trunkhol, Hilal behaved like any other happy person on a trek.

“The most challenging phase of the ascent is the 8-kilometre-long stretch of Budhsheri. Hilal was walking just fine during that part of the journey. Had he stumbled or felt tired there, we would have turned back as the town is not far from that point,” Sahil detailed.

He recollected that after climbing Budhsheri, his team rested to drink the tea they had carried in a kettle. “We stopped for tea at around 10:15 am and Hilal went away to text or chat.”

This was also confirmed by Mehraj, a professional trekker since 2017. Noting the onset of hiking season, he had planned a trip to Gangabal Lake with his friend on the same day as Hilal’s much-awaited climb to Kolsar Lake.

Two lakes separated by a turn in the woods, Mehraj went straight



to Gangabal whereas Hilal’s group turned left towards Kolsar, from the point that separated them at Trunkhol.

He was last seen at Trunkhol.

“We were on the same trail that day and met at ‘Budhsheri Top’. The boys were sipping tea when two from their team approached us. We were having our first meal of the day, some sweet corn, when the two came and said that they had seen us on a 40-member-trek to Mount Mahadev. I apologised for failing to remember them and offered them my breakfast. They politely refused and carried on,” Mehraj, the eyewitness, said.

“Mashallah! The team was happy and united,” he added.

He even informed that he had casually spoken to Hilal about the shoes he was wearing. Since the two groups – one of five members and the other of two, were headed the same way, they interacted sporadically. Mehraj suggested Hilal to invest in a pair of hiking shoes if he was going to continue indulging in the sport. “He told me it was his first-ever trek and requested that I recommend some good models. I had told him to look at some pairs on the online store of Decathlon,” he sadly reminisced.

The two groups were within the range of each other’s visions until Trunkhol. Sahil said that after hiking past ‘difficult Budhsheri’, Hilal had slowed down creating half a kilometre’s gap between the rest of the team and him.

“My brother walks the fastest so I asked him to stick with Hilal who was struggling behind us. We naturally split into two: three ahead and Hilal behind with my brother,” Tabish described further.

While Mehraj claimed that he reached Trunkhol at 11:13 am, “a meadowy brilliance; a filler before one approaches the glory of Mount Harmukh”, with the three boys in close proximity, the surviving group has said that they reached at 12:30 pm.

“We went straight towards Gangabal from the meadow. They went left. I do not know what happened after but it has been very unfortunate,” Mehraj stated gloomily.

Still lagging, Sahil said that Hilal and he had successfully reached the turning point and walked a little ahead from there. “But a few minutes later, Hilal sat down on some stones from exhaustion. He wanted to go another way from there but I refused because I knew the right way to the lake,” he shared.

According to him, he tried to convince Hilal to resume walking. He said that they had finished 90 per cent of their hike and it made no sense to waste time when the group was already divided. Apparently, Hilal was persistent and demanded to go another way but Sahil tried to negotiate. He even offered to carry his bag to ease the burden but he altruistically asked Sahil “to not spoil his trip” because of his tiredness.

“He told me that he would wait at that spot for our return. I found it odd to leave but he was not ready to move and my brother was much ahead, so I agreed and left.”

They reached their destination by 2 pm and stayed there for an hour. Remembering that they had to descend and regroup at Trunkhol, they left Kolsar Lake at 3 pm.

But Hilal was not there.

The siblings said that their team searched around for two hours. They checked with every farmer, herder, nomad, in sight. Even Mehraj corroborated this claim from his participation in Hilal’s rescue operations in the days consecutive to his disappearance. “All the Bakarwals and Gujjars we spoke to, during rescue efforts, told us that the four boys had leaped around the meadows looking for their friend.”

Tabish said that since his group was looking for Hilal in a no-network zone, they could not call his cellphone. Just as they reached Budhsheri, Tabish received a call from an uber-tensed Yasir asking, “Where have you kept my brother?” He thought of it to be more of an insinuation and less of a question and was disappointed by the sound of it. “He must be at the foot of the mountain,” he had told Hilal’s brother.

However, after the Four descended from the body to the feet of the majestic rock, they saw Hilal’s two-wheeler still parked in place and his family gathered with a few men in uniform. The presence of the lone vehicle without its rider seemed ominous to them.

“They were accusing us. We understood that they were disturbed. So were we. We did not go home that night and stayed at a cheap hotel above a *dhaba* so that we could join the police team in their search operations the next day,” Sahil said.

The Four had “checked every hotel in Naranag” for Hilal. *What if he had climbed down and taken a room to rest...* they thought. But Hilal was nowhere. Some hoteliers tried to pacify the boys by telling them that their friend must have camped with tourists in the folds of the ranges. “Many do that,” Sahil mentioned it to the family as well.

“Kabhi keh rahe the upar hoga, toh kabhi keh rahe the ki neeche hoga (They were saying ‘he must be at the foot of the mountain’ sometimes or sometimes they were saying the opposite),” Sadiq clicked his tongue in exasperation.

As a matter of obvious consequence, the Four were locked up immediately. “The police custody lasted two weeks,” the siblings maintained but Hilal’s brother said that they were kept for a week, if not less than that. “That statement is wrong. Only we know what happened to us in the lock-up,” Sahil sourly stated.

They were constantly interrogated. “Mind games were played,” Tabish said.

“We went with the Mountain Rescue Team (MRT) to scan the whole place. We found someone’s 5-rupee note but nothing of Hilal’s. His family has accused me of forcing him to trek but why would I coerce someone for a sport of this nature? It makes no sense,” he lamented.

“We were questioned countless times. Sometimes the CID came and sometimes the officers disguised themselves as civilians to find anything that will help in incriminating us,” Sahil continued.

“We were also made to give the lie-detector test and we passed it. Now, still unsatisfied, the police are seeking to do a Narco test and I am scared. I have heard that people can suffer severe side-effects if anything goes wrong. Memories have been lost to such tests in the past. The court needs to give permission for this and the judge has told us Four that we have the right to decline but even if we decline, the society will accuse us anyway. We consulted a few lawyers and they said that even if we had ‘free will’ with regards to the Narco test, the system would find a way to make us take it. Thus, we have given our consent, overlooking the dangerous and permanent threat to our future and lives.”

Yasir is also waiting for the Narco test.

....To be Concluded

“I THINK GENERALLY WE HAVE SEEN IF YOU LOOK at the market prices are much keener than you would expect,” Skyscanner Vice President Commercial and Flights Hugh Aitken told Reuters in a phone interview. “That just reflects that airlines have capacity and need to fill that capacity.”

Skyscanner says it will take several years before business travel returns to previous levels, forcing some airlines to rethink their strategies and reconfigure their plane cabins.

Left River Circular Road Div

Nepal halts distribution of books with altered map

Press Trust Of India

Kathmandu: Nepal has stopped the distribution of a books that include the country's revised political map showing three strategically-important Indian areas as part of its territory, saying there were a number of factual errors in it, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Errors in books

The Ministry of Education does not have the authority to change Nepal's geographical area and there are errors in the books. — Spokesperson, Ministry of Land Reform

instructed the Ministry of Education not to distribute and print any more copies meant for classes IX to XII as there were some reservations from the Ministry of Land Management and Cooperatives and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Kathmandu Post reported.

"The Ministry of Education does not have the authority to change Nepal's geographical area and there are faults in the books," said spokesperson for the Ministry of Land Reform and Cooperatives Janak Raj Joshi. There are errors in the books prepared by the Minis-



India has already termed as untenable the "artificial enlargement" of the territorial claims by Nepal after its Parliament unanimously approved the new political map of the country featuring the Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura areas, which India maintains belong to it. A Cabinet meeting on Tuesday

try of Education on a subject it has no expertise, he said, adding that the higher authorities have been asked to take corrective measures. "The Department of Survey, which is the official agency that declares the total area of the country, however, hasn't made any decision on the area," Joshi said.

Airlines Look To COVID-19 Tests That Give Results As Fast As Pregnancy Tests

Agencies

Zurich/Milan: European airlines are pinning hopes on pre-flight COVID-19 tests that deliver results as fast as pregnancy tests to help restore passengers' confidence in taking to the skies in confined spaces with shared air. Germany's Lufthansa, at the mercy of government bailouts for survival, is in talks with Swiss drugmaker Roche over deploying so-called antigen tests, according to two people familiar with the discussions, as the airline aims to make them available next month. Italian operator Alitalia, meanwhile, told Reuters that from Wednesday it would add two flights from Milan to Rome, to the two it is already offering from Rome to Milan, exclusively for passengers with negative tests. The tests are administered by health authorities at the airports and included in ticket prices. If they prove popular and safe, these antigen-tested flights will be expanded to more domestic, and later international, routes, the airline said. Unlike laboratory-based molecular tests that have been the staple of health authorities in the pandemic, antigen tests do not require machines to process. Much like pregnancy tests, they can produce

results in about 15 minutes. However the tests require an uncomfortable nasal swab and are not as accurate as the molecular, or PCR, tests. They generally produce more "false negatives" which could mean sick people could slip through the cracks and onto planes. An increasing number are hitting the market, from companies such as Abbott Laboratories, Becton Dickinson & Co and Quidel Corp and Roche, which is rebranding antigen tests from South Korea's privately held SD Biosensor. Airlines are pressing governments to embrace alternatives to blanket travel restrictions amid a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Europe. Rapid antigen tests that can be administered by non-medical staff are expected to become available in coming weeks for as little as \$7 each, the head of industry body the International Air Transport Association said on Tuesday.

NEGATIVE-ONLY FLIGHTS

Despite the drawbacks of such antigen tests, carriers hope they could tip the balance in convincing people to fly. "It is to give... confidence, at a specific point in time, that the result is positive or negative," said Christian Paulus, a Roche research and development manager.



Most People Infected With Novel Coronavirus Develop Symptoms: Study

Most people who are infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, that causes Covid-19, are not asymptomatic throughout the course of infection, a review of studies carried early in the pandemic suggests.

While some people who contract the novel coronavirus never experience any symptoms, there remains disagreement about what proportion of total infections these cases represent. The latest study, published in the journal PLOS Medicine, suggests that true asymptomatic cases of SARS-CoV-2 comprise a minority of infections. According to the researchers at the University of Bern, Switzerland and colleagues, the full spectrum and distribution of the severity of Covid-19 symptoms are not well understood. Some people with the virus may experience severe infections resulting in viral pneumonia, respiratory distress syndrome, and death, while others remain completely asymptomatic or develop mild, nonspecific symptoms.

The researchers wanted to better understand the proportion of people who become infected with SARS-CoV-2 and never develop any symptoms, as well as the proportion of people who are asymptomatic at the time of diagnosis but develop symptoms later. They systematically reviewed literature using a database of SARS-CoV-2 evidence between March and June, 2020. The researchers analysed 79 studies reporting empirical data on 6,616 people, 1,287 of whom were defined as asymptomatic, in order to determine the proportion of infected people who never developed symptoms. While the study was limited by its inability to ascertain the impact of false negatives, the researchers were able to estimate that 20 per cent of Covid-19 infections remained asymptomatic during follow-up. Accurate estimations of true asymptomatic and presymptomatic infections are critical to understanding SARS-CoV-2 transmission at the population level and for populations to adopt appropriately tailored public health strategies,

the researchers said. Improved accuracy of serological tests is also needed to reduce the number of false negatives, they said. Since each person infected with SARS-CoV-2 is initially asymptomatic, the proportion that will go on to develop symptoms is estimated to be around 80 per cent, suggesting that presymptomatic transmission may significantly contribute to overall SARS-CoV-2 epidemics. "The findings of this systematic review of publications early in the pandemic suggests that most SARS-CoV-2 infections are not asymptomatic throughout the course of infection," said Diana Buitrago-Garcia at the University of Bern. "The contribution of presymptomatic and asymptomatic infections to overall SARS-CoV-2 transmission means that combination prevention measures, with enhanced hand and respiratory hygiene, testing and tracing, and isolation strategies and social distancing, will continue to be needed," Buitrago-Garcia added.

Agencies

Iran sends message of resistance to US at UNGA

AGENCIES

Tehran: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani used his speech at the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday to denounce American pressure and send a message of resistance and resilience to the United States, signaling no matter the pressure, the Islamic Republic will refuse to budge.

In his pre-recorded video message, Rouhani started by pointing out that COVID-19 has put the global community in the same boat. "But instead of being able to benefit from international cooperation, my nation is faced with the harshest sanctions in history, in obvious and fundamental violation of the UN Charter, international agree-



ments, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231," the president said. He evoked the image of George Floyd, whose killing at the hands of Minneapolis police officers sparked massive protests in late May. Rouhani said such images are familiar for Iranians who have felt the pressure of other nations for decades, but have continued to strive for peace and progress.

After listing a wide variety of Iranian initiatives aimed at achieving regional peace and efforts that he said were in line with standing up to "occupation, genocide, displacement and racism" in the four decades since the formation of the Islamic Republic, Rouhani directly addressed the 75th UNGA President Volkan Bozkir. "Such a nation does not deserve sanctions. The answer to peace is not war. The reward of fighting extremism is not terror." One day after the 40th anniversary of the Iran-Iraq War that started after US-backed dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Iran and killed an estimated 500,000 people on both sides, Rouhani also recalled the conflict.

Saudi to gradually resume Umrah pilgrimage

Agencies

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia will allow pilgrims living inside the country to undertake the Umrah pilgrimage, beginning on October 4, after a seven-month pause due to the coronavirus pandemic, state news agency Saudi Press Agency has reported.

In March, the country had declared a freeze on Umrah, which is an Islamic pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina undertaken any time of the year, attracting 19 million people last year.

Saudi Arabia will now allow 6,000 citizens and residents inside the kingdom to perform Umrah daily, representing 30 percent of a revised capacity of 20,000 that takes into account precautionary health measures, SPA said.

That will expand to 75 percent of capacity on October 18. Beginning on November 1, the kingdom will allow visitors from specific countries deemed safe to perform Umrah at 100 percent of the revised capacity, until the end of the pandemic, SPA added.

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah is developing a mobile application that will be available a week before the Umrah resumes, so that pilgrims can register and book on it. They

will also need to follow the health guidelines provided in the app.

The decision to resume Umrah came after the kingdom organised the smallest Hajj in modern history in late July, with only up to 10,000 Muslims allowed to take part in total – a far cry from the 2.5 million who participated last year.

Health authorities said no coronavirus cases were reported at the holy sites during the Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam and a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime.

Hajj pilgrims circled the sacred Kaaba – a cubic structure inside Mecca's Grand Mosque towards which Muslims around the world pray – along socially distant paths.

The kingdom has sought to contain a spike in infections, which have now risen to more than 330,000 cases – the highest in the Gulf – and at least 4,500 deaths.

But Saudi Arabia has also reported a high rate of recoveries, which surpassed 312,000 on Tuesday. Last week, Saudi Arabia partially lifted its suspension on international flights, six months after travel curbs were imposed due to the pandemic.

Official data show Hajj and Umrah earn the kingdom about \$12bn a year.

Bags Of Hair From Salons Are Helping Tackle Ocean Oil Pollution In France

Agencies

Brignoles: In the town of Brignoles in southeast France, 40 tonnes of human hair are stacked in a warehouse – discarded locks sent in from salons far and wide under an

He plans to sell the forearm-length tubes, which can each absorb eight times their weight in oil, for nine euros (\$10.50) apiece. At the Brignoles warehouse, paper bags are filled with two kilograms (4.4 pounds) of hair each,



innovative recycling scheme. After a successful trial in the nearby port of Cavalaire-sur-Mer, the hair is destined to be stuffed into nylon stockings to make floating tubes that will line harbours to mop up ocean oil pollution. "Hair is lipophilic, which means it absorbs fats and hydrocarbons," said Thierry Gras, a hairdresser in Saint-Zacharie near Brignoles and founder of the project Coiffeurs Justes (Fair Hairdressers). Awaiting the green light from labour inspectors and anti-pollution officials, Gras hopes to start large-scale production of the tubes before year-end and so help fight against pollution.

waste from thousands of participating hairdressers from all over France – including Gras's own – as well as Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg. The bags are then sent to another site a few streets away, where formerly-unemployed people and school dropouts are paid to make the absorbent tubes. Gras plans to reinvest half of the sale price of the tubes in the employment centre. Mopping up "micro-pollution" According to the stylist, each hairdresser on average produces about 29 kilograms of hair waste every year, most of it ending up in the trash.

NEWS MAKERS

Bilkis: Anti-CAA protester among TIME's most influential people

An 82-year-old Muslim woman who became the face of a female-led protest against a controversial citizenship law in India's capital New Delhi has been named to the list of the 100 Most Influential People in 2020 by US-based TIME magazine.

The prestigious publication named Bilkis, who participated in protests against the anti-Muslim law, as one of their "Icons".

"Bilkis gave hope and strength to activists and student leaders who were being thrown behind bars for standing up for the unpopular truth in a democracy that was sliding into authoritarianism, and inspired peaceful copycat protests across the country," Indian writer Rana Ayyub wrote for Time's profile of the elderly protester from the



Shaheen Bagh suburb of New Delhi, a Muslim working-class neighbourhood.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which eases the path for non-Muslims from three neighbouring countries to gain citizenship, sparked nationwide protests against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government after it was passed in December.

Legal experts say the CAA, which makes faith the basis for acquiring Indian citizenship, goes against the country's secular constitu-

tion. The law is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court.

"I will sit here till blood stops flowing in my veins so the children of this country and the world breathe the air of justice and equality," Bilkis told Ayyub during the protests earlier this year.

Ayyub added that Bilkis deserved recognition "so the world acknowledges the power of resistance against tyranny".

Peaceful protests

Bilkis told Al Jazeera in January the CAA was meant to "target Muslims and send their children to detention camps". Her fears stemmed from the Hindu nationalist government's plan to roll out a national register of citizens, which rights groups say will lead to the disenfranchisement of Muslims.

Some Freed Taliban Prisoners "Returned To Battlefield": Afghan Official

Washington: A number of Taliban prisoners who were released by the Afghan government as a condition for peace talks have taken up arms again, top official Abdullah Abdullah said Tuesday.

Abdullah, who chairs Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation and is overseeing the government's peace efforts, said discussions with the Taliban in Qatar so far have been positive.

However, he said some – though not the majority – of the 5,000 Taliban prisoners released by the government as a condition for talks had resumed the fight against Kabul.

"I do know that some have returned to the battlefield, which is a violation of the agreement that they had made," Abdullah said during an online conference with the US Council on Foreign Relations.

Abdullah said talks between the two sides had begun in Doha on a positive note, as the delegations build

some familiarity with each other.

Yet the level of violence inside Afghanistan has not fallen, and he called on the United States, which launched the peace process with its own deal with the Taliban, and Pakistan, which maintains ties to the insurgents, to pressure them to agree to a ceasefire.

"Unfortunately, so far, the level of violence is very high and to a level that is not acceptable for the people," Abdullah said.

"I repeat my call to the Taliban themselves and also to all partners who have any leverage over the Taliban to press on that point."

Abdullah said he planned to visit Pakistan in the coming days for the first time since 2008.

The persistent violence, and the Taliban's failure to completely cut relations with the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda jihadist groups, was singled out as a barrier to success by US officials testifying in Congress Tuesday.

Malaysia's Anwar claims 'strong majority' to form new government

Malaysia's opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim on Wednesday said he had secured a "strong majority" from lawmakers to form a new government, seven months after a power grab within the ruling coalition brought down the administration elected in May 2018.

Anwar said he had been "approached by a number of MPs from various parties" who were unhappy with the existing leadership of Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

Sitting next to his wife, Anwar told a news conference his support from lawmakers "means that the administration of Muhyiddin has fallen" and insisted that his government had the mandate of the people.



China Doubled Air Bases And Heliports Near LAC After 2017 Doklam Standoff: Stratfor



China has started construction of at least 13 entirely new military positions including three airbases, five permanent air defence positions and five heliports near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the aftermath of the Doklam standoff in 2017, according to a report by global security consultancy Stratfor.

The report also said construction on four of those new heliports started only after the current border standoff erupted in eastern Ladakh in early May.

"The 2017 Doklam crisis appears to have shifted China's strategic objectives, with China more than doubling its total number of airbases, air defence positions, and heliports near the Indian border over the past three years," it said.

The report authored by security expert Sim Tack and released on Tuesday said China's construction drive projects a future military capability that will see long-term regional tensions with India sustained beyond the two countries' recent standoffs.

The report said the recent procurement of the Rafale fighter aircraft by India has started to provide it some relief, but more time will be required to see indigenous production and foreign acquisitions truly rebuild the strength of India's air force.

It observed that the ongoing escalation in the Ladakh region has started to formulate an Indian response to the broader strategic threat posed by China's ongoing military infrastructure drive.

The report titled 'A Military Drive Spells Out China's

Intent Along the Indian Border' analysed that the rapid expansion of permanent Chinese military infrastructure points to Beijing's intentions that span a wider timeframe than current and recent border standoffs.

"Indian and Chinese forces clashed in the Doklam region in June 2017. Since then, China has started constructing at least 13 entirely new military positions near its borders with India, including three airbases, five permanent air defence positions and five heliports," the report said.

It said China's strategy aims to confront India with an "insurmountable" challenge in territorial disputes by leaning on broad support capabilities that provide Beijing with a tremendous ability to mobilise forces into disputed border areas.

The report noted that such an approach is similar to China's strategy in the South China Sea, where a buildup of permanent defence facilities supports Chinese localised military superiority and significantly raises the potential cost of military opposition to Beijing's maritime claims.

"In applying this same strategy on the Indian border, China aims to discourage Indian resistance or military action during future border disputes by ostentatiously demonstrating its ability and intent to engage in military confrontations."

The troops of India and China were engaged in a 73-day standoff in Doklam tri-junction in 2017 which even triggered fears of a conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. Tensions were defused after several rounds of talks.

The armies of the two countries have been locked in a fierce faceoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 following a violent clash in Pangong Tso area.

Visa-Free Entry To Indian Passport Holders In 16 Countries: Centre



NEW DELHI: Sixteen countries, including Nepal, Bhutan and Mauritius, provide visa-free entry to Indian passport holders, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Tuesday.

In a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said there are 43 countries which provide visa-on-arrival facility and there are 36 countries which provide e-visa facility to Indian ordinary passport holders.

"There are 16 countries which provide visa-free entry to Indian ordinary passport holders," Mr Muraleedharan said.

Barbados, Bhutan, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Hong Kong SAR, the Maldives, Mauritius, Montserrat, Nepal, Niue Island, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Senegal, Serbia and Trinidad and Tobago, provide visa free entry to Indian ordinary passport holders, according to the information provided by the minister.

Iran, Indonesia and Myanmar were among the 43 countries which provide visa-

on-arrival facility to Indian ordinary passport holders.

Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Malaysia are among the 36 countries which provide e-visa facility to Indian ordinary passport holders, according to the information provided by the minister.

The government has been making efforts to increase the number of countries that provide visa free travel, visa-on-arrival and e-visa facility so as to further ease international travel for Indians, Mr Muraleedharan said.

While issuance of visa and visa related process is the sovereign and unilateral decision of the respective country, the matter regarding easier and liberalised visa policy for Indian nationals is taken up regularly in bilateral meetings and forums with foreign countries, he said.



FRUIT OF LABOUR: A walnut grower sundries his freshly harvested crop on Wednesday in Kashmir countryside.

Significant Improvement In Air Quality During Lockdown, Says Report By Pollution Body

NEW DELHI: Significant improvement in air quality was observed during the coronavirus-induced lockdown due to restricted anthropogenic activities, but such air quality management strategies come with considerable economic costs, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) said on Wednesday.

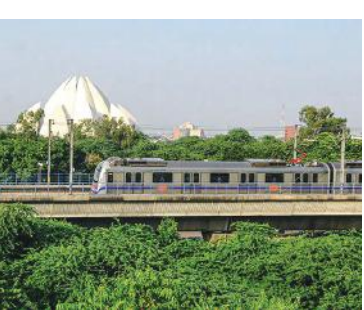
According to the "Impact of Lockdown on the Ambient Air Quality" report, released during the virtual celebrations of the 46th Foundation Day of CPCB, PM 2.5 reduced by 24 per cent during the pre-lockdown phase and further reduced by almost 50 per cent during the lockdown phases as compared to levels observed during 2019.

The report was released by Minister of State for Environment Babul Supriyo, who praised the CPCB for its contribution in checking and spreading awareness about air pollution.

"CPCB has been working very diligently for the last four decades. It has played a very important part in India's growth. It created awareness and conscience about the importance of air we breathe," Supriyo said.

The CPCB report considered the pre-lockdown phase from March 1-21, Lockdown phase-I from March 25 - April 19 and Lockdown phase-II from April 20 to May 3.

"Considerable improvement in air quality levels were seen as compared to the same time periods in last year. It has also been noted that air quality



rise back with increasing relaxations in the lockdown.

"Although significant improvement in air quality was observed during lockdown due to restricted anthropogenic activities, such air quality management strategies come with considerable economic costs. Irreversible emission reductions through sustainable process changes and long-term objectives is crucial for achieving good air quality levels.

"However, as the impact of various anthropogenic activities is now being quantified, actions that can be integrated in business as usual scenarios need to be identified, with emphasis on reduction of emissions at source including dust control, vehicular emissions, industrial operations, etc.," it said.

The report said that lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic can be utilised to target source specific actions leading to maximum improvement in ambient air quality.

"Further, socio-economic development and industrialization also needs to be in tandem with the carrying capacity of a city," it said.

According to the report, across India, workplaces mobility dropped by 56.7 per cent and by 81.3 per cent in Delhi during lockdown period (from March 24 to April 30) from the baseline average (from February 15 to March 23) which also corroborates with the period of least contribution to PM2.5 levels from traffic emissions.

PM Modi's Visit To 58 Countries Since 2015 Cost The Centre Rs 517 Crore

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited 58 countries since 2015 and a total expenditure of Rs 517 crore was incurred on them, the government said on Tuesday.

Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan provided details of the prime minister's visits abroad since 2015, including their outcome, in a written reply in Rajya Sabha. "The total expenditure on these visits was Rs 517.82 crore," he said.

According to the details provided by Muraleedharan, the prime minister made five visits each to the US, Russia and China, and multiple trips to some other countries like Singapore, Germany, France, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates.

Some of the visits the prime min-



ist undertook were multi-nation trips while some were standalone bilateral visits.

Modi's last trip was to Brazil on November 13-14 in 2019 where he attended a summit of influential grouping BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa).

Muraleedharan said Modi's visits to the countries have enhanced their understanding of India's perspec-

tives on bilateral, regional and global issues. He said the visits helped in strengthening India's relations with the countries in a wide range of sectors including trade and investment, technology, defence collaboration and people-to-people contact.

"These, in turn, have contributed to India's national development agenda to promote economic growth and well being of our people," the minister said. "India is now increasingly contributing to shaping the global agenda at the multilateral level including on climate change, trans-national crime and terrorism, cyber security and nuclear non-proliferation, and offering to the world its own unique initiatives for global issues like the International Solar Alliance," he added.

Parliament Passes Bill To Amend Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act

Parliament on Wednesday approved a bill to make it mandatory for officebearers of NGOs to provide their Aadhaar numbers at the time of registration and also bring various other changes.

Amid opposition boycott of proceedings over suspension of eight MPs, Rajya Sabha unanimously passed The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020.

Replying to debate on the bill, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the legislation was not against any NGO and is an effort to maintain transparency. "This amendment is in the interest of good NGOs which want to do good work in the country."

The bill was passed in Lok Sabha on Monday and will now be sent to the president



for his assent.

The minister said the bill provides for reduction in administrative expenses of any NGO receiving foreign funding, from 50 per cent to 20 per cent of annual funds to ensure spending on their main objectives.

Among other provisions, the bill proposes to enable the Centre to allow an NGO or association to surrender its FCRA certificate.

Saudi Arabia Bans Flights To And From India Due To COVID-19 Outbreak



Saudi Arabia has banned flights to and from India from Tuesday amid a surge in coronavirus cases, according to an official document. In a circular issued on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) said it was "suspending travel to and from the following countries: (India, Brazil and Argentina) including any person who has been in any of the mentioned countries above in the last 14 days prior to their arrival to the Kingdom".

However, it excluded "passengers who have official government invitations".

The GACA circular—titled: 'Suspension of travel to countries where the COVID-19 virus has outbreak'—was marked to all the airlines and chartered flight companies operating at the Saudi Arabia's airports.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE host a significant Indian migrant population.

Five days back, Air India Express had said the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA) suspended its flights for 24 hours for bringing two passengers with COVID-positive certificates on August 28 and September 4.

Dubai is the most populous city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Scheduled international passenger flights have been suspended in India since March 23 due to the outbreak. However, special international flights have

been operating between India and Saudi Arabia since May 6 under the Vande Bharat mission.

India's COVID-19 caseload has reached 56,46,010, and the death toll has climbed to 90,020 with 1,085 people succumbing to the disease in the past 24 hours, the Health Ministry's data updated at 8 am Wednesday showed.

After one-day suspension for bringing passengers with COVID-positive certificates, Air India Express resumed its Dubai flights on Saturday.

According to rules of the UAE government, every passenger travelling from India is required to bring an original COVID-negative certificate of an RT-PCR test done within 96 hours prior to the journey.

Hong Kong has banned Air India flights from Sunday to October 3 after a few passengers on its flight on Friday tested positive for COVID-19 post arrival, a senior government official said on Sunday.

Air India passenger flights were barred from landing in Hong Kong between August 18 and August 31 after 14 passengers on its Delhi-Hong Kong flight of August 14 tested positive for COVID-19 post arrival.

Passengers from India can arrive in Hong Kong only if they have a COVID-19 negative certificate from a test done within 72 hours prior to the journey, according to rules issued by the Hong Kong government in July.

NEWS MAKERS

Toyota Urban Cruiser Launched In India; Price Starts From Rs 8.4 Lakh

NEW DELHI: Japanese auto major Toyota on Wednesday launched its compact SUV Urban Cruiser, which it has sourced from compatriot Suzuki, in India with price starting at Rs 8.4 lakh as it looks to use cross-badged products from the latter to draw more customers in the volume segment.

The Urban Cruiser is the second model to be launched in India under the global Toyota-Suzuki alliance after the premium hatchback, Glanza. It is the cross-badged version of Maruti Suzuki's compact SUV Vitara Brezza.

The model is powered by K-Series 1.5 litre four-cylinder petrol engine and will be available in manual transmission and automatic transmission options in three variants of mid, high and premium priced between Rs 8.4-11.30 lakh.

Vitara Brezza on the other hand is priced at Rs 7.34 lakh for the entry level variant and goes up to Rs 11.15 lakh for the top end (all prices ex-showroom Delhi).

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) will start deliveries of the Urban Cruiser from mid-October.

"Globally, our collaboration with Suzuki is going very well, particularly in India. Once again Urban Cruiser will show us a much stronger relationship," TKM Managing Director Masakazu Yoshimura told PTI.

He said the cross-badged products from Suzuki will serve to draw more customers to the Toyota fold to develop a long-term relationship with the company.

Citing the example of Glanza, which Maruti Suzuki sells as Baleno, he said the company has so far sold 30,000 units and that is Toyota's first chal-



lenge into the B-segment targeting young millennial customers in India.

"Surprisingly, the product has been well accepted, and our aftersales marketing strategy is also well accepted," Yoshimura said adding even sales of Maruti Suzuki Baleno has increased.

"With Maruti Baleno and our Glanza, (together) as a motor industry we are welcoming old and new car buyers into that segment. Either from two-wheelers or second hand cars, many first-time customers are the majority of the buyers," he said adding "that is good evidence which is showing our collaboration between Suzuki and Toyota globally (is working well)".

Yoshimura further said, "The same applies to Urban Cruiser, just as Glanza. This is the phase two of our collaboration with Maruti Suzuki."

He said Toyota's entry into the compact SUV space comes at a time when the segment has gained much popularity in India due to its body type and superior road presence thereby garnering greater connect and appeal among today's youth.

The model will compete with the likes of Maruti Suzuki Vitara Brezza, Hyundai Venue, Kia Sonet, Honda WR-V, Mahindra XUV 300, Tata Nexon and Ford EcoSport.

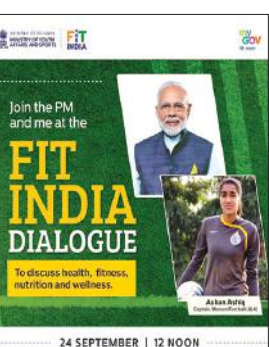
The launch of the Urban Cruiser is a direction towards the company's "focus of delivering the best products and services to customers who have remained loyal to the brand over the years while looking for ways to welcome more customers, particularly the youth, to the Toyota family", Yoshimura added.

J&K Woman Footballer To Interact With PM Modi In FIT India Dialogue

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir woman footballer Afshan Ashiq, who hit the headlines in 2017 as a stone pelted in Srinagar, will be among some top sportspersons of the country who will interact with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Fit India Dialogue session on Thursday.

Goalkeeper Afshan will join the likes of Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli, two-time Paralympic gold medalist javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia, health and fitness influencer Milind Soman, among others, for the interaction.

"This interaction, which is set to take place online will see participants share their own stories and their take on how



they maintain fitness along their journey. Prime Minister Modi will also share his own take on health and fitness with the aforementioned influencers," the All India Football Federation said in a release.

"This online dialogue will

see a conversation on nutrition, wellness, and other facets of fitness as well, as fitness has become an important aspect of life in times of the COVID-19 pandemic."

Three years ago, a photograph of Afshan pelting stones at J&K Police got her into national media spotlight. She was already playing football then and the picture got her "noticed". She had decided to promote women's football in J&K.

The 25-year-old played as goalkeeper in J&K women's football team and later played in the Indian Women's League in 2019 for FC Kolhapur City. She also trains youngsters in Srinagar.