



Maximum : 20°C
Minum : 04°C
Humidity : 41%

SUNSET Today 05:41 PM
SUNRISE Tomorrow 06:48 AM



News Digest

2 Soldiers Injured In Mine Blast Along LoC

Poonch- Two soldiers were injured in a mine blast at a forward area along Line of Control in Balakote sector in Poonch district on Wednesday afternoon. Official sources said that at around 1230 hours, two soldiers – Sepoy Nayat Hussain (59 BSF attached with army's 14 Punjab battalion) and Sepoy Sahil Kumar of army's 14 Punjab battalion were injured in a mine blast in Manjakote area of the Balakote sector. They **● P-02**

PDP Leader Joins BJP In Jammu

Jammu- A senior PDP leader joined the BJP here on Wednesday, saying the people of Jammu and Kashmir do not support anyone who tries to defame the nation and the national flag. Ramazan Hussain, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2014 assembly elections from Bani constituency on a BSP ticket before joining the PDP, was welcomed into the party fold by J-K BJP president Ravinder Raina at the party headquarters **● P-02**

Girl Slips To Death In Gurez Forest

Srinagar- A teenage girl on Wednesday morning slipped to death in Gurez forests of north Kashmir's Bandipora district. 18-year-old Shameema Jan was collecting firewood in Tulail forest area of Gurez when she lost control and fell into a gorge leading to her death, news agency KDC reported. The report said that the body of the girl was recovered, and handed **● P-02**

Militant Hideout Unearthed In Poonch

Jammu- State forces have busted a militant hideout in a forest area in Poonch district of Jammu region, leading to recovery of a cache of arms and ammunition, a senior police officer said on Wednesday. The hideout was unearthed during an overnight joint operation by police and Rashtriya Rifles in the forest area of Kalaban in Mendhar sector, Senior Superintendent **● P-02**

Sopore Teen's Body Retrieved After 7 Days

Srinagar- The body of a teenager boy was retrieved from river Jhelum on Wednesday, seven days after he allegedly jumped in the river in Sopore area of Baramulla district to end his life. The body of Nazir Ahmed Chahal (14) of Ahad Bab Crossing Sopore was retrieved today by a joint team of Sopore Police, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Army and local boatmen after a weeklong continuous search operation, officials said **● P-02**

7 Gamblers Arrested In Raid: Police

Srinagar- Police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested seven gamblers in a raid in Rainawari area of this capital city. Acting on an input, a police team carried out a raid near Gondola in Rainawari and arrested seven gamblers from the spot, a police spokesperson said. He said besides playing cards, an amount of Rs 82,300 was recovered from the gamblers. "They have been arrested and shifted to Police Station Rainawari where **● P-02**

Agriculture Land Will Not Be Given To Non-Residents: LG

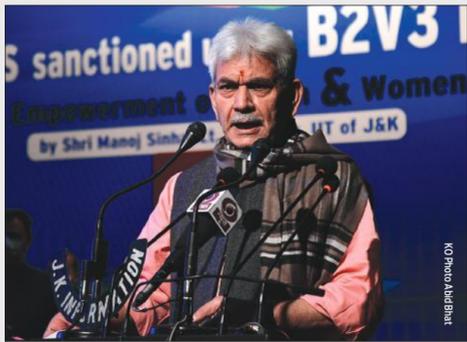
Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Amid widespread criticism over the new land laws introduced by the government of India, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said that no agricultural land in Jammu and Kashmir will be alienated to non-residents but for industrial investment and employment opportunities, non-agricultural land would be optimally utilized.

Speaking on the launch of Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)-2020 for Apple here at Horticulture Complex, Raj Bagh here on Wednesday, Sinha assured that no agricultural land would be alienated to any non-residents of the Union Territory, an official spokesperson said.

However, for industrial investment and employment opportunities, LG said non-agricultural land would be optimally utilized. He said that the LG observed that Horticulture is one of the priority sectors of J&K due to its unique agro-climatic diversity, which makes it ideal for varied cultivation.

"The Horticulture sector, in particular, has an immense growth potential and the J&K Government is making all out efforts to tap the potential in order to give a fillip to the socio-economic condition of all those who are associated with the sector and contribute to the betterment of livelihood of Apple Growers," LG, J&K and therefore, the Government agreed to extend **● PAGE 02**



as per official spokesperson said. He said that the LG observed that the objective of the newly launched MIS is to facilitate the stakeholders by providing optimum prices to the growers in the region during the peculiar situation arising out of COVID-19 pandemic.

"Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) is a great relief for apple growers. It will provide a comprehensive insurance cover against any obstacle thus helping in stabilizing the income of the Apple farmers". The scheme was launched for the first time in the history of J&K during September-2019 and was widely appreciated by the growers across

Now Govt Can Declare Any Area In J&K As Strategic At Army's Behest

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Ministry of Home Affairs Govt of India on Tuesday announced that any local area in Jammu and Kashmir can be declared as strategic by the government on the written request of the army.

"Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, the Government may on the written request of an Army officer not below the rank of Corp Commander, declare an area as Strategic Area within a local area, only for direct operational and training requirements of armed forces, which may be excluded from the operation of this Act and rules/regulations made there under in the man-

ner and to the extent specified in the declaration and the Government may satisfy itself about the reasons cited for declaring the area as strategic area and will have such area notified accordingly with such conditions as may be required," reads the government order. It also announced an amendment in land laws to **● PAGE 02**

THE HORTICULTURE SECTOR, IN PARTICULAR, HAS AN IMMENSE GROWTH potential and the J&K Government is making all out efforts to tap the potential in order to give a fillip to the socio-economic condition of all those who are associated with the sector and contribute to the betterment of livelihood of Apple Growers,"

PDP, NPP Stage Protests In Jammu

A day after the government of India notified new land rules paving way for outsiders to buy land in Jammu and Kashmir; scores of people Wednesday held protests and burned effigies of BJP in the winter capital and demanded **● P-02**

Muslim Majority JK 'Eyesore' For BJP: NC

Coming down heavily on the BJP-led government over the new land laws, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on Wednesday said that having a Muslim majority state within the union of India has always been an eyesore to the ruling **● P-02**

New Laws Will Boost JK Economy: Singh

Union minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said the new land laws in Jammu and Kashmir, which allow all Indians to buy land there, will boost the economy and offer value addition to the higher education institutions in the union territory. **● P-02**

Pak Rejects New Land Laws In J&K

Pakistan on Wednesday "categorically rejected" the government of India's amendments in the land ownership laws in Jammu and Kashmir, saying it was a "clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions, bilateral **● P-02**

4 More Corona Deaths In J&K, Toll 1456

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Four more people succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, raising the fatality count since the outbreak of the pandemic in the Union Territory to 1456.

Three more Covid-19 related deaths were reported from Jammu division, while a woman lost the battle with the deadly disease in the valley, officials said.

The 58-year-old woman from Bagh-e-Mehtaab, was admitted to a hospital here and diagnosed with bilateral com-

4 Doctors Among 536 New Cases

Four doctors and thirty five travelers were among 536 new cases detected in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, taking the total number of people infected by the virus in the Union Territory to 93213. **● P-02**

munity acquired pneumonia on October 18.

The deaths from Jammu included two from the **● PAGE 02**

2 Militants Killed In Overnight Gunfight In Srinagar Outskirts

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- Two Jaish-e-Muhammad militants were killed by state forces in an encounter that broke out on Tuesday night in Mouchwa area of Budgam district of central Kashmir, police said Wednesday.

The site of the encounter is close to the capital Srinagar. State forces launched a cordon-and-search operation at Mouchwa in Chadoora area of Budgam around 7 pm on Tuesday following information about the presence of militants there, a police spokesperson said.

He said the search operation turned into an encounter around 9 pm after militants opened fire at state forces positions.



Two militants were killed in the encounter which lasted nearly four hours, the police spokesperson said,

adding due to darkness the operation was suspended, however the whole area was put under **● PAGE 02**

NIA Raids Trust, NGOs In Srinagar

The Probe Agency Conducts Searches At 10 Places, Including Offices Of NGOs And A Newspaper As Well As Homes Of Activists And Journalists.



NIA team leaving GK office after carrying out searches on Wednesday.

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out searches at ten places in twin districts of Srinagar and Bandipora, including a trust owned by a newspaper owner and some non-governmental organisations, officials said.

In a statement, the NIA said that "it raided at least at 10 locations in Srinagar, Bandipora and one location in Bangalore in connection with a case pertaining to certain so-called NGOs and Trusts raising funds in India and abroad in the name of charitable activities and then using those

funds for carrying out secessionist and separatist activities in J&K".

"This case was registered by NIA on 8/10/2020 u/s 120B, 124 A IPC and sections 17, 18, 22A, 22C, 38, 39 and 40 UA(P)A, 1967 on receipt of credible information that certain NGOs and Trusts are collecting funds domestically and abroad through so-called donations and business contributions etc. and are then utilizing these funds for secessionist and militant activities in J&K," the statement added.

The statement further stated that those whose premises have been searched include "residence and office of Khurram Parvez (co-ordinator of Jammu and Kashmir **● PAGE 02**

KEG Concerned Over Raid On Newspaper Premises

The Kashmir Editors Guild (KEG) expresses its concern over the pre-dawn NIA raids on Greater Kashmir premises in the Srinagar Press enclave. Though NIA after a five-hour wait said that the raid was on GK trust, GK management said that the investigating **● P-02**

China Says LAC Standoff Bilateral Issue, Slams US

Beijing: China on Wednesday said its border standoff with India in eastern Ladakh is a bilateral issue, and asked the US to "stop" its Indo-Pacific strategy, terming it as an attempt to impose American hegemony in the region. The remarks by the Chinese Foreign Ministry came a **● P-02**

Govt Appoints 2 Media Consultants To LG

SRINAGAR: The J&K Government on Wednesday appointed Yatish Yadav as senior media consultant and Dr. Dushyant Kumar Rai as media consultant in the Information Department on nomination basis. The senior media consultant will be paid Rs 150000 salary per month while the media consultant will draw a salary of Rs 80000 per month, according to an order issued here. Cumulatively they will draw Rs 230000 as salary besides other perks. "Sanction is hereby accorded to the engagement of **● P-02**

'Pied Piper' Sarjan Barkati Released After Four Years

SRINAGAR: Sarjan Barkati, popularly known as 'Freedom Chacha' and the pied piper of Kashmir, was on Wednesday released by the authorities after over four years of detention.

Barkati's wife Shabroza Banoo said that her husband was released from detention and he reached home at around 7: 40 pm Wednesday.

Barkati, who hails from south Kashmir's Shopian **● P-02**

In FOCUS / New Job Rules Will Make Working Women More 'Vulnerable', Activists Fear

Bisma Bhat

Fear has gripped many women government employees, after the Jammu and Kashmir administration passed new amendment in the retire policy of government employees, as they suspect that the law might increase vulnerability of sexual abuse and harassment in the male-dominated offices.

The administration on October 22 introduced certain substitutes in 226(2) Article of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Service Regulations.

The Finance department issued notification stating that in exercise of powers conferred under provision

to Article 309 of Indian Constitution, Lieutenant Governor has directed that Article 226(2) of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Service Regulations may be substituted as "226 (2): (a) Notwithstanding anything contained in these Regulations, government may, if it is of the opinion that in the public interest to do so, require any government employee other than one working on a post which is included in Schedule II of these rules, to retire at any time after he/she has completed 22 years of qualifying service or on attained 48 years of age.

It stated that "the exercise of review of performance of the government servants will be initiated for each employee for the first time

after her/his completion of 22 years of service or attaining 48 years of age and any time subsequently, as may be required".

The notification further states that a register of the government employees, who are due to attain the age of 48 years or to complete 22 years of service, has to be maintained by the administrative department.

The register should be "scrutinised" at the beginning of every year by officers to be nominated by the administrative department concerned and the review be undertaken as mentioned in sub-clause (b), the notification read.

Growing Concerns
Taranum (name changed) work-



ing at one of the prominent government hospitals in Srinagar feels very insecure in the office when-

ever she had night duties. In February this year, while doing a graveyard shift at the hospital, she

approached the store-keeper for blanket. Instead he offered her a cup of tea and said, "Hot cup of tea will make you hot."

"I understood his intentions were not good," Taranum recalled. "I was really scared and dumb-stuck how to react on this. I left the place without taking the blanket and preferred to spend the night in cold. Next day I shared the incident with my female colleagues who consoled me, but I did not dare to report it and buried the incident in my heart," she said.

She believes that giving men authority to write performance report every year will give them enough chance to blackmail women for

sexual favours. Another nurse, Maryam Wani (name changed) said that last year when the winter was approaching she wanted to avail hotel facility to avoid inconvenience prevailing in winters as she had to come from far-flung village.

"I have to travel from Mattan area of Anantnag District, so I thought to prefer hostel facility during winter months to avoid regular travelling. I approached the concerned authority to book rooms in hostel. A man accompanied me to check the rooms available. When I asked him the hostel fee, he replied 'Aapkahotoa sab free kara do aapkayliye' (If you wish I will avail it **● PAGE 02**

From Front page...

Agriculture Land Will Not...

it to this year also," LG said, as per the official spokesperson. He said that Sinha asserted that the scheme will make way for procurement of 12 Lakh MT of apples which will not only ensure profitability to the apple growers but at the same time, it will also create rural employment through supplementary services such as packaging, transportation etc.

"The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister has also allowed NAFED to utilize Government Guarantee of Rs. 2,500 Crore. The losses, if any, to be incurred in this operation will be shared between the Central Government and UT administration of J&K on 50:50 basis," the LG said. "The Market Interventio n Scheme will provide a valuable marketing platform to the growers, besides ensuring remuneration prices of apples and protect the Apple growers from making distress sale. NAFED is going to collect the apples from the growers and make the payment directly into the accounts of the growers through DBT. It will also address all issues related to marketing and transportation, in addition to providing optimum returns to apple growers, which will go a long way in expanding the horizon of this sector in J&K," he added.

The official spokesperson further said that the LG asked MD NAFED to increase their investment in Horticulture infrastructure from proposed Rs 100 crore to Rs 500 crore to give a substantial push to the development of horticulture sector in J&K.

Horticulture-Agriculture is a major industry in the UT and around 70 percent of J&K's population is connected with the sector. We had released an excess of Rs 680 crore for augmentation of Agriculture and Horticulture sectors so that better marketing and innovative farming techniques are incorporated by the producers. All the government's efforts are aimed at increasing the income of farmers and fruit growers. The official spokesperson said that LG also called upon the farmers to set up Controlled Atmosphere Storage Plants with the help of 50% subsidy provided by the UT government. He underlined the importance of linking the UT's fruit and vegetable mandis to National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Platform.

Speaking on the Prime Minister's ambition on doubling the farmers' income; the LG, as per official spokesperson, laid special emphasis on promoting high density plantation of apples to increase the production in order to achieve three to four times returns for the growers.

"It is our goal to cover 355 hectares of land for high density apple plantation. We have also decided to convert another 1500 hectare land for high density apple plantation," Sinha said.

"We have to become a market leader in the horticulture sector and the entire government machinery would ensure that the dream is fulfilled soon," he added.

The LG, as per official spokesperson also said that promoting J&K's Horticulture and Agriculture produce to the global platform; official stall of J&K will also be displayed in the upcoming Dubai Food festival.

Now Govt Can Declare Any...

allow everyone in India to buy the land in Jammu and Kashmir which hitherto was exclusively meant for permanent resident of J&K. Earlier this year, J&K administration had issued a clarification on its decision to notify certain places in the Union territory as strategic areas, to facilitate construction by the armed forces.

A number of amendments have been carried out in the Jammu and Kashmir Development Act to allow the buying of land by anyone as works such as domicile or PRC holders find mention.

The J&K administration had made amendments to the Control of Building Operations Act-1988, and the J&K Development Act- 1970, thus giving powers to the Cantonment Board and the armed forces to carry out construction activities beyond the cantonments.

PDP, NPP Stage Protests...

repeal of the decision. Scores of PDP activists led by General Secretary and former legislator Surinders Choudhary, assembled at the PDP headquarters at Gandhi Nagar and staged a rally to lodge their resentment against the BJP-led central government over the new land law. However, the protesters holding the tricolour as well as the party flag, were stopped by police from marching on the main road and later dispersed peacefully.

This was the first major political activity by the PDP amid repeated attempts made by various groups and individuals to fly the national flag on the party headquarters after its president Mehbooba Mufti had last week stoked a controversy with her remarks on the national flag. In her first press conference after over 14-month detention in Srinagar, the former chief minister had on last Friday said that she was not interested in contesting elections or holding the tricolour till the constitutional changes enforced on August 5 last year were rolled back. The PDP leader had also said that she would hold the tricolour only when the separate flag of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was restored.

The Centre on August 5 last year had abrogated the erstwhile state's special status and bifurcated it into union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Following the controversy, three senior leaders of the party in Jammu -- former MP T S Bajwa, ex-legislator Ved Mahajan and former state secretary Hussain Ali Waffa had resigned on October 26.

"Our protest is against the anti-people policies of the BJP, especially the new land law. This land belongs to our future generations and the BJP is cheating the people of Jammu and misleading them," Choudhary said.

Accusing the BJP of pursuing anti-people policies, he said, "This will not be tolerated... we will fight for our rights." He claimed that Mufti never said that she would not hold the national flag.

It is not about the tricolour which we are hoisting on January 26 and August 15 with great fervour... Visit BJP headquarters, you won't find the national flag fluttering round the year. No party hoists the national flag on a daily basis, he said.

PDP activist Mohammad Amin, who was holding the tricolour in the rally amid pro-India sloganeering by his party colleagues, said: We have been holding this flag from school days. We love our country. Meanwhile, JKNPP chairman and former minister Harh Dev Singh too led a protest demonstration near exhibition ground here and rejected the new land laws for Jammu and Kashmir.

It is an insult to the vision of last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh who had introduced the state subject in 1927 to protect the jobs and lands of locals. The saffron party arbitrarily notified the new law against the wishes of the people, he said.

The new draconian land law enacted by the government is a breach of trust of the people of J&K and Jammu region in particular. The BJP time and again assured the people that their right of land and jobs shall be safe guarded at all costs post abrogation of article 370 but the notification of the obnoxious law has sent ripples and shock waves among the people who are feeling cheated, Singh said. He said the regime was hell bent to change the demography of the UT and Jammu province in particular.

Jammu region has been bearing the brunt of the illegal settlement of Rohingyas and Bangladeshis. Will the new land law not enable them to buy plots here and provide them an opportunity to settle permanently?, he asked.

Stressing that the new law will encourage the land mafia, the NPP leader called upon the Centre to repeal the new law in conformity with the aspirations of the people.

Amid anti-BJP sloganeering, the activists set ablaze an effigy of the saffron party before leaving.

Muslim Majority JK 'Eyesore'...

dispensation and its ilk. In a statement issued to media here, NC Parliamentarians Muhammad Akbar Lone and Hasnain Masoodi said the incumbent ruling dispensation has defaulted on the assurances of 'Kashmiriyat, Jamhooriyat, and Insaniyat' and the new notification is a case in point. They said with the new land notification people fear will bring demographic change and alter the character of Jammu and Kashmir. "Having a Muslim Majority state within the union of India has always been a eyesore to the ruling dispensation and its ilk. New Land Rules have made it clear that they want to wipe out the character of J&K. The order is not inclusive in its discrimination. Voices of concern are being heard in Jammu and Ladakh as well. The people of Jammu are unhappy with this land ownership system because they know before it affects Kashmir, it will affect them," the MPs said. The senior NC leaders said that people of J&K are feeling alienated

from rest of the country and harboring the notion that nobody understands their sentiments saying the new land notification will only lead to total bewilderment of a whole set of populace which is not good for the greater interests of the country in general and Jammu and Kashmir in particular. The MPs further said that the new notification abates the rights of the people of J&K and places them at a lower pedestal than other country men.

"A mere written request of an Army officer not below the rank of Corp Commander is required to declare an area strategic within a local area. Can we have such a measure in place for other civilian areas in the country or for that matter in states situated alongside the international border? Why the people of J&K are only being singled out and treated as dump-driven cattle. Are the people of J&K any less Human? On one hand it is being said that the measures taken on 5th of august last year by the GOI were to bring J&K at par with other constituent units of the country, but in reality J&K is being converted into a garrison," they said. Taking exception to the "propaganda" of the government on the demerits of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, the senior NC leaders said that it was a "boogey to hoodwink people".

"Do other states like Himachal Pradesh have no investment? The industrial growth argument is a big bogey. In Jammu, there were big industries before abrogation. The problem for setting up MNCs or other infrastructure is not Article 370 but the situation of the valley. The BJP and the RSS do not want a Muslim majority state in this country. This is their agenda of Akhand Bharat and the new land notification is a measure aimed to meet that end," they said.

New Laws Will Boost JK...

He said the earlier arrangement not only created a physical barrier but also caused a mental barrier to outsiders who were willing to contribute and invest but never had the feeling of belonging.

"Jammu and Kashmir land reforms are being opposed by disgruntled elements. This bogey is being raised by those who are feeling the threat to their vote bank," the minister of State for Personnel said.

The Centre on Tuesday allowed people from across the country to buy land in Jammu and Kashmir by amending several laws, a move which the mainstream political parties in the union territory said was akin to putting the erstwhile state up "for sale".

Singh hailed the new land laws as a welcome step. "This will boost the economy of Jammu and Kashmir and at the same time, offer value addition to the institutions of higher education," the minister said.

Singh said the right to buy property by outsiders in Jammu and Kashmir does not deprive the owner of the property the right to decide whether to sell his or her land or not.

"On the contrary, for any potential property seller in Jammu and Kashmir, the new arrangement offers a wider range and wider loop of buyers to decide as to whom to sell and at what price to sell," he said. Singh claimed that several potential investors are in a beeline, waiting to set up units in Jammu and Kashmir and, in fact, ever since the abrogation of Article 370 provisions, they had been repeatedly approaching the government to expedite the process of issuing land notification so that they could go ahead with their entrepreneurship initiatives.

In the times to come, he said this will not only boost industry and business in Jammu and Kashmir but also create new avenues of employment and livelihood. Rebutting the allegation by certain Kashmir-centric politicians that the new land laws are a threat to demography, Singh retorted saying that actually they are feeling the threat to their vote bank demography because over the years they had learnt to survive and thrive on a captive vote bank. "If they are actually convinced about what they are saying, then why did they not allow voting rights to refugees from Pakistan even when Article 370 was in force and there was no threat to demography, as seen by them," he said.

Responding to the allegation that "J-K is on sale" and that people from outside will come and buy bungalows and properties in the union territory, Singh asked are the Gupkar bungalows on sale and is any of the residents of Gupkar Road allowing their bungalows to be taken over by somebody from outside? He said it means that nobody can purchase a bungalow unless the owner is willing to sell it. Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah lives in a bungalow on Gupkar Road in Srinagar. Singh said if the new notification allowed the freedom to grab or forcibly occupy a property in Jammu and Kashmir, as is being made out, then the Gupkar bungalows, being most likeable and situated in the most picturesque locality, would have been the first to be taken over by outsiders

PakRejects New Land Laws...

agreements between Pakistan and India, and international law". The Foreign Office in a statement reminded India that the valley is an "internationally recognised dispute under the relevant UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions and international law". "India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5August 2019, and subsequent measures, particularly the domicile law and now the land ownership laws, are aimed at changing the demographic structure of Jammu and Kashmir to convert the Kashmiris into a minority in their own land," the FO statement said. It added that by changing the demographic structure of the valley, New Delhi was violating the 4th Geneva Convention and committing a "war crime".

"All these measures and laws, lacking legal and moral legitimacy, are forced upon the oppressed people of J&K through the barrel of the gun with an unprecedented military siege in the most militarised zone in the world," said the FO. Pakistan reiterated that such steps can neither change the disputed nature of the region as recognised by the United Nations and the international community nor can they "prejudice the inalienable right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people". Pakistan urged the UN and the international community to take "immediate action to stop India from changing the demography and distinct identity" of Kashmir.

It also asked the global body of nations to urge New Delhi to facilitate the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute as per the relevant UNSC resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

NIA Raids Trust, NGOs In...

Coalition of Civil Society or JKCCS), his associates Parvez Ahmad Bukhari, Parvez Ahmad Matta and Bengaluru-based associate Swati Sheshadri; Ms. Parveen Ahanger, Chairperson of Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDPK) and offices of NGO Athrout and Greater Kashmir Trust". "Several incriminating documents and electronic devices have been seized. Further investigation in the case is continued," reads the statement.

The APDP and the JKCCS are the two prominent local human rights groups which have been vocal about the rights abuses in the region. Bukhari, a journalist, works for a foreign news agency. Mehbooba Mufti, former J&K chief minister and the chief of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), alleged that the NIA has emerged a "pet agency" of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) "to intimidate and browbeat those who refuse to fall in line".

She alleged: "NIA raids on human rights activist Khurram Parvez and the Greater Kashmir office in Srinagar is yet another example of the government's vicious crackdown on freedom of expression and dissent. Sadly, NIA has become BJPs pet agency to intimidate and browbeat those who refuse to fall in line". She alleged that at a time when J&K's land and resources were being plundered, the government wanted media outlets to write opinion pieces about anodyne topics such as diabetes and yoga.

"In BJPs' all is well' charade, truth is the biggest casualty. Any journalist unwilling to become a part of Godi media (those who speak in favour of the ruling party or government) is targeted," she further alleged.

KEG Concerned Over Raid On...

agency checked the computers and took away the hard drives, KEG said in a statement on Wednesday. The statement further said that Kashmir media continues to get targeted, demonized, vilified and raided by both the state and non-state actors for a long time now. "Kashmir media has a proven record of being a professional institution that maintained textbook objectivity while maintaining its core journalistic values. This is despite the adversity of an extraordinary situation and the mounting challenges day in and day out," the Guild said.

Expressing its concern over the mounting costs of being a journalist in Kashmir, the KEG expressed hope that Kashmir media is permitted to function without hassles and hurdles.

"This is in the interest of everybody within and outside Jammu and Kashmir," the KEG statement added.

China Says LAC Standoff ...

day after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo assured India that the US stands firmly with it to confront threats to its sovereignty. Pompeo's remarks came after the third edition of the Indo-US dialogue in New Delhi during which the two sides deliberated prominently upon the Sino-India border row and situation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Reacting to the US push for closer defence ties with India, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here on Wednesday that "the border affairs between China and India are matters between the two countries."

"The border situation is generally stable at the moment. Both sides have unimpeded channels for communication, and are properly handling matters through consultation and negotiation," he said, in an apparent reference to the military and diplomatic level talks between India and China to resolve the standoff.

In a blunt criticism of China, Pompeo cited the killing of 20 Indian Army personnel in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh in a clash with the Chinese military and said the US stands firmly with India in confronting threats to its sovereignty.

"Our leaders and our citizens see with increasing clarity that the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) is no friend to democracy, the rule of law transparency...I am glad to say that the US and India are taking steps to strengthen our cooperation against all manner of threats and not just those posed by the Chinese communist party," Pompeo said.

Wang sharply criticised the US' Indo-Pacific concept, saying "the Indo-Pacific strategy proposed by the US trumpets the outdated Cold-War mindset, confrontation between blocs and geopolitical rivalry. What it upholds is nothing but the dominating role of the US and its hegemonic system."

"We urge certain US politicians to reject the Cold-War and zero-sum game mentality, and stop making erroneous moves like hyping up the so-called "China threat", sowing discord between regional countries, and undercutting regional peace and stability."

He said all visions on regional cooperation "should be in line with the trend of the times, which is peace, development and win-win cooperation."

The Chinese military has been flexing its muscles in the strategically vital Indo-Pacific region and is also engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea. Early this month, India, the US, Japan and Australia agreed to step up coordination in creating a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Govt Appoints 2 Media...

Mr. Yatisb Yadav as Senior Media Consultant and Dr. Dushyant Kumar Rai as Media Consultant in the Information Department, on nomination basis to assist the Lieutenant Governor," reads an order.

While their term will be co-terminus with tenure of the Lieutenant Governor, they are also entitled to allowances, TA and DA as admissible to a temporary employee and will get transportation and accommodation as that of an additional secretary and a deputy secretary rank officer respectively.

"The salaries and other perks of the above mentioned media consultant shall be drawn from the Directorate of Information and Public Relations," the order added.

'Pied Piper' Sarjan Barkati...

district, was known for his sloganeering during the 2016 uprising that started following the killing of Hizb commander Burhan Muzaffar Wani. Barkati was arrested on October 01, 2016.

Locals from Reban, the native village of Barkati said that scores of people gathered outside the house of Barkati and welcomed him. Pertinently, his family members have been protesting at different locations from the last four years to demand his release.

"From the last four years, my husband was in police custody and we were facing a lot of problems to survive," Shabroza said, adding that "we are indebted to those who have assisted us in our odd days and were very happy that he has been finally released."

"We have gone through very tough days since then as my children were most often getting up at night and used to cry when they couldn't find their father next to them," she said.

"Hundreds of people were visiting our house to ask my husband to participate in rallies in their areas during the 2016 uprising, however, most of them disappeared after he got arrested," she added.

"I faced all hardships because I know my husband was not on any wrong path," she said, while thanking people who have helped them in the last four years.

Notably, Barkati was immediately booked under Public Safety Act (PSA) after he was arrested on 1st October 2016 in Anantnag district and since then was under detention.

2 Militants Killed In Overnight ...

strict cordon. "In the wee hours, search operation was resumed and bodies of both the killed militants were retrieved from the site of encounter," the police spokesperson said.

He identified them as Javid Ahmad Ganie resident of Pulwama and Khalid alias Ilyas, a Pakistani national, both associated with JeM.

"Incriminating materials including arms & ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes," the police spokesperson said.

He further said that the bodies shall be sent to Handwara for burial after completion of all medico-legal formalities and the nearest family members of the local militant shall be allowed to participate in the last rites at Handwara.

"In this connection a case under relevant sections of law has been registered and investigation has been initiated. People are requested to cooperate with police till the area is completely sanitized and cleared of all the explosive materials, if any," he added.

4 More Corona Deaths In J&K...

winter capital of the J&K and one from Kathua, they said. With these deaths, the fatality count has reached 968 in Valley and 488 in Jammu region.

Srinagar district with 348 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (251), Baramulla (143), Budgam (92), Pulwama (80), Kupwara (72), Anantnag (74), Kulgam (46), Bandipora(46), Rajouri (46), Doda (45), Shopian (35), Ganderbal (32), Kathua (31), Udhampur (30), Samba (25), Poonch (23), Kishtwar (14), Ramban (13), and Reasi (8). (With GNS inputs)

While 337 fresh cases of coronavirus were reported from Kashmir valley, the remaining 199 were detected from the Jammu division, officials said.

Giving district wise details, they said, Srinagar reported 131 cases, Budgam 27, Baramulla 73, Pulwama 12, Kupwara 30, Anantnag 13 Bandipora 12, Ganderbal 25, Kulgam 6, Shopian 8, Jamm 118, Rajouri 3, Udhampur 6, Doda 4, Kathua 14, Poonch 5, Samba 12, Kishtwar 18, Ramban 8 and Reasi 11.

Moreover, officials said, 546 more Covid-19 patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals 213 from Jammu Division and 333 from Kashmir.

4 Doctors Among 536 New Cases

free for you). He wanted some kind of favour in return," Wani recollected. Later, Wani did not avail hostel facility and preferred to travel to hospital from her home in Anantnag every day.

"I won't say every man out there carries bad intentions for girls but yes I won't also deny that women are not comfortable in men-dominated workplaces. They are being exploited and abused everywhere. New amendments in the retirement rules will give men enough chances to exploit women. It can increase sexual violence against women," Wani added.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 ("POSH Act") was enacted to provide a safe, secure and enabling environment, free from sexual harassment to every woman. Under the POSH Act, it is mandatory that every office, government

or private, should have internal Complaint Committee (ICC), a body envisaged to receive complaints on sexual harassment at the workplace from an aggrieved woman, as well as to inquire into and make recommendations to the concerned authority on the action required pursuant to its inquiry of such complaint made.

However, Wani said that there is no such committee in her office where women can lodge complaints against the sexual harassment.

Activist Take
According to the women's right activist, Ezabir Ali, women throughout Kashmir face various kinds of violence which include sexual abuse and exploitation in public places, offices, educational institutions and even homes, despite the fact that there're various acts enacted which govern women right but due to sorry state of affairs it is not been implemented anywhere.

"With the introduction of these amendments women will definitely be exposed to exploitation and abuses at workplaces and the vulnerability of violence against women will definitely increase," Ali said. In past, she said, on the basis of reports that women face sexual abuses at workplaces, government ordered constitution of Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) to provide support to the working women but we would hardly see such establishment in government offices.

"In most of the cases, the predator would be the immediate bosses who would ask sexual favours from the women employee. These amendments will give men chance to use it for their personal benefits," Ali informed.

Giving the overlook of infrastructure, Ali said that women who face violence at workplaces have no place to go as State Women Commission has been already abolished after the Article 370 abrogation and there is only one women police station working in the entire Kashmir to address women-related issue, besides there're no destitute homes for such women.

"Even if women managed to reach the women police station in Srinagar, you don't know how gender sensitive the police station is? The police station has been in bad news in the sense that they are not women friendly. People over there are not helpful and accommodative towards victims, who have gathered lots of courage to break their silence and reach there for help to report their atrocities. We have very less infrastructure in place to address crime related women," Ali said, adding that policymakers should reconsider these amendments.

A female government employee working in male-dominated department in Srinagar said on the condition of anonymity that females are trolled for everything at their workplace.

"Men feel inferiority complex when a women is progressive and they cannot bear that a women will rise above them," she said.

"They will definitely place some hurdles in your way. When you are in a place where you are surrounded by opposite gender, you will be noticed for everything. Be it your clothes, your behaviour, people will notice your actions. Women are not comfortable or safe in a male-dominated workplace keeping in mind there're no rules and regulations in place that will restrict men to exploit women."

She added that by bringing new amendment in retirement policy, government will expose women to sexual abuse, giving men enough chances to blackmail women for sexual favours.

A post-graduate medical student at one of the reputed medical colleges of the valley had faced similar abuse in the hands of her immediate boss.

"During my post-graduation days, I was doing research under one of the professors who repeatedly sought favours from students. I had received many calls and messages from him but I repeatedly resisted his advances. I could not dare to report it because I suspected that the person will not entertain my research if I will go against him," she recalled adding that men always tries to find weakness to exploit women.

"I think these amendments will increase women's vulnerabilities because again when the immediate bosses of women employee will have to write performance report of any women, he might ask favours from them," she said.

Social worker and researcher, EssarBatoool opine that workplace is vulnerable place for women if she is not in a position of power and introduction of these amendments will add to the avenues for exploitation of a women for sexual favours because you can just withhold the report or write bad remarks in the performance appraisals in private institution as well and they could very well be used as weapon against the women to have them agree to certain favours or to harass them into submission.

"There was this incident some years back in HDFC bank where a woman was allegedly harassed by her superior and later she committed suicide and no one knows what happened to that case. Just look at the mechanism put in place to readdress such issues.It does not even exist on the ground," Batoool noted.

2 Soldiers Injured In Mine...

said the injured BSF personnel has been shifted to government hospital Rajouri while the injured army soldier was shifted to Udhampur.

PDP Leader Joins BJP In Jammu
here, a party release said.

It said Hussain quit PDP and joined the BJP along with his supporters, stressing that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are very optimistic about the policies of Prime Minister NarendraModi.

"The people of J-K are ready to sacrifice themselves to protect the "Tricolor" (tricolour) and do not support anybody who tries to defame the nation and the national flag," the statement quoting Hussain said.

He said J-K is on the right track towards peace and development. Hailing Hussain's decision, Raina said he has come to the right place now and asked him to serve the party and the nation with full vigour. Raina also assured him full support of the party in his public welfare endeavours, the statement said.

"The PDP has insulted the nation and this has forced senior leaders to quit that party," Raina claimed.

Girl Slips To Death In Gurez ...

over to her family for last rites. Tuesday. Vijay Bahadur, son of Mahavir, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, suffered massive cardiac arrest while he was working in a brick klin in Beerwah Budgam on Tuesday, official sources said.

He was immediately shifted to sub-district hospital Beerwah while doctors declared him brought dead. (KDC)

Militant Hideout Unearthed...

of Police, Poonch, RameshAngral said. He said the search of the hideout led to the recovery of an AK 56 rifle, three magazines, 793 rounds, a binocular, a radio set, a Pakistan-make pistol with a magazine and a solar charger.

Sopore Teen's Body Retrieved...

They said the body was handed over to the kin after the completion of medico-legal formalities for the burial. The boy had allegedly committed suicide by jumping into the river on October 21 from Bypass Bridge. Since then, efforts were on to trace his body.

Meanwhile a case, under relevant laws, stands registered in the concerned police station and police are investigating the matter. (KDC)

7 Gamblers Arrested In...

they remain in custody," the police spokesperson said. He identified them as Basharat Hussain Sheikh,Tariq Ahmad Khan, Manzoor Ahmad, Mohammad Maqbool Malik, Mohammad Saleem Nakash, Asif Ahmad Bhat and Mushtaq Ahmad.

"Accordingly, a case FIR No. 51/2020 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Rainawari and investigation has been initiated," the police spokesperson added.

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CS chairs maiden meeting of State Broadband Committee

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 28: The Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam today chaired the first meeting of the State Broadband Committee to review the implementation of National Broadband Mission in Jammu & Kashmir. Administrative Secretaries of departments of Home, Housing & Urban Development and Information Technology besides, officers from LSA, Department of Telecom, GoI, BSNL and representatives from TAIPA participated in the meeting. The meeting was informed that to provide high-speed internet connectivity in Jammu & Kashmir, the J&K Communication and Connectivity Infrastructure Policy will be adopted soon which will pave the way to the implementation of Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016 in the Union Territory.

Corruption deep rooted in society: CUK VC

Ganderbal, Oct 28: Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir Wednesday said that corruption is deep rooted in every sector of our society, which needs to be checked and addressed immediately. "Despite stringent laws and establishment of several government institutions to check the bribery and other forms of corruption in public and private organizations, it is still rampant and continues to grow," Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir said while addressing the participants during the first day of the Vigilance Awareness Week celebrated on the theme "Sartak Bharat Samruddh Bharat (Vigilant India Prosperous India)" at varsity's Green Campus here.

5 % interest subvention a game-changer: JK Bank CMD

'More than 2 lac J&K Bank borrowers to benefit from it'

Srinagar: Hailing the J&K government, under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, for its timely intervention through an economic package for the business community of the Union Territory, J&K Bank Chairman and Managing Director R K Chhibber on Wednesday asserted that the bank will ensure that all relief measures, including the interest subvention is promptly passed on to all eligible customers, in a hassle free manner.



He stated this after receiving a cheque of Rs 250 crore from Lieutenant Governor J&K UT Manoj Sinha as first instalment of the interest subvention during the grand function held at Raj Bhavan here to mark the success of phase III of the UT Government's financial outreach to youth and women entrepreneurs during its flagship program 'Back to Village'. Terming the J&K Government's Rs. 1350 Cr financial package as a game-changing step

to revive the economy of the region, the CMD said that 5% interest subvention for the businesses of the UT was a historic decision, depicting the strong determination of UT Government for the overall welfare of the business community. "On ground, it means that the traders and businessmen whose debt serviceability has been impacted by the recent economic disruption shall get a shot

in their arm to revive their businesses by effectively managing their liabilities. The decision, in nutshell, shall lessen the hardships faced by the traders and business community to a great extent", he said. Outlining the benefits of interest subvention for J&K Bank borrowers, the CMD stated, "It is going to benefit more than two lac borrowers of the bank. It will also result in regularization/up

gradation of the some of the business accounts which have been under stress since 2019 followed by the Covid-19 pandemic."

Giving an overview of the bank's performance during the B2V3 program which he called as festival of development, the CMD said that the bank has garnered around 15389 loan cases from entrepreneurs during the programme and sanctioned around 10828 cases within a small span of 11 to 13 days during two important government programs of 'Back to Village - 3' and 'My Town My Pride'.

"There was an unprecedented co-ordination between the government functionaries and bankers during the recently concluded 'Back to Village-III' and 'My Town My Pride' Programs and the role played by our staff, as counsellor and guide to the youth, has resulted in expeditious sanction of loan cases for early initiation of their ventures", he said.

LG Inaugurates Water Sports Centre at Nehru Park

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 28: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today inaugurated Water Sports Centre under PMDP scheme at Nehru Park, Dal Lake. The Lt Governor also launched the International Standard Water Sports Equipments on the occasion. The Lt Governor congratulated the concerned officers and sportspersons for completion of the Water Sports Centre at Nehru Park in record time. For encouraging water sports in Jammu region as well, a similar Water Sports Centre is coming up at Ranjit Sagar lake, Basohli, announced the Lt Governor. The government is working on a multi-

pronged strategy to tap the immense sports potential to make J&K a Centre of Sporting Excellence, he added.

The region is bestowed with a number of water bodies which can be effectively used to facilitate water sports. A number of steps have already been taken in this regard. J&K has huge potential in water sports and the UT Government is aiming to promote water sports by developing water sports infrastructure like the newly inaugurated Water Sports Centre to facilitate the associated sports persons, said the Lt Governor.

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir NOTICE

Where a application for transfer of ownership has been received from one. Shri : G.N. Naik S/o: Gh Mohiuddin Naik R/o: Gagribal Srinagar (Transferor) of LMV Etios Toyota. Vehicle bearing registration number JK01S - 0777. Chasis number 300016665 Engine no. 061044 Model 2012. In favour of Shri., Tufail Ahmad S/o. Gh Nabi R/o Sidra Jammu A/P Q No.127 Tulsli Bagh Sgr. (Transferee) Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed transfer of ownership shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Srinagar Times. No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.1722 Dated 27/10/2020 Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir NOTICE

Whereas an application has been received from one. Shri : Javid Ahmad Dar S/o: Ghulam Mohi ud Din Dar R/o: Shoolipora Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04D- 3156 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S J&K Bank Ltd B/U Nasrullahpora Budgam. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper. Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.1711 Dated 27-10-2020 MCB

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir NOTICE

Whereas an application has been received from one. Shri : Imtiaz Ahmad Bha S/o: Abdul Gani Bhat R/o: Hayat Pora Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04D- 3156 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S Cholamandlam Investment B/U Nowgam. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper. Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.1714 Dated 27-10-2020 MCB

Office of the Election Authority (Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989) Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir

Corrigendum to Notification No: EA/Pyt/2020/02 dated: 26.10.2020

Whereas, vide Notification No. EA/Pyt/2020/02 dated 26.10.2020, Delimitation of District Development Constituencies was notified by the Election Authority under the provisions of Rule 108-B of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Rules 1996:

Whereas, Deputy Commissioner, Kathua and Deputy Commissioner Baramulla have pointed out certain factual errors in the Annexure appended to the above referred notification in respect of their respective districts;

Now therefore by virtue of this corrigendum, corrections, as mentioned hereunder, are notified to the Notification No. EA/Pyt/2020/02 dated 26.10.2020 issued by the Election Authority:-

A. Baramulla:

- In District Development Council Kunzer, the name of Panchayat halqa shall be read as 'Lalpora-A' instead of 'alpara-A'.
- In District Development Council 'S. Parenpillan, the Panchayat Halqas 'NamPH-A, NamPH-B and NamPH-C' shall be read as "Nambla-A, Nambla-B and Nambla-C" respectively.

B. Kathua:

- Panchayat Halqa 'Forelane East' shall be shifted from District Development Council 'Barnoli A' to District Development Council 'Barnoli B' and consequently, District Development Council 'Barnoli A' shall be renamed as 'Dinga Amb' and District Development Council 'Barnoli B' shall be renamed as 'Barnoli'.
- Panchayat Halqas 'Bhaddu Upper', 'Bhaddu Lower' and 'Dher', shall be shifted from District Development Council 'Mandli' to District Development Council 'Bilowar'.
- Consequent to the above, District Development Council 'Barnoli' shall be assigned S.No. 2, District Development Council 'Basholi' S.No. 3, District Development Council 'Bilowar' S. No. 4 and District Development Council 'Dinga Amb' S. No. 5, amongst the District Development Councils of the district Kathua in the said Notification.

Sd/- (Hirdesh Kumar) IAS Election Authority (Chief Electoral Officer, J&K) Dated:- 27/10/2020

DIPK-NB-3321/20 No. 6817/CEO/PYT/2020/1883-1902

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir NOTICE

Whereas an application has been received from one. Shri : Mohammad Ashraf Khan S/o: Mohammad Akram Khan R/o: Sheikhpura Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04E- 5151 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S J&K Bank Ltd B/U Humhama. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper. No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.1707 Dated 27-10-2020 Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir MCB

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir NOTICE

Whereas an application has been received from one. Shri : Imtiaz Ahmad Bha S/o: Abdul Gani Bhat R/o: Hayat Pora Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04D- 3156 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S Cholamandlam Investment B/U Nowgam. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper. No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.1714 Dated 27-10-2020 Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir MCB

Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL ENGINEERING WING KULGAM

Tender Notice

e-NIT No.25/REWK of 2020-21 dated:23-10-2020

For and on the behalf of Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Union territory of jammu&kashmir , the Executive Engineer REW Kulgam hereby invites E- tenders (In single cover system) on item rate basis from the registered /eligible contractors for the following work .

S.No	Name of the work	Advertised Cost (Rs in lacs)	Earnest Money	Cost of tender document	Class of contractor	Time for completion
01	Construction of Community Hall at Vessu KP Colony Tehsil Kulgam	8.70	17400/=	500/=	CEE/DEE	30 Days

Position of Funds: Position of AAA: Approved
Position of funds: Available

Terms and conditions:-

- The bidding document consisting of qualifying information ,eligibility criteria ,specification drawings and bill of quantities (BOQ) set of terms and conditions of the contract and other related details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per scheduled dates given below:-

01	Date of issue of tender notice	23-10-2020
02	On line bid submission start date	27-10-2020 from 09:00AM
03	On line bid submission last date	05-11-2020 upto 4:00PM
04	Date and time of opening of on line bids	06-11-2020 at 11:00 AM

Note: Hard copies shall be obtained only from the bidder who is declared as 1st lowest bidder at the time of opening of tenders. The cost of tender documents will be collected through Treasury challan/receipt under account Head 0515. However the unsuccessful bidders will submit the same separately after the opening of bids online.

- The online bids must be accompanied with the following scanned documents (Soft copies), failing which the Executive Engineer, REW Kulgam reserves the right to cancel any or all bids without issuing notice to the bidders.
- All other terms and conditions shall remain same as are laid down in the detailed general NIT and in PWD Form 25 double agreement form.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Kulgam

NO.REWK/ NIT/2020-21/
Dated:...../10/2020

DIPK-8123/20

DIAL-EMMA

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPPD: 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)

PRAYERS

FAJR 5: 25
ZUHR 12: 15
ASR 4: 04
Magrib 5: 45
ISHA 7: 07

HIJRI CALENDAR

11 Rabi-ul-Awwal
1442

This Day In History

- 1859 - Spain declares war on Morocco
- 1914 - Turkish warships storm Black Sea
- 1923 - Turkey declares independence (successor state to Ottoman Empire)
- 1923 - Mustafa Kemal officially confirms Turkey as a republic (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti), now commemorated annually as the Republic Day of Turkey
- 1945 - First ballpoint pen goes on sale, manufactured by Biro
- 1947 - Belgium, Luxembourg & Netherlands form Benelux Union
- 1947 Trial of art forger Han van Meegeren begins in Amsterdam
- 1948 - Israeli forces liberate Meron & Gush-Halev
- 1948 - Safsaf massacre, Israeli defence forces attack Palestinian village of Safsaf in the Galilee
- 1954 - Colonel Nasser disbands Muslim Brotherhood
- 1956 - International zone of Tangier returns to Morocco
- 1956 - Israeli paratroopers drop into Sinai to open Straits of Tiran
- 1964 - The United Republic of Tanganyika & Zanzibar renamed The United Republic of Tanzania
- 1966 - Lunar Orbiter 1 crashes on moon: 6.7°N 162°E
- 1966 - National Organization of Women founded
- 1997 - Iraq's Revolution Command Council announces that it will no longer allow US citizens and US aircraft to serve with UN arms inspection teams
- 1998 - Space Shuttle Discovery blasts off on STS-95 with 77-year old John Glenn on board, making him the oldest person to go into space.
- 2004 Arabic news network, Al Jazeera broadcasts an excerpt from a video of Osama bin Laden in which the militant leader first admits direct responsibility for the September 11, 2001 attacks and references the 2004 U.S. presidential election
- 2005 - 29 October 2005 Delhi bombings kill more than 60.
- 2015 - China announces the end of their one-child policy after 35 years

From KO Archives

Fire brand Asiya urges husband to take more wives

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - A top female separatist leader in Kashmir valley is pushing her husband to take more wives.

For Asiya Andrabi, the step is logical and humane given the huge number of widows created by the decade-old conflict in Kashmir.

"The jihad against India has left so many widows and orphans. A man has a responsibility to look after them," Aasiya said.

"Allah says a man can marry one, two, three or four wives but he must have the means to do justice to them all."

Asiya's husband, Muhammad Qasim, was only recently released from prison after serving a six-year jail term for militant activities.

While polygamy is legal for Muslims, it is relatively rare in Muslim-majority Kashmir.

But then Asiya, 37, has always stood out from the crowd. She heads the Dukhtaran-e-Millat, or Daughters of the Nation, a socio-political group that favours Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

On one hand a vocal supporter of equal employment and educational rights for women, Asiya insists on a strict Islamic dress code with women veiled and covered from head to foot.

"Women should be heard and not seen," she argues.

To people from the West, I may seem a contradiction, but I have never felt that this veil, this purdah has been an obstacle to my work."

Asiya's activism is uncompromising and earned her a 13-month jail sentence in 1993.

On Pakistan national days, she raises the Pakistani flag around Srinagar, and has led many anti-Indian marches through the city.

She has also led bands of similarly veiled women, armed with black paint, to brush over posters showing scantily clad film stars and berate those who choose not to wear the veil.

While rejecting as "Indian propaganda" claims by the authorities that she has been responsible for disfiguring acid attacks, she, has admitted to throwing coloured dye in women's faces.

Her ambition for her sons is that they should join the Mujahideen (freedom fighters) who "I" have been waging an armed insurgency against Indian rule in Kashmir since 1989.

"I never dreamed that they should be doctors or prime ministers. Until we achieve our freedom, I want them to be mujahids who fight for the cause of holy Islam."

Asiya and her husband Qasim, who belongs to the militant group Jamiat-ul-Mujahadeen, were arrested together at Srinagar airport after returning from Delhi in 1993.

She was allowed to keep her infant son, who she was still breast-feeding, with her in prison.

I remember my son, then a toddler, how he responded to the jail bells and still has a fear of the security forces."

While Asiya has many detractors, she has won respect for her ceaseless campaign to ensure that Muslim women are properly educated.

(Kashmir Observer, October 29, 2000)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

New land laws

In a new order on Tuesday, centre has thrown open the J&K land for outsiders. It has removed the requirement of being a J&K domicile for the purchase of land in the union territory. In the amended laws the urban and non-agricultural land can be bought by outsiders. It has permitted contract farming on agricultural lands and provided for setting up of an industrial development corporation. Also, the areas earmarked for development do not fall under the purview of the laws that earlier ensured ownership rested with permanent residents. Government had earlier indicated that some protection on land-rights on the lines of Himachal Pradesh and North Eastern States will be granted to domiciles of J&K. But this hope has been belied.

The new laws do not restrict purchase of farm land by non-J&K agriculturists. There are also no limits on the extent of area for building a residence or a shop. Such restrictions do exist in some states in the rest of the country.

Similarly, the reference to 'permanent residents of the State' has been removed from laws that provide for housing for economically weaker sections and low-income groups.

The laws have been opposed by the The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration. The newly formed alliance of six parties has described the Centre's action as a "huge betrayal". Its spokesman Sajad Lone termed the land laws as a massive assault on the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and also grossly unconstitutional. National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah said the laws are designed "to alter the character" of Kashmir and have added to the fear of demographic changes. J&K, he said, has been put up for sale and left bereft of any basic protections.

Earlier this year, the domicile law that opened up Kashmir for settlement by outsiders were issued in similar circumstances, without taking J&K's public and political opinion on board. This has only further deepened a sense of political disempowerment among people. More so, when there is no political or civil society leader in Kashmir in a position to stick his neck out.

However, considering the far-reaching fallout of the new land laws on the demographic landscape of J&K, the situation in the UT has been plunged into a deep uncertainty. The move has already eroded any shred of legitimacy that New Delhi blessed new J&K politics might have enjoyed. It has also dented the credibility of the established mainstream politicians who are now blamed by a section of society for bringing this upon the region by always siding with New Delhi. However, any visible expression of the public anger against Centre is likely to be contained by the ongoing preoccupation with coronavirus pandemic. That said, New Delhi should review the new land laws as a confidence building measure towards J&K. This would go a long way to address the alienation in the Union Territory.

OTHER OPINION

Back to Future

The signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) at the 2+2 dialogue between the defence and foreign ministers of India and the United States in Delhi on Tuesday marks the end of the prolonged phase of mutual trust-building and sets the stage for more expansive security cooperation.

The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed by the government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee back in 2002. The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was signed a full 14 years later in 2016. The Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed in 2018. The missing years in between belonged to the UPA government. To be sure, it was the UPA that opened the space for a bold new strategic engagement with Washington. Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee signed a 10-year framework agreement on defence cooperation with the US in June 2005 and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed the India-US civil nuclear initiative in July 2005. The four foundational agreements should have followed easily from the 2005 breakthrough. But the Congress leadership was struck by "buyer's remorse" — it turned each of these functional agreements into purity tests for India's non-alignment.

Unlike the Congress leadership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed with the armed forces that saw major security gains from these agreements and even, more importantly, the political value of deeper strategic partnership with the US. That has helped clear the brush for more intensive engagement between the armed forces — from interoperability to intelligence-sharing and joint defence research to production of weapons. As the real possibilities for bilateral and multilateral defence and security cooperation open up now, it will be wrong to view the current developments as a tactical response to the immediate military challenges that India confronts vis-a-vis China. India's defence dialogue with the US has a longer history than either country's concerns about China. Substantive and institutionalised cooperation between the two defence establishments will serve the long-term interests of a rising India and an America that is restructuring its global security burden. Acting together, Delhi and Washington will be in a better position to shape the regional and global environment in favour of peace and stability.

Indian Express

G20 Interfaith Forum for Faith Leaders

The Forum stressed on the importance of role, which could be played by religious leaders in resolving many global issues

ASAD MIRZA

Attracting an extraordinary assembly of diverse representatives from world's religious and interreligious networks and communities, the seventh annual G20 Interfaith Forum concluded its meetings mid-October; after five days of virtual sessions which addressed the thematic areas related to COVID-19 emergencies, climate change, social, racial, and economic disparities, environmental challenges, the preservation and safeguarding of sacred sites including places of worship besides other pressing issues confronting today's world.

Originally intended to be held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, host of the 2020 G20 Summit, the conference was conducted virtually in response to the global pandemic. Virtual attendance exceeded 2,000 participants from more than 90 countries. Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman played a key role in stressing the role of religious leaders and interfaith partnership to find a solution to the global issues by bringing it on top of the G20 agenda.

At the closing of the Forum, the organising partners; the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), the G20 Interfaith Association, the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC) and Saudi Arabia's National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue, issued a joint statement calling for more robust representation at global policy making tables for religious leaders and faith-based actors.

Role of faith-based organisations

The five-day Forum brought together prominent religious leaders from across the faith spectrum as well as government officials, senior officials of United Nations entities and opinion formers to consult, deliberate and recommend.

Recommendations received from different thematic panels during the Forum were grounded in the experience and wisdom of the world of faith and the experience and insights of religious actors and institutions. Priority recommendations of these will be presented to the G20 Leader Summit to be held in November at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

In his closing remarks, H.E Faisal bin Muaammar, Secretary General of KAICIID, called for greater alignment between religious leaders and policy makers. He said, "The G20 Interfaith Forum has demonstrated the vast breadth and scope of the work carried out by religious actors."

Speaker after speaker at the Forum noted how COVID-19 had intensified challenges across the entire spectrum of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. H.E Mr Moratinos called for, "a different approach driven by unity and solidarity. But most of all by compassion and humility." In this context, he underlined the need for "a convergence between faith actors and state actors."

The G20 Interfaith Forum

The G20 Interfaith Forum was setup to find global solutions by collaborating with religious thought leaders and political representatives. It builds on vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting a rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values.

The goal of the meetings were to contribute meaningful insight and recommendations that respond to and help shape the upcoming G20 Summit and thus global policy agendas. The Forum's agenda sought to build on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and additional issues of social cohesion, equity, and sustainability that have been a central underlying theme for the Forum from its inception.

As the world struggles with the COVID-19 pandemic, faith-based organisations and religious actors' rapid, yet informed responses have been crucial to support the collective efforts. At the same time, responding to hate speech, stigmatisation and other negative dynamics that hinder interreligious relations and social cohesion in the time of a pandemic remains a crucial task in which religious actors have unique leverage.



A candid analysis of the recommendations makes one wonder whether we have become disillusioned with the western concepts demarcating the domains of both political and religious leadership. And this new thinking may take us back to the old ages instead of moving forward.

The IF Forum observed that as a part of an inter-faith approach, experiential learning must be incorporated into the pedagogy by way of opening up spaces that bridge the gap between religious and secular perspectives, and adherents of different faith traditions.

Various panels on different issues underlined the fact that religious institutions and Faith Based Organisations (FBO) have been essential in peace building, conflict prevention and mediation. Evidence continues to grow that when religious actors are valued and engaged in a considered way, informed by effective analysis, they can be particularly effective partners for government and peace building institutions and actors.

The forum's discussions offered vivid testimony to the need for the world's political leaders to include religious actors in policy-making processes including notably the immediate opportunity available at the Riyadh Summit. This collaboration can further reinforce the shared values of solidarity, coexistence and respect.

Forum's Recommendations

Most recommendations from different panels and policy groups highlighted the key role which could be played by religious leaders to play a proactive role in tackling different issues faced by the society all across the globe.

A key recommendation was that the time has come for formal recognition of the religious platform of the G20 Interfaith Forum as an official engagement group in future G20 Summits.

The Forum urged religious leaders and institutions to agree amongst each other and with policymakers on fostering joint efforts towards more effective dialogue, negotiations, and peace building processes, and reinforcing the role of religion as a means of peace building, rather than a tool for fueling conflict.

It called for adopting multilateral measures by activating inclusive institutional channels for cooperation between states, institutions, and religious leaders, while fully respecting the independence of institutions. It further stressed

the need to strengthen the role of religious institutions and leaders as facilitators of dialogue and cooperation among followers of religions in conflict-affected contexts.

Panellists urged to develop or reinforce institutions and grievance mechanisms, which allow addressing human rights violations and corruption; guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities. Panellists stressed that this would contribute to achieve social cohesion by reinvesting in social rights and in a cohesive society; building an edifice of shared and social responsibilities; strengthening representation and democratic decision-making and expanding social dialogue and civic engagement; and building a secure future for all.

The agreement of religious leaders and religious institutions amongst each other was on to encourage countries to restructure their national legal and political systems in order to address all forms of human rights violations and all manifestations of corruption in the political and administrative sectors, while developing policies that enshrine justice, transparency, responsibility and accountability.

It is high time that we realise that states actors can't play an effective role without the support of religious leaders and FBOs. For every human being, except atheists of course, religion plays an important role in their lives and in formulating their responses and actions. If we are able to harness that element in their lives then perhaps we can aspire for a world free of its many malices and conflicts.

However, a candid analysis of the recommendations makes one wonder whether we have become disillusioned with the western concepts demarcating the domains of both political and religious leadership. And this new thinking may take us back to the old ages instead of moving forward. Further, the recommendations may seem acceptable to an audience in the eastern world but whether the western leaders and public will accept them remains a moot question.

Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi.



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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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Tenacity of Gupkar Declaration

Last year on August 4th, 2019 when the signatories of the gupkar declaration met and vowed to fight against any assault on the autonomy of J&K, nobody took them seriously and I fear nobody takes them seriously even now. And why must one blame the people who've lived through decades of broken promises and betrayals.

However, it is in the nature of every turn of event for us to pin some hopes in it. Now, that the mainstream parties have come together and revised the Gupkar declaration; one wonders if they are trying to bring dignity back and trying to salvage themselves.

For years these politicians have made promises after promises to the people of J&K and broke them again and again. One can clearly say that they have lost their place in the political spectrum of J&K, and not only that, only a miniscule group of people trust them and believe that they are honestly fighting to undo what happened on 5th august last year.

The "new alliance" has its own loopholes and ideological asymmetries which puts it to a lot of doubts and questions regarding how they are going to pull it off. The way the BJP has busted governments by trading MLAs in different states and toppling governments, it is really hard

to fathom that it wouldn't happen with the Kashmiri politicians, as the Kashmiri politicians have a sorry history of selling out.

The political reality of J&K stands in oblivion. India isn't ready to talk to Pakistan on Kashmir, and naturally Pakistan won't accept it. The separatist politics in Kashmir has been choked out, none of their leadership can be seen anywhere. The mainstream politics also doesn't stand any ground.

Whatever activity we see is by the BJP, and it doesn't interest the Kashmiris. There is a conscious effort by the home ministry to somehow try to make people accept last years' events.

Material benefits are being considered and one might think that these promises do hold ground as the BJP needs to justify their actions.

This is a long road of uncertainty that the people of J&K might have to bear with for some time. The road for the People's Alliance is difficult; they have to win the trust of the people. It will be fascinating to see what means and ways the alliance would take to seek what they ask for, and more than that, whether the people of the erstwhile state will trust this entity which they call "mainstream politicians" once more!

Burhan Ahmad
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Turning a Deaf Ear to Soothing Music

HILAL MANZOOR WAGAY

“If gambling is an instinct, it can be controlled with self-motivation and strong will. If the dice is soothing music, one can turn a deaf towards it.”

It is hard to believe that most moral of human beings, incapable of telling a lie, cannot resist the sound of a dice. Couple days ago, I got a call from one of my esteemed friends who also happens to be from Kashmir and working for livelihood with one of the Multinational Company at Noida and requested for Legal Advice. What he revealed was a shocker to me, and I thought it worth sharing. My friend took a whopping loan of 13 lakh rupees and lost little by little of it in gambling, not in a traditional way but via new norms of gambling online, in Dream 11 and Rummy. In fact, my friend does not have any other source or shoulder, to payoff or share the liability and this introduced him to the world of depression.

Dream 11 is an Indian fantasy sports platform that allows users to play fantasy Cricket, Hockey, Football, Kabaddi and Basketball. Gambling is an instinct and present in all human beings and majority of individuals and realms are of the opinion that if gambling be regulated and structured appropriately, it will be advantageous for the economic expansion of the nations.

Whether gambling should be legalized or not has been an ongoing debate for decades now. Many countries had legalized betting activities such as UK (as per Gambling Act of 2005, it is legal for UK residents to gamble) and China and these activities are profoundly taxed in order to use the revenue collected from said activities to boost the economy. Proponents of legalizing betting opine that there are many recompenses of gambling apart from enhancing economy. For instance, it will prevent gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being impaired or exploited by gambling, most essentially will curb the generation of black money.

In numerous countries new legislations had been delineated and framed to regulate and legalise gambling activities, be it online domain or offline area, but in India this area is still considered as a gray area and no new central legislations have been passed to regulate or legalise gambling activities.

In India, gambling activities are still governed by the rusty pre independence legislation passed during the British rule called, Public Gambling Act, 1867. As per Seventh Schedule List II entry 34 Gambling and betting is covered under State Subjects and states are either entitled to formulate laws for gambling activities within their respective states or follow the legislation passed by Central Government.

Gambling is nowhere defined in India under



any legislation pertaining to gambling. But three things which were excluded from the ambit of gambling are Betting on Horse Race (subject to the legal regulations), Games of Skill (excluded under the Gambling Act and by Court Judgments) and Lotteries (regulated by lottery Laws of India). It is incumbent to state that certain online gambling activities/games were covered under the ambit of Game of Skill as held in catena of judgments and were allowed to carry these activities forward like Dream 11 and Rummy. There is a difference between Game of Skill and Game of Chance, where former does not come under the ambit of Gambling as skill remains the predominant factor in such activities/games and success depends upon the knowledge and experience of performer. Whereas the latter depends on sheer luck and final outcome of the game is unpredictable, that is the reason Game of Chance is banned in most of the Indian states.

In India gambling is allowed in Damman and Diu, Sikkim and Goa, whereas Lottery had been legalised in 13 states be it online or offline like Maharashtra, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Punjab etc.

Business of fantasy sports is growing at a lightning speed. It had witnessed three times the growth in the past twelve months, recording more than 2400 Crores growth in revenue as compared to last year's 920 Crores, all thanks to smart phones and free access to high speed internet. It might be beneficial for economic growth but what about the people like my friend?

The only way out is that if gambling is an instinct it can be controlled well with self-motivation and strong will. If the dice is soothing music one can turn a deaf ear towards it.

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The author is an
Advocate at Delhi High Court

When Can I See My Grandkids?

The pandemic has separated many grandparents from their grandchildren. Here's advice for safely reuniting your family's oldest and youngest generations.

TARA PARKER-POPE

Grandparents have had enough. They want to see their grandchildren.

A life in seemingly endless lockdown and isolation from grandchildren is not how grandparents want to spend their golden years. But adult children don't want to risk exposing an older, more vulnerable generation to the new coronavirus during a family visit. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that eight out of 10 deaths from Covid-19 are in people aged 65 and older.

But a healthy life is more than just physical health. Loneliness is also a general predictor of decline and death in people over 60. As reality sets in that pandemic living will be measured in months and possibly years, grandparents are asking, "How can I safely visit my grandchildren?"

"This is a tricky one because older people are particularly vulnerable to this virus," said Julia Marcus, an infectious disease epidemiologist and assistant professor in the department of population medicine at Harvard Medical School. "Of course the safest approach is to avoid any interactions with grandparents, but that won't be sustainable for everyone, and there are important ways to minimize risk if people do choose to see older relatives."

To start, families need their own reality check about the actual level of vigilance by every member of the household.

"What I would consider quarantine and what other people would consider quarantine are often different," said Shan Soe-Lin, a lecturer at the Yale Jackson Institute for Global Affairs and managing director at Pharos Global Health Advisors, a non-profit global health firm in Boston. "One of the gold standard questions is, 'How many people have you come into contact with over the last week, or over the last month if you can remember that far back?' I think that's a clear test question. Everyone says that they are being super careful. Nobody self-evaluates as being completely reckless."

So as a first step, think about human contacts, big and small, by every member of the household. How many times did someone go to a store? Did you meet up with a friend for a walk? When you jog, how close are you to other runners? At the park, did your children run up to another child before you could stop them? Is a teenage boyfriend dropping by the house? Do you always wear a mask? Do your children?

"If you're a family and you have some leakage in your quarantine protocol — if you had to go to the grocery store, for instance, delivery people came over, other people entered your house — any



“Remember, the biggest worry is being in an enclosed space with someone who has the virus but doesn't know it. Keep everyone outside, if possible. But if a child must enter a grandparent's house, monitor them and allow it only when the grandparent is outside.”

time you have a break in that protective bubble I would be extremely cautious," said Dr. Soe-Lin.

Now that you've taken stock, try to seal the "leaks" in your quarantine bubble. While it may be impossible to get your contact risk to zero, you can eliminate the biggest risks (like outside visitors), reduce shopping trips to once a week or less, improve hand hygiene and wear a mask. Once you're confident in your family's quarantine vigilance for 14 days, it's less risky to visit an older family member. But go with a plan.

The safer strategy is to spend time together outdoors — the risk for viral transmission outside is far lower than inside. Everyone should wash their hands, and stay at least six feet apart. Some experts suggest 10 to 12 feet if the grandparent is a very elderly person or has a chronic health condition. Even outdoors, everyone over the age of 2 — and not just the grandparent — should wear a mask. Children are more likely to wear a mask if you explain to them that it's to protect someone they love.

"A sneeze without a mask can spread up to 20

feet," said Dr. Asaf Bitton, executive director of Ariadne Labs at Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "It's also the act of speaking — we expel droplets even in quiet speech. The mask really contains a great amount of them. The mask is protecting all of us from each other."

Masks can be removed for meals, but everyone should stay at least six feet apart from the older person. Don't share food or drinks — it increases the risk of close contact or catching germs from serving utensils and dishes. If you have hand sanitizer, use it often. And avoid touching the face.

Remember, the biggest worry is being in an enclosed space with someone who has the virus but doesn't know it. Keep everyone outside, if possible. But if a child must enter a grandparent's house, monitor them and allow it only when the grandparent is outside. Everyone should wear a mask, and sanitize the bathroom after use. If the grandparent is visiting you, designate one disinfected bathroom just for them and keep children outdoors.

Linsey Marr, an aerosol scientist at Virginia Tech who studies viral transmission, said that before the pandemic, her 74-year-old mother-in-law cared for her two children twice a week. Now they meet outdoors for family meals, with everyone keeping their distance.

"We have a long table outside, and she sits at the opposite end more than six feet away," said Dr. Marr. "We do not pass around dishes. She has not been in our house for months. We're worried about her. We don't want her to get sick."

While parents may worry that all these precautions will create too much stress, research shows that even young children understand the concept of keeping people safe, "kind of like how superheroes help save people," said Dr. Neha Chaudhary, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital.

"Parents can explain the need to keep grandparents from getting sick by keeping their body to themselves, staying behind a particular landmark like a sidewalk or set of chairs, and keeping a mask on their faces since germs come from there," Dr. Chaudhary said. "Young kids generally understand the idea of something bad happening and trying to do good instead."

Don't panic if a child breaches the social distancing barrier and gets close to a grandparent. Brief encounters are not a big risk, and you don't want to create fear in children. But long hugs, cuddles and sitting in grandpa or grandma's lap are not advised. If both grandparent and child are wearing a mask, a quick hug from a child around the waist or knees, keeping faces as far apart as possible, poses very little risk, Dr. Marr said.

Long-distance visits to see grandparents are more difficult. You should stay in a hotel or rental nearby, not in the grandparent's house, and still limit visits to the outdoors while wearing a mask. Even if you drive instead of fly, stopping for food and using public restrooms along the way sets your quarantine clock back to zero. It's safest to quarantine for 14 days before visiting the older person.

Be aware that the risk of being together during the pandemic will change over time. Areas where new cases and hospitalizations are low and dropping may be safer than places where illness is high and on the rise, Dr. Bitton said. Experts say the summer may be your best opportunity to visit with older family members in many states, partly because you can spend time together outdoors, but also because a surge in cases is expected in the fall and winter, when stricter quarantines may be recommended for the most vulnerable.

Do you have a health question? Ask Well

The New York Times

Air Pollution, Green Space, Built Environment Characteristics May Influence Body Mass Index During Initial Years Of Life

Agencies

Exposure to higher air pollution levels and greater population density during the early months of life may be associated with an increase in children's body mass index (BMI). By contrast, living in areas with greater exposure to green space and a more favourable land use mix (a measure of the variety of building types and services in an area) could be associated with the opposite effect. These are two conclusions reached by a study undertaken by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), a centre supported by the "la Caixa" Foundation, in which data from nearly 80,000 children living in urban environments in Catalonia was, for the first time, analysed to explore relationships between BMI growth trajectories and multiple urban exposures.

There is a growing body of evidence that environmental urban exposures, such as air pollution, green space and the built environment, may be linked to effects on growth and obesity in children. These effects may begin at a very early stage, during pregnancy and the first few years of life. "Urban environments are characterised by multiple exposures that may influence the BMI, but the results



of research to date have been inconsistent and earlier studies did not assess simultaneous exposures," said the first author of the study, Jeroen de Bont, researcher at ISGlobal and the IDI-APJGol Foundation.

The most notable innovation of this new large scale longitudinal study, funded by the La Marato de TV3 Foundation and published in the journal Environmental Pollution, was that multiple exposures were evaluated simultaneously. The data analysed was extracted from a database of primary care medical records in Catalonia, which

included 79,992 children born between 2011 and 2012 in urban areas, who were followed up until they reached five years of age. BMI growth curves were calculated based on routine measurements of weight and height. At the same time, the authors estimated various urban exposures

at the level of the census tracts where the children live. These included air pollution.

"Our results suggest that the population density in urban areas and exposure to higher levels of air pollution may be associated with a small increase in BMI in children up to five years of age and that

greater exposure to green spaces and a more favourable land use mix may be associated with a small decrease in BMI," said de Bont. "The fact that these associations were strongest during the first two months of life, could be explained by the effects of exposure during pregnancy, which would persist over time," he added.

According to study coordinator and ISGlobal researcher Martine Vrijheid, earlier findings indicated that the relationship between BMI and air pollution might be explained by the fact that the pollution "could affect foetal growth through various factors, such as oxidative stress and inflammation, and lead to alterations in the basal metabolism of infants, thereby increasing the risk of obesity by inducing insulin resistance and hormonal alterations".

"On the other hand," Vrijheid goes on to explain, "the possible relationship between a lower BMI and exposure to green space could be explained by the fact that such spaces are a valuable resource favouring physical activity on the part of both mother and child and result in a beneficial effect on the development of the foetus and later on that of the child".

A different hypothesis is that the association could be explained by another possible me-

diating factor--the lower levels of air pollution observed in the greener areas in the study. In the case of the characteristics of the built environment, Vrijheid goes on to explain that higher population density may be associated with a higher BMI "owing to higher levels of air pollution and because traffic levels in the more populated areas in Spain may give rise to a perceived lack of safety and disincentivise active modes of travel (walking and cycling), thereby increasing childhood obesity."

While there is no clear consensus on how the land use mix affects BMI, the chief hypothesis is that a more varied land use mix decreases the distance between housing, work and services and therefore favours walking and cycling, which in turn increases levels of physical activity. "For children, the early years of life are a time of great sensitivity; they represent a window of special vulnerability to environmental exposures that can permanently affect the structure, physiology and metabolism of the child's body. Future studies should take into account multiple exposures in the urban setting instead of analysing exposure one by one, as encouraged by the exposome concept, which studies many different exposures a person faces altogether", Vrijheid said.

Airplane COVID-19 risk 'very low' with masks, other actions: Report

Agencies

Transmission risks of COVID-19 during airline flights are very low and below other routine activities during the pandemic such as grocery shopping or going out to dinner, when using face coverings and taking other steps,

researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health said on Tuesday.

The report found transmission risks can be "reduced to very low levels through the combination of layered infection control measures."

The report, funded by Airlines for America - a trade group representing

American Airlines, United Airlines, Delta Air Lines and others - and a consortium of aircraft and equipment manufacturers and airport operators, comes as US airlines lose billions of dollars a month as passenger demand remains down 65 per cent year on year because of the coronavirus.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
Department of Soil & Water Conservation (Forests)
Office of the District Soil Conservation Officer District Budgam
01951-255139 dscobudgam777@gmail.com
E-TENDER NOTICE 03 OF 2020-21 DATED: 27/10/2020

For and on behalf of the Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Tenders on item rate basis are invited from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Civil/PWD Department, for execution of the following works:-

S. No.	Name of the work	Location	Qty.	Estimated Cost (Rs. in lacs)	CDR @ 2% (Rs.)	Time	Class of Contract	Cost of T/D non refundable head of work	Major head of work	Remarks
1	Establishment of S C Unit by way of fencing of barbed-wire fencing 1500 Rft. With wooden fence posts 8 feet apart in 4 strands of B.A Wire at Shoolipora	Shoolipora	1500 Rft.	0.817	0.017	30 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	
2	Providing and laying of 10 Nos. Of black annealed wire crates mesh 4"x4" machine woven size 16"x16" both end bend, including labour and material at Shoolipora comppt.	Shoolipora	10 Nos.	0.975	0.02	30 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	
3	Providing and laying of earth filled nylon bags (50 kg) for protection bunds including labour and material cost	Shoolipora (Balnar)	2300 Nos.	0.299	0.006	30 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	
4	Erection of DRSM Moisture retention checkdams across and along nallah coarse and along nallah coarse foundation laid in dry hand packed tightly, well banded and faced with selected stones including earth work for preparation of beds complete operation as per the estimate given.	Shoolipora	60 M ²	0.659	0.013	15 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	
5	Construction of Water Harvesting Tank in cement concrete block of size 10'x10'x5' complete including cost of material as per the estimates given.	Shoolipora	01 No.	0.60	0.012	15 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	
6	Establishment of S C Unit by way of fencing of barbed-wire fencing 1500 Rft. with wooden fence posts 8 feet apart in 4 strands in pits at Kristward Gogilpathri comppt. N6	Kristward Gogilpathri comppt. N6	1500 Rft.	0.817	0.016	30 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	
7	Providing and laying of earth filled nylon bags (50 kg) for protection bunds including labour and material cost at Kristward Gogilpathri comppt. N6	Kristward Gogilpathri comppt. N6	2200 Nos.	0.286	0.006	30 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	
8	Construction of crib structures by way of live willow mawas (10'x12") and (8'x9") providing and laying of empty nylon earth filled bags (50kgs) in layers and providing of brushwood material cost as per the estimate at Kristward Gogilpathri comppt. N6	Kristward Gogilpathri comppt. N6	06 Nos.	0.48	0.01	20 days	D	Rs. 100/-	State Sector	

The E-tender related documents, BOQ Estimates etc. can be seen/downloaded from the Department website www.jktenders.gov.in as per the schedule given below:

Position of AA: Available
Position of funds: Available

S.No.	Date of issue of tender notice	28.10.2020
1	Period of download of bidding documents	From 28.10.2020 at 11.00 am to 09.11.2020 at 2.00 pm.
2	Bid submission start date	28.10.2020 at 11.00 am
3	Bid submission end date	09.11.2020 at 1.00 pm
4	Date of opening of bids/tenders	09.11.2020 AT 2:00 PMin the Office of Joint Director, Kashmir Soil & Water Conservation Department Haftchinar Srinagar.

Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender documents (non-refundable) in the shape of demand draft in favour of Assistant Conservator of Forests Soil & Water Conservation Division Budgam, and earnest money in the shape of CDR/FDR/Bank Guarantee pledged to the Assistant Conservator of Forests Soil & Water Conservation Division Budgam, payable at J&K Bank Ltd. Budgam. The Bank Guarantee should be valid for 45 days beyond the bid validity.

Terms and Conditions

- The tenders shall be free from cuttings, correction/insertions. Tenders having corrections/cuttings/insertion shall be out rightly rejected.
- The conditional tenders shall be rejected.
- The Contractor shall quote the rates inclusive of the entire incidental charges, GST, Octroi and other levies etc. and no extra over and above the quoted rates shall be paid.
- No storage for material shall be provided by the Department for which the contractor shall have to make the arrangement of his own, and shall have to arrange for safeguarding of material.
- The contractor shall attach the tax clearance certificates with respect to sales tax and income tax and GST clearance certificate for the assessment year 2019-20 with the tenders falling which the tenders shall be rejected.
- No compensation to the damages occurred during execution, shall be made and the damages if any caused during the currency of the work shall have to be rectified by the contractor on his own.
- The key construction material shall be arranged by the contractor on his own conforming to the specifications and standards of detailed estimates.
- The taxes, levies as admissible under rules from time to time shall be deducted at source from the bills of the successful contractor.
- A deposit of 10% shall be retained on all running account bills of the contractor.
- The tenderers shall quote their rates on the BOQ, without cutting, correction, insertion, over, writing.
- The work shall be completed strictly as per the specification's drawings (as per annexure to NIT). The contractor shall be personally responsible for maintaining the specifications for the material.
- The quantities mentioned in the NIT are subject to increase or decrease of availability of funds.
- No activity shall be undertaken by the contractor against the provision of J&K Soil & Water Conservation Act and in case of any violation action under the provisions of the Act shall be initiated against the contractor, his representative or worker if any.
- In case of any dispute arising between the contractor and the department, the case shall be referred to the Director Soil & Water Conservation Department whose decision shall be final, binding and operative upon the parties.
- Other terms and conditions not covered under this NIT shall be same as are in vogue in the Forest Department and Form 25 of PWD.
- The department reserves the right to reject or accept any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
- Department shall be at liberty to impose any other condition deemed necessary during the course of execution of work that may be deemed proper by the visiting Inspection Officers.
- The successful bidder shall have to furnish the test check certificate of material to be utilized at his own cost.
- Defect liability period (DLP) shall be 15 days for all works.

District Officer
Soil & Water Conservation Deptt.
Budgam

DIPK-8072/20

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SEWERAGE & DRAINAGE DIVISION No.II. (SMC) SRINAGAR.
Phone/ Fax No. 0194-2503237 email: exdrainage@gmail.com
GIST OF TENDER NOTICE No:-09/e-Tendering OF 2020-21

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K State/ Srinagar Municipal Corporation, e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from the Registered PWD Civil Contractors whose Registration cards are valid in terms of standing rules, for the below mentioned works strictly as per the terms and conditions given hereunder:-

Sl. No.	Name of work	Estt. Cost of work incld. Deptt. materials (Amount in lacs)	Earnest Money (CDR) (Rs.)	Class of Contract	Time of completion.	Cost of Tender Document in the shape of Treasury Challan (Rs.)	Head of Account/ Authority No:
01.	Construction of Sub-main Pipe drain including Manholes at Iqbal Colony Mark Masjid Ayesha, Shaltang Srinagar	31.00	62000/-	AAV & BEE	50 days	1500/-	14 th FC/ SMC/ Pfg/2020-21/ 872-79 dt.-12.10.2020
02.	Construction of cement concrete drain including Manholes at Friends Colony Batmaloo Srinagar (Sec-1st)	21.90	43800/-	BEE & CEE	30 days	1000/-	Capex Budget 2020-21
03.	Construction of 300mm dia RCC Pipe drain including Manholes at Friends Colony Batmaloo Srinagar (Sec-2nd)	6.33	12660/-	CEE & DEE	45 days	300/-	-----do-----

The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, 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 the schedule of dates given hereunder:-

S. No.	Date of issue of Tender Notice	28-10-2020
02.	Period of down loading of bidding documents	29-10-2020 from 11.00 A.M. to 04-11-2020 upto 4.00 PM
03.	Bid Submission Start Date	29-10-2020 from 11.00 AM
04.	Bid Submission end Date	04-11-2020 upto 4.00 PM
05.	Date & time of opening of Bids on line	05-11-2020 at 2.00 PM in the office of Executive Engineer, Sewerage & Drainage Division No.II,SMC, DareshKadal, Srinagar.
06.	List of soft copies to be uploaded	Scanned copy of Treasury challan (cost of tender document) with SL.No.of NIT/ work Scanned copy of CDR (Earnest Money) with S.No. of NIT/ Work Scanned copy of GST Registration and PAN Card Scanned copy of Enlistment card with its validity, Cell No. and e-mail address BOQ

Further information regarding the NIT can be had from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-Executive Engineer
Sewerage and Drainage Division

No.II.(SMC) Srinagar
DIPK-NB-3312/20

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER Muffasil R&B Division, Budgam
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS
NIT No:126/MDB/7524-44 of 2020-21 DATED: 27.10.2020

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)	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Time of completion	Class of Contractor	Major Head of Account
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Construction of Drain near Masjid Sharief Parray Angan Ompora	1.06 Lacs	200/-	2120/-	10 days	DEE	District Capex Budget
2	Earth filling on Bonpora Link road from H/O Nissar Hussain Bhat on wards karipora	0.78 Lacs	200/-	1560/-	10 days	DEE	District Capex Budget
3	Construction of stepping from H/O Shakeel Ahmad Ganie to Irrigation Canal W. NO 02 MC Budgam	1.62 Lacs	200/-	3240/-	10 days	DEE	District Capex Budget
4	Construction of path from H/O Gaffar Bhat to Rafiq Ahmad Paul	0.76 Lacs	200/-	1520/-	10 days	DEE	District Capex Budget

(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	27.10.2020 4.00 PM
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	27.10.2020 from 4.00 PM.
3	Bid submission Start Date	27.10.2020 from 4.00 PM.
4	Bid Submission End Date	03.11.2020 upto 4.00 P.M.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	04.11.2020 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-

- 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.
- Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.
- Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Muffasil (R&B) Division, Budgam.

No:7524-44
Date: 27.10.2020
DIPK-8080/20

Saudi Arabia plans to abolish sponsorship system

Agencies

KARACHI: Saudi Arabia plans to cancel a foreign worker sponsorship system, known as kafala, and replace it with a new form of contract between employers and employees, a Reuters report said on Tuesday.

Quoting Maaal, the Arabic language online economic newspaper, the report said that the kafala system — that generally binds an expatriate worker to one employer — had been in place for seven decades in the kingdom.

Rights groups criticise the system and say it leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation. However, Saudi media had said the abrogation of the sponsorship law would lead to limiting the relationship between the employer and the expatriate worker to the employment contract that defines the rights and duties of both the parties.

A report says the end to the kafala system is also aimed at promoting economic growth and expanding commercial activities.

In February, a Saudi Gazette report had said that the decision to end the sponsorship system was part of economic reforms that Riyadh is witnessing after the launch of Vision 2030 by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, also

known as MBS.

Under the plan, the abolition of the sponsorship system will give expatriate workers freedom to secure their exit and re-entry visas while also getting their final exit stamped on their own as well as taking up employment without any restriction or approval of the employer.

The expatriate workers will have complete freedom of movement according to what is stipulated in the employment contract.

The sponsorship system, which has been in force in Saudi Arabia for seven decades, governs the relationship between the expatriate worker and the employer. Under the system, the worker, upon his arrival in the kingdom, becomes obligated to work for his sponsor in accordance with the terms of the contract, and he is not entitled to work with others without transferring his sponsorship.

The sponsorship system went through several changes aimed at protecting human rights as well as behavioural and financial rights of both parties, the newspaper said, adding that a sizable number of employers misused many provisions of the system, which led to calls from international organisations to abolish the system.

Turkey condemns French caricature featuring Erdogan



Agencies

Ankara: Top Turkish officials condemned a caricature scorning President Tayyip Erdogan in the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo on Wednesday, calling it a "disgusting effort" to "spread its cultural racism and hatred".

Turkish anger at the caricature added fuel to a row between Turkey and France about blasphemous sketches of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which flared after a teacher who had shown pupils the cartoons in a lesson on freedom of speech was beheaded in France this month.

"We strongly condemn the publication concerning our President in the French magazine which has no respect for any belief, sacredness and values," presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin wrote on Twitter.

"They are just showing their own vulgarity and immorality. An attack on personal rights is not humour and freedom expression," he said.

The cartoon on the cover of

Charlie Hebdo, showed Erdogan sitting in a white T-shirt and underpants, holding a canned drink along with a woman wearing an Islamic hijab.

Turkish presidential communications director Fahrettin Altun said "Macron's anti-Muslim agenda is bearing fruit!". "We condemn this most disgusting effort by this publication to spread its cultural racism and hatred," Altun wrote on Twitter.

Erdogan sharply criticised Macron at the weekend, saying the French leader needed a mental health check, prompting France to recall its ambassador from Ankara. On Monday, Erdogan urged a boycott of French products.

The blasphemous sketches of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) have been displayed in France in solidarity.

Meanwhile Macron's remarks that Islam is "a religion in crisis all over the world today" and his support for publishing and publicly exhibiting the blasphemous caricatures has angered many Muslims across the globe.



Amid China Concern In Indo Pacific, Pompeo Meets Sri Lankan President

Press Trust Of India

Colombo: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo today called on Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and discussed a range of bilateral issues, including economic partnership based on transparent trade and investment, COVID-19 as well as a shared commitment to democratic freedoms.

The top US diplomat, who arrived in Sri Lanka from India on Tuesday for a two-day visit, will hold talks with the country's top leadership as America seeks to balance China's growing influence in the region and to advance the common goals for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The President's Media Division said that Secretary Pompeo met President Rajapaksa for talks.

In a tweet, the US Embassy in Colombo said that Mike Pompeo met with the President to discuss economic partnership based on transparent trade and investment, key components of the post-pandemic economic recovery as well as a shared commitment to democratic freedoms.

Later, Mr Pompeo held bilateral talks with his Sri Lankan counterpart Dinesh

Gunawardena, according to media reports in Colombo.

The discussions during Mike Pompeo's visit will cover several areas of the multifaceted engagement between the two countries, the reports said.

This is the highest-level visit of a US dignitary to Sri Lanka during the tenure of US President Donald Trump.

Thank you for the warm welcome, @USAmbSLM. I'm excited to be here in Colombo. I'm proud of the work @USEmbSL does to strengthen our ties with the government, businesses, and people of Sri Lanka and look forward to expanding on those efforts during my visit. #USwithSL, Secretary Pompeo said in a tweet.

Mr Pompeo was in India along with US Defence Secretary Mark T Esper for the third edition of the US-India 2+2 dialogue with their counterparts in New Delhi.

The US Secretary of State travelled to Sri Lanka on an invitation extended by his Sri Lankan counterpart Dinesh Gunawardena. He is also expected to meet Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

During talks with Mike Pompeo, Sri Lanka will emphasise its need to maintain the independence of its foreign

policy, Regional Cooperation Minister in the foreign ministry Tharaka Balasuriya told reporters on Tuesday.

"He will be here to discuss bilateral issues and regional issues," Mr Balasuriya said.

Mike Pompeo will also visit the St Anthony's Church in north Colombo, one of the Churches devastated by last year's deadly Easter Sunday attacks.

"Secretary Pompeo will travel to Colombo to underscore the commitment of the United States to a partnership with a strong, sovereign Sri Lanka and to advance our common goals for a free and open Indo-Pacific region," the US State Department said in a statement last week.

The Chinese military has been flexing its muscles in the strategically vital Indo-Pacific region and is also engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea (SCS) and the East China Sea (ECS).

Early this month, India, the US, Japan and Australia agreed to step up coordination in creating a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Mike Pompeo's visit is being seen as part of the US effort to have Sri Lanka on its side vis-a-vis China.

UN watchdog: Iran building underground nuclear facility

Agencies

BERLIN: Inspectors from the UN's atomic watchdog have confirmed Iran has started building an underground centrifuge assembly plant after its previous one exploded in what Tehran called a sabotage attack over the summer, the agency's head told The Associated Press.

Iran also continues to stockpile greater amounts of low-enriched uranium, but does not appear to possess enough to produce a weapon. Rafael Grossi, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told the AP in an interview in Berlin on Tuesday.

Following the July explosion at the Natanz nuclear site, Tehran said it would build a new, more secure, structure in the mountains around the area. Satellite pictures of Natanz analyzed by experts have yet to show any obvious signs of excavation at the site in Iran's central Isfahan province.

"They have started, but it's not completed," Grossi said. "It's a long process." He would not give further details, saying it's "confidential information." Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's nuclear department, last month told state television the destroyed above-ground facility

was being replaced with one "in the heart of the mountains around Natanz." Natanz hosts the country's main uranium enrichment facility. In its long underground halls, centrifuges rapidly spin uranium hexafluoride gas to enrich uranium.

Natanz became a flashpoint for Western fears about Iran's nuclear program in 2002, when satellite photos showed Iran building an underground facility at the site, some 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of the capital, Tehran. In 2003, the IAEA visited Natanz, which Iran said would house centrifuges for its nuclear program, buried under some 7.6 meters (25 feet) of concrete.

Pak court reprimands govt for incarcerating Indian nationals despite completing their sentences

Press Trust Of India

Islamabad: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday reprimanded the Pakistan government for incarcerating some Indian nationals who have served their sentences in terrorism and espionage cases and ordered to send them back, according to a media report.

In a hearing over petitions submitted by eight Indian citizens for their release, a representative of the Ministry of Interior submitted a report on the matter to IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah, Geo news reported.

Syed Muhammad Tayyab Shah, one of the deputy attorney-generals of Pakistan, informed the court on behalf of the federal government that Pakistan had on October 26, 2020, released five convicted Indian prisoners on the completion of their sentences and sent them back to their homeland, the report said.

A legal representative of the Indian High Commission told the court that one of the Indian

nationals, who did not want to return despite having completed his sentence, had been deported.

Three more citizens were incarcerated despite having served their sentences, the counsel added.

Shah said he would respond to the matter after obtaining instructions to the extent of the three Indian prisoners, the report said.

The case of some prisoners is with the review board, Shah said, to which Justice Minallah angrily remarked: "How can you keep them any longer when their sentence is completed?"

"Where did the review board come from," he asked. "If the sentence is complete, send them back."

The IHC disposed of a combined petition seeking the release of four Indian citizens. One of the individual petitions was related to the man who was deported.

The court set the next hearing for November 5.

Hong Kong bars Air India flights till Nov 10 after passengers test positive

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Hong Kong has banned Air India flights from Mumbai till November 10 after a few passengers on its flight earlier this week tested positive for COVID-19 post arrival, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

This is the fourth time that Air India flights from India have been banned by the Hong Kong government for bringing passengers who tested positive for the infection after arrival.

Previous bans were on the airline's Delhi-Hong Kong flights during September 20-October 3 and August 18-August 31 and October 17-October 30.

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.

Moreover, all international passengers are required to undergo a post-flight COVID-19 test at the



Hong Kong airport.

Besides India, a pre-flight COVID-19 negative certificate is mandatory for all passengers from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, France, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, the UK and the US, according to the Hong Kong government's rules.

An airline operating a flight to Hong Kong from these countries has to submit a form before departure, stating that all passengers onboard have COVID-19 negative certificates.

"A few passengers who travelled on Air India's Mumbai-Hong Kong flight earlier this week tested positive for COVID-19 post arrival at Hong Kong," the senior government official said.

"Subsequently, the Mumbai-Hong Kong flights have been barred from October 28 to November 10 by the Hong Kong government," the official added.

Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India since March 23 due to the pandemic.

However, the Indian airlines have been permitted to operate special international flights under the Vande Bharat Mission since May this year and under the bilateral air bubble pacts since July this year.

Under a bilateral air bubble pact, the airlines of both countries can operate international flights with certain restrictions. India has formed such pacts with approximately 18 countries. PTI

NEWS MAKERS

US Self-Styled Guru, Guilty Of Leading Sex Cult, Jailed For 120 Years

New York: A "self-help" guru convicted of running a cult-like organization of sex slaves who were branded with his initials was sentenced to 120 years in prison by a New York judge Tuesday.

The effective life sentence for Keith Raniere, 60, comes after he was found guilty of coercing women into having sex with him as the charismatic leader of Nxivm, a life-coaching group that attracted a coterie of rich and famous devotees.

Followers signed up for \$5,000, five-day self-help courses, but some were then financially and sexually exploited and forced to follow a restrictive diet, as Raniere — known as "Vanguard" — exerted control, his six-week trial heard.

He established a faction within the group called DOS, a pyramid structure in which the women were "slaves" and "Grand Master" Raniere sat at the top.

The "slaves" were made to have sex with Raniere, hand over personal information and compromising photos — and some of the



women were branded like cattle as other members held them down.

Raniere was convicted in June 2019 on all seven charges brought against him, including racketeering, sex trafficking, extortion, criminal conspiracy and the sexual exploitation of a 15-year-old girl.

"I was a child. (He) robbed me of my youth," said the woman during an impact statement at his sentencing hearing.

A total of 15 people — 13 of them women — addressed the Brooklyn

court Tuesday while more than 90 victims wrote letters to Judge Nicholas Garaufis.

Nxivm — pronounced Nexium — proved a huge draw with its promise of self-improvement courses after Raniere founded the organization in New York state in 1998.

But Raniere, who was arrested in Mexico in 2018, swapped the personal development training courses for sex sessions as the head of subgroup of up to 20 women — the

youngest of whom was the 15-year-old.

Heiress The dramatic story has been the subject of two screen adaptations: HBO's recently released "The Vow" docu-series and "Escaping the Nxivm Cult," a 2019 Lisa Robinson film focused on the testimony of a mother working to save her daughter from the organization.

Addressing the court Tuesday, Raniere said he was "deeply sorry" for the "pain and anger" that his victims had expressed but maintained his innocence.

"I'm not remorseful over the charges. Those are not right," he added. Five other people were charged in the case, and all of them pleaded guilty.

German-born American actress Allison Mack — known for her role in "Smallville" — admitted to two counts of racketeering in April 2019.

The heiress of the Canadian drinks empire Seagram, Clare Bronfman, was sentenced last month after also pleading guilty.

Store guard stabbed 27 times for asking women to wear masks

Chicago: Two sisters accused of stabbing a West Side Chicago store security guard 27 times with a knife after he asked them to wear face masks and use hand sanitizer were ordered held without bond Tuesday.

The alleged attack late on Sunday by Jessica Hill, 21, and Jayla Hill, 18, left the 32-year-old victim hospitalised in critical condition, police spokeswoman Karie James said.

An argument that began after the women refused the guard's request to wear masks became physical when one of the women punched the man, James said.

Jessica Hill allegedly pulled a knife from her back pocket and began stabbing the man, while Jayla Hill held him in place by his hair. The man was stabbed in his chest, back and arms.

The women were arrested at the scene of the attack and both were treated for minor lacerations at a nearby hospital, James said.

During Tuesday's bond hearing before Cook County Circuit Judge Mary C. Marubio, the women's court-appointed

attorney said the stabbing was self-defense, adding both women suffered from a bipolar disorder.

Prosecutors said the guard never approached either women before the attack. — AP



The women were arrested at the scene of the attack and both were treated for minor lacerations at a nearby hospital, James said.

Twitter's Explanation On Showing Ladakh As Part Of China Inadequate: Joint Parliamentary Panel Chairperson



NEW DELHI: Microblogging site Twitter's explanations to a parliamentary panel on showing Ladakh as part of China are inadequate and the act amounts to criminal offence attracting imprisonment of seven years, committee chairman Meenakshi Lekhi said on Wednesday.

Representatives of Twitter appeared before the joint committee of parliament on Data Protection Bill, 2019 and were questioned by the members on showing Ladakh as part of China, Lekhi said.

"The committee was unanimous in its opinion that Twitter's explanation on showing Ladakh as part of China was inadequate," Lekhi told PTI.

However, representatives of Twitter told the panel that the social media company respects the sensitivities of India, she said.

"It is not a question of sensitivities only, it is a matter of India's sovereignty and integrity, showing Ladakh as part of China amounts to a criminal offence which attracts imprisonment of seven years," Lekhi said.

Officials who deposed before the panel on behalf of Twitter India included Shagufta Kamran, senior manager, public policy, Ayushi Kapoor, legal counsel, Pallavi Walia, policy communications, and Manvinder Bali, corporate security.

Officials from the Ministry of Electronics, Information and Technology, and the Ministry of Law and Justice also deposed before the panel. PTI

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I-T Dept Seizes Rs 62 Crore In Cash After Raids On Hawala Operatives In Punjab, Haryana, Delhi



NEW DELHI: The Income Tax Department has made a seizure of at least Rs 62 crore in cash as part of its multi-city tax evasion operation against hawala or entry operators and individuals who prepare fake bills, official sources said on Wednesday.

They alleged that the money is unaccounted and had been seized from various premises, including those belonging to a person identified as Sanjay Jain.

The seizure is linked to the searches launched by the department at 42 premises in Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhnad and Goa on Monday and the taxpayer had said that the alleged illegal transactions point to a hawala racket worth about Rs 500 crore.

The cash, in crisp Rs 2,000 and Rs 500 notes, was found stashed in wooden almirahs and furniture on the premises that were raided, they said.

The CBDT had earlier said that the action was carried out against "a large network of individuals running the racket of entry operation (hawala-like operation) and generation of huge cash through fake billing", officials said.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Board had said that Rs 2.37 crore cash and jewellery worth Rs 2.89 crore was found along with 17 bank lockers which are yet to be searched.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) is the administrative authority for the I-T department.

"The search has led to seizure of evidences exposing the entire network of the entry operators, intermediaries, cash handlers, the beneficiaries and the firms and companies involved."

"So far, documents evidencing accommodation entries (hawala) of more than Rs 500 crore have already been found and seized," it said.

Several shell entities and firms were used by the searched entry operators for layering of unaccounted money and cash withdrawals against fake bills issued and unsecured loans given, the Board said.

Describing the modus operandi of the tax evasion racket, it had said personal staff, employees, associates had been made dummy directors and partners of these shell entities and all bank accounts were managed and controlled by these entry operators.

"Statements of such entry operators, their dummy partners/employees, the cash handlers as well as the covered beneficiaries have also been recorded, clearly validating the entire money trail," the statement said.

"The searched persons were also found to be controller and beneficial owners of several bank accounts and lockers, opened in names of their family members and trusted employees and shell entities, which they were managing in collusion with bank officials, through digital media," it said.

The CBDT further said the beneficiaries had been found to have made huge investments in real estate properties in prime cities and in fixed deposits to the tune of several hundred crores of rupees. PTI

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Officials from the Ministry of Electronics, Information and Technology, and the Ministry of Law and Justice also deposed before the panel. PTI



TWO MEN SMOKING hubbal babbal at a vegetable field in Srinagar outskirts on Wednesday.

Bihar Elections 2020: Voting For Phase 1 Ends, 53.46% Voter Turnout Recorded Till 6 Pm Amid Covid-19 Pandemic

NEW DELHI: The first phase of voting in Bihar assembly elections came to an end with 53.46% percent voter turnout recorded till 6pm. The last hour of polling was set aside for covid -19 patients and voters who were under quarantine. The polling was held for 71 assembly segments spreading across 16 districts, of which Banka district recorded the highest turnout with over 59% polling. Munger district recorded the lowest turnout at 47.36 percent voting.



The ECI said that only 0.22% of the total ballot units deployed developed a glitch, 0.25% control units were reported as malfunctioning and only 1.25% VVPATS had to be replaced. The malfunctions impacted voting time in only one Assembly constituency: 241 Jamui, where polling had been extended till 7 pm to make up for the lost time. In the first phase, 1,066 candidates, including 114 women are in the fray.

— CEO Bihar #ElectionDepartmentBihar (@CEOBihar) October 28, 2020

Polling in 4 Naxal-hit districts satisfactory

Election Commissioner in a press briefing today said that the polling for first phase included four Naxal-hit districts was conducted in a satisfactory manner.

BJP files complain with EC over Rahul Gandhi tweet

The BJP filed a complaint with the Election Commission (EC) against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his tweet in which he sought votes for the Mahagathbandhan, adding that it is this alliance that will fulfil promises of jobs, welfare of farmers and justice.

Violence reported in Kaimur and IED recovered in Aurangabad

Violent incidents were reported in

some parts of Bihar including in Kaimur district where two groups comprising more than 50 people attacked each other. They were dispersed by paramilitary force personnel. The situation is now under control. Tekari is another place apart from Ara where an altercation between supporters of two alliances was reported.

As the first phase of polling got underway on Wednesday in Bihar, a major threat was averted after the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) recovered and defused two Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) in Aurangabad's Dhibra area today morning.

According to Dhibra police station in-charge, Pramod Kumar, as reported by news agency IANS, "The IEDs were placed under a culvert in Dhibra area were recovered in time and a major accident was averted".

Lakhisarai village boycotts polls

Voters in Balgudhar village in Lakhisarai district boycotted the assembly elections to mark their protest against the construction of a museum on a playground

in the village. As per the visuals by news agency ANI, the polling station number 115 wore a deserted look as the villagers decided not to cast their votes. In the pictures, only the security personnel and volunteers on the polling duties can be seen at the polling booth.

Voters faced technical issues in EVMS

The ECI claimed that the EVM problem was solved shortly after the fault was detected, voters have to wait in queues for over an hour and some even returned home without casting votes. Due to the technical snags, the functioning of over 75 EVMS or VVPATS in Munger, Arwal, Gaya and Nawada districts of Bihar got affected.

Voters in Gaya, Jahanabad, Aurangabad, Jamui, Bhabhua, Sasaram, Baka, and Kaimur also complained of technical and other errors in EVMS. Due to this, polling started late by 30 minutes to 2 hours at several places.

The elections for the 243 Assembly seats in Bihar are being held in three phases, and the counting of votes will be done on November 10.

In NDA, BJP is contesting on 29 seats, JD(U) 35 and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) six seats. The Vikas Sheel Insaan Party (VIP) has fielded one candidate. Among the Grand Alliance partners, RJD is contesting on 42 seats, while Congress has fielded 21 candidates. The CPI-ML has eight candidates in fray. Besides, IJP has fielded 42 candidates while RLSP on 43 and BSP on 27 seats. Political fortunes of eight Cabinet Ministers Prem Kumar, Ram Narayan Mandal, Jai Kumar Singh, Krishna Nandan Verma, Shailesh Kumar, Santosh Kumar Nirala, Vijay Kumar Sinha and Brij Kishore Bind will be decided in this phase.

DGCA Extends Suspension Of Scheduled International Passenger Flights Till Nov 30

The suspension of scheduled international passenger flights has been extended till November 30 amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said on Wednesday. "However, the international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," the Indian aviation regulator said in a circular.

The scheduled international passenger services have been suspended in India since March 23 due to the coronavirus pandemic. But special interna-



tional flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May and under the bilateral "air bubble" arrangements with selected countries since July. India has formed air bubble pacts

with around 18 countries, including the US, the UK, the UAE, Kenya, Bhutan and France. Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special international flights can be operated by their airlines between their territories.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) circular also mentioned that the suspension does not affect the operation of international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by it.

The scheduled domestic passenger flights resumed in India on May 25 after a gap of two months amid the pandemic situation.

Sensex Plunges 600 Points; Nifty Cracks Below 11,750

Equity benchmark Sensex plunged 600 points on Wednesday, tracking heavy losses in index majors Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank amid a massive selloff in European markets. After hitting a low of 39,774.60 during the day, the 30-share BSE index ended 599.64 points or 1.48 per cent lower at 39,922.46.

Similarly, the broader NSE tanked 159.80 points or 1.34 per cent to close at 11,729.60. IndusInd Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding over 3 per cent, followed by HDFC, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, UltraTech Cement and Tata Steel.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel was the top gainer, rallying more than 4 per cent, after the country's second largest telecom operator reported its highest-ever quarterly consolidated revenue, helping it narrow losses in the July-September period.

Consolidated revenue rose



22 per cent to Rs 25,785 crore in the September quarter, while net loss narrowed to Rs 763 crore. M&M, Maruti and L&T also ended with gains.

According to analysts, Indian equities faced intense selloff after European markets opened with heavy losses amid spiking COVID-19 cases.

Extremely volatility was also witnessed ahead of monthly derivatives expiry and US presidential election, they said. Benchmarks in Europe plunged up to 3 per cent in early deals.

Bourses in Hong Kong and Tokyo ended on a negative note, while Shanghai and Seoul were in the positive territory. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 3.20 per cent lower at \$40.28 per barrel.

No Info About Creation Of Aarogya Setu App: IT Ministry; CIC Issues Show-Cause Notice



NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the National Informatics Centre have said they do not have any information about the "creation" of the Aarogya Setu application promoted by the government to contain the spread of COVID 19, responses termed as "preposterous" by the Central Information Commission.

The transparency panel has issued a show-cause notice to the NIC to explain why a penalty under the Right to Information (RTI) Act not be slapped on it for "prima facie obstruction of information and providing an evasive reply".

Information Commissioner Vanaja N. Sarna, in a terse order, pointed out that the website of the application mentions that the content on it is "owned, updated and maintained" by MyGov and MeitY and directed the CPIO of the ministry to explain why they didn't have the requisite information.

"The CPIO NIC also should explain that when in the website it is mentioned that Aarogya Setu Platform is designed, developed and hosted by National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, then how is it that they do not have any information about creation of the App," she said.

Meanwhile, a clarification issued on Aarogya Setu App on Twitter said: "Aarogya Setu App is a product of Government of India built in collaboration with the best of the minds of Industry & Academia. Worlds largest contact tracing App, appreciated by WHO also."

The Ministry of Electronics and IT, in a release, said: "Since 2nd April 2020, regular press releases and updates have been issued on Aarogya Setu App, including making the source code available in Open domain

on 26th May 2020. The names of all those associated with the development of the App and management of the App ecosystem at various stages was shared when the code was released in Open/Public Domain and the same was shared widely in media also."

The Information Commissioner was hearing the plea of one Saurav Das who had sought to know from the government details about the creation of Aarogya Setu application, the law under which it is functioning and whether the government was planning to bring a separate law about the handling of data collected by the application.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) did not provide any information, prompting Das to file a complaint under the RTI Act.

He had filed a similar application before the NIC which responded by saying it did not have any information.

During the hearing before the Commission, Das said the response of the NIC was surprising, as NIC is the developer of the application. He also said the ministry also did not provide any information relating to the mobile application's creation and other matters.

He told the Commission that many credible media reports have questioned the Aarogya Setu application, its making and handling, which makes it "of utmost importance" to bring transparency in the creation and handling of this application, which collects vast amounts of user and personal data of individuals.

After hearing the submissions of ministry officials, Sarna noted that ultimately the steps taken till today failed to locate the source from where information can be accessed.

"None of the CPIOs were able to explain anything regarding who created the application, where are the files, and the same is extremely preposterous," she said.

The Commission observes that it is a current issue and it is not possible that there was no file movement while creating this App. "A citizen cannot go round in circles to find out the custodian," Sarna said.

NEWS MAKER

Smriti Irani tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI: Union minister Smriti Irani on Wednesday said she has tested positive for COVID-19.

She asked people who came in contact with her to get themselves tested at the earliest.

"It is rare for me to search for words while making an announcement; hence here's me keeping it simple - I've tested positive for #COVID and would request those who came in contact with me to get themselves tested at the earliest," Irani tweeted. - PTI

Delhi University Vice Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi Suspended

NEW DELHI: Delhi University Vice Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi was suspended on Wednesday on the orders of President Ram Nath Kovind who has also directed an inquiry against him over allegations of dereliction of duty, according to officials of the Ministry of Education (MoE).

The move comes amid a power tussle in the central university.

The President, who is the Visitor to the university, has placed Tyagi under suspension to ensure that the inquiry is fair and that he is not able to tamper with material records or coerce the witnesses, a senior ministry official said.

"All orders issued by or issued with the approval of Yogesh Tyagi during the period of his absence on medical ground are set aside and to be treated as null and void," the official said.

Tyagi has been on leave



since July 2 when he was admitted to AIIMS under emergency medical condition. The government had on July 17 given Pro-VC P C Joshi in charge of VC, until Tyagi resumes office.

The ministry official said, "The Vice Chancellor is not administering the university in accordance with (statutory) provisions...which has caused mis-governance and malfunctioning of University of Delhi. This is not conducive for appropriate academic as well as administrative environment of the university."

"The President of India in his capacity as Visitor of the University, on consideration of facts and material available on record, has ordered to conduct an inquiry into the allegations of dereliction of duties and lack of commitment and devotion to duty against him. The president has also

been pleased to place Yogesh Tyagi under suspension with immediate effect until further orders as he may influence/coerce the witnesses and tamper with the material records of the university so as to ensure fair inquiry," the official said.

A controversy erupted last week when Tyagi removed Joshi as pro-VC on Thursday and appointed Geeta Bhatt, the director of the Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board of the university, in his place.

Joshi had, meanwhile, notified the appointment of a new registrar, Vikas Gupta, whose interview had been completed and appointment cleared by the executive council on Wednesday.

However, the same day, Tyagi had approved and notified the appointment of P C Jha as acting registrar and director of the South Campus.

Man Arrested For Throwing Shoe At Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister: Police

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat Police on Wednesday arrested a man, who they claimed was a "Congress worker", for hurling a shoe in the direction of Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel in Vadodara district two days ago.

The shoe "attack" took place on Monday evening in Vadodara district when Nitin Patel was addressing the media after a bypoll rally.

The footwear missed the minister and landed just a few inches away from Nitin Patel.

According to the Vadodara district police, the accused, Rashmin Patel, is a resident of Shiner taluka of the district and is a Congress worker.

However, the Congress has rejected the police claim and said Rashmin Patel is a BJP worker.

"Based on a specific tip-off, we have arrested one Rashmin



Patel, a Congress worker, for his involvement in the case.

"In an audio clip found in his mobile phone, he can be heard saying his 'plan remains successful'. We are investigating whether others were involved in the incident," Superintendent of Police Sudhir Desai told reporters in Vadodara.

Refuting the police claim, state Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi shared documents with the media, claiming that Rashmin Patel is in fact a BJP worker and belongs to a dissident group.

"As per this official document of the Gujarat State Election Commission, Rashmin Patel won the Shiner Taluka Panchayat election on a BJP ticket in 2010. He was also appointed as the chairman of the executive committee of Shiner Taluka Panchayat by the BJP and he held the post between 2010 and 2013," Mr Doshi told reporters.

"Police must remain neutral and refrain from functioning as BJP workers. Rashmin Patel is a BJP worker and belongs to a dissident group. The shoe was hurled because of BJP's internal groupism," added Mr Doshi.

The ruling BJP, however, refuted the Congress claim, saying Rashmin Patel was with the Congress and even took part in canvassing for the opposition party's candidate from the Karjan assembly seat, Akshay Patel.