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P6 LIFE & TIMES

MIDWIVES COULD SAVE MILLIONS OF LIVES PER YEAR BY 2035: LANCET STUDY

Increasing the number of midwives and their level of care could save up to 4.3 million lives per year over the next 15 years, particularly in low and ...

P5 PANORAMA

PANDEMIC, MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA OVERUSE



P7 NEWS

ERDOGAN HOPES FRANCE 'WILL GET RID OF MACRON SOON'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday he hoped France would get rid ...



Wisdom Quote!

"Sometimes one likes foolish people for their folly, better than wise people for their wisdom." — Elizabeth Gaskell

news DIGEST

CRPF Man Shoots Self, Critical

SRINAGAR: A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) trooper on Saturday evening shot himself with his service rifle in Srinagar. Official sources said that a CRPF man identified as Constable Yogesh Kumar (33) shot himself and got critically injured, reported news agency GNS.

"He fired himself with his service rifle at the camp in Wazir Bagh area," He was immediately shifted to SMHS Srinagar in critical condition.

An official said that the reason behind taking this extreme step was not known yet and a case has been registered in this regard.

Minor Found Dead In A Tin-Shed

SRINAGAR: A minor boy was found dead under mysterious circumstances in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, reports said Saturday.

12-year-old Showket Ahmed Dar of Paden Saller Srigrufwara along with other local boys left home to play in the field, news agency KNTreported. The boy however, didn't return home after which family members started looking for him.

During the search, his body was found in a tin shed of a neighbour, the report said.

It added that police rushed to the spot to ascertain the facts.

Employee Suspended For Joining Poll Rallies

KUPWARA: Authorities on Saturday placed under suspension a microbiologist in PHE division Sogam Kupwara for participating in election related rallies and political meetings in violation of the model code of conduct.

As per an order by Additional Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, the suspending of Microbiologist PHE Sub Division Sogam, Reyaz Ahmad Tantray, followed a complaint filed with Governor's Grievance Cell J&K regarding the official's participation in Election related rallies and political meetings, reported news agency GNS.

"The participation of the government employee in election rallies is a clear violation of Model Code of Conduct which deserves punitive action as warranted under law," reads the order. While placing him under suspension, the ADC also attached Tantray with the Accounts Officer of the deputy commissioner's office with immediate effect.

"The accounts Officer shall conduct the enquiry into the matter and furnish a detailed report within 15 days," the order added.

Hideout Busted In Baramulla: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Saturday claimed to have busted a militant hideout in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

The hideout between Shripora and Naribal was busted by Baramulla police along with CRPF 53,176 BN after launching a CASO, a police statement said. It said that 2 UBGL grenades, a Chinese grenade, medicines, a blanket and some "incriminating documents" were recovered from the hideout.

NC Shifts Goal Post, Demand J&K's 1953 Position

OBSERVER MONITORING DESK

SRINAGAR: The National Conference on Saturday demanded restoration of pre-August 9, 1953 position of Jammu and Kashmir, saying the ruling BJP government has to accept the 'reality' and 'return' what was snatched away from the people of the erstwhile state through a unilateral decision last year

"BJP has to accept reality and restore Articles 370 sooner or later. We also demand the August 9, 1953 position of Jammu and Kashmir to be restored in its original form. Sheikh Sahab had warned beforehand the challenges Article 370 could face and asked people to stand united to save internal autonomy of the state," NC General Secretary, Ali Muhammad Sagar said Saturday.

Sagar was speaking to reporters at the mausoleum of NC founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah on his 115th birth anniversary.

The NC leader said that the efforts of party president, Dr Farooq Abdullah of bringing all regional political parties on a single platform were being appreciated everywhere.

He also said the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) was formed to bring all regional political parties on a single platform to fight for the restoration of the special constitutional position of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the political party's needs to stay united at this juncture and fight for the restoration of Article 370 than to fight with each other.

Terming the NC founder as a visionary leader, he said Sheikh had warned the people that special constitutional position of Jammu and Kashmir would face challenges and that they need to stand united to save internal autonomy of the state. >> More On P2

Time Over For NC, PDP's Dynasty Rule: BJP

SRINAGAR: Accusing National Conference (NC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), two major regional mainstream parties of looting Jammu and Kashmir's resources, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national general secretary Tarun Chug Saturday said that time was over for the dynasty rule in the erstwhile state.

Addressing a press conference at a hotel here on Saturday, Chug said that it was for the first time that District Development Council (DDC) polls are being held in J&K and he was glad to see that people are coming out in large numbers to vote for the candidates who come from villages and ground zero.

"This is an indication that time for dynasty politics is over now in J&K. Dynasty leaders, who till yesterday, fought against each other and were arch rivals, are today against BJP," he said. >> More On P2



DYNASTY LEADERS, who till yesterday, fought against each other and were arch rivals, are today against BJP"

'IIT-2020: The Future Is Now'

J&K Has Conducive Business Environment: LG

'Kashmir's Young Population Armed With New Innovative Ideas Is Ready To Realize The Entrepreneurial Dreams'

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Saturday said that J&K was gearing up for a post-pandemic world with new policies and technological tools in place. He said policies are inclusive, people-centric and focus on domestic investment & consumption.

"We are devising new paths, new policies, and new technological tools to strengthen our business ecosystem for the post-pandemic world" Sinha said in his keynote address at the "IIT-2020: The Future is Now" Global Summit, organized by PanIIT USA.

The Summit aimed to bring together change-makers, innovators, and thinkers and inspire them to re-define humanity's future, an official spokesman said.

During his address, the LG appreciated the PanIIT USA for focusing on important issues like >> More On P2



WE HAVE A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT, a robust grass-root democratic system and talented young men and women to set up innovative business and services"

Guns Roar Again Along LoC, IB

JAMMU: India and Pakistan troops exchanged heavy gunfire, including mortars for the second day running on Saturday along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in twin districts of Poonch and Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir.

Officials here said that Pakistani troops violated ceasefire by resorting to firing and mortar shelling on forward posts and villages along the LoC and IB in Poonch and Kathua districts. The firing and shelling from across the border, they said, was unprovoked and drew a strong retaliation by the Indian troops.

At about 11:40 am, Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and shelling with mortars along the LoC in Balakote sector of Poonch, a defence spokesperson said. >> More On P2

PANCHAYAT BY-POLLS

Phase III Panch Elections Witness 61% Turnout

49.25% VOTES POLLED FOR SARPANCH SEATS



File Photo: Abid Bhat

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The third phase of by-elections held on Friday to vacant seats of Panch and Sarpanch in Jammu and Kashmir recorded 61.10% and 49.25% voter turnout respectively, State Election Commissioner (SEC) K K Sharma said Saturday.

In Jammu division, 79.47 per cent while in Kashmir division 59.63 percent voter turnout was recorded for the third phase of by-poll to vacant Panch seats held in 327 constituencies on Friday, Sharma said.

Regarding vacant Sarpanch constituencies, Sharma said, 49.25

per cent polling was registered in 66 constituencies. "Besides, 74.74 per cent polling was registered in Jammu division where as 42.57 per cent voting was recorded in Kashmir division," the SEC said.

In Jammu division, he said, Kishtwar district recorded the highest voter turnout of 89.55 per cent for Panch by-elections followed by Rajouri with 88.29 per cent and Ramban with 86.10 per cent.

"Similarly, Kulgam district topped the voter turnout in Kashmir division with 77.11 per cent followed by Budgam with 74.21 per cent and Bandipora with 64.88 per cent," Sharma added.

J&K Witnesses 12 More Corona Deaths, Toll 1742

OBSERVER MONITORING DESK

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus claimed lives of twelve more people in Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, taking the fatality count since the outbreak of pandemic in the Union Territory to 1742.

In Kashmir, six more people lost the battle with the deadly infection, while six others succumbed to the virus in Jammu division, officials said Saturday. >> More On P2

Among the six victims from the Valley, three were residents of north Kashmir's Bandipora, including an 85-year-old man from Arin, an 80-year-old man from Hajin and a 75-year-old man from Argam. Three more victims included a 75-year-old woman from Nayi Sadak Srinagar, a 61-year-old man from Anantnag and an 80-year-old woman from Charar-e-Sharief Budgam.

501 More Test Positive

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir reported on Saturday 501 fresh cases of novel coronavirus, including thirty-one travelers thus taking the total number of infected people across the Union Territory to 112757.

While in Kashmir division 234 more people tested positive for coronavirus, in Jammu division 267 new cases of Covid-19 were detected on Saturday, officials said.

Giving district-wise break-up of the cases, officials said Srinagar reported 92, Baramulla 12, Budgam 40, Pulwama 22, Kupwara 18, Anantnag 12, Bandipora 13, Ganderbal 11, Kulgam 4, Shopian 10, Jammu 147, Rajouri 6, Udhampur 34, Doda 16, Kathua 10, Poonch 2, Samba 10, Kishtwar 18, Ramban 12 and Reasi 12 new cases.

Panel Of Doctors To Meet Emergency Cases

SRINAGAR: The health department on Saturday constituted a committee of senior doctors to streamline the working of emergency rooms for dealing with emergency cases.

According to an order issued by the Director Health Services Kashmir, the committee which

comprises specialist doctors has been tasked with supervising emergency care across Kashmir.

Director Health Services Kashmir, Sameer Mattoo said that the emergency rooms have been set up in each hospital for dealing with emergency cases. >> More On P2

Amid Repair Ban And New Policy, Houseboats Are Sinking In Kashmir

AUQIB JAVEED

When a midnight creaking sound followed by a thud jolted Farooq Nagoo out of his sleep on December 3, 2020, he heard an alarming spurt of water.

His seven-member family, including his three daughters and two sons, woke up and wondered about the nocturnal wobbling in their houseboat on river Jhelum in Srinagar.

"We thought the earthquake hit us," recalled Nagoo, 45-year-old owner of



H.B Prince House.

After tremors, his houseboat tilted towards the left. It panicked his family. Next, Jhelum's murky, cold water flooded his bedroom—a reminiscence of the deluged fall of 2014 when the brimmed river stormed living rooms and created a riot run for life.

"I couldn't understand what to do," the owner said while sitting ashore with



KO: PHOTOS

"Our future is very dark," the houseboat owner said. "I think it would be better if the government allotted me some piece of land now for my family's peace of mind."





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NO HOLDS BARRED



It seems Middle Eastern leaders are expecting Biden's presidency to be the exact opposite of Trump's and to bring back aspects of Barack Obama's. But this may not be the case, as his recent appointments of national security officials have shown. However, the new administration will certainly change the way US foreign policy is conducted in at least three ways.

# OIC Meet and Niamey Declaration on Kashmir

Niloofer Qureshi

The Niamey resolutions against India might please politicians and bureaucrats sitting comfortably in their air conditioned offices, but they amount to nothing for the common Kashmiri who has been given false hopes for the last three decades

Now that the standard ritual of Pakistan moving a resolution against atrocities in Kashmir and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) adopting the same in Niamey [Niger] is over, it's time for everyone to rejoice because all concerned would be content of having done their duty, even if it's just lip service. However, what does this resolution, which is being hailed by Islamabad as a major 'diplomatic victory', mean for the common Kashmiri or the 'self-determination' movement remains questionable.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has in a tweet mentioned that, "The OIC has strongly reaffirmed their unequivocal and unanimous support for the Kashmir Cause in a Resolution adopted at #OIC47CFM-Niamey categorically rejected illegal actions taken by India since 5 August 2019 and this is good news." However, he has not clarified as to how without any plan of action to undo the "illegal actions" does this declaration become "good news"? If 57 member countries of the OIC are unanimous in their opinion that New Delhi's actions of August 5 in J&K and later are "illegal," then instead of just making hollow declarations, why doesn't OIC take up this issue with the International Court of Justice (ICJ)?

The Niamey resolutions against India might please politicians and bureaucrats sitting comfortably in their airconditioned offices, but they amount to nothing for the common Kashmiri who has been given false hopes for the last three decades. When the 'armed struggle' erupted in Kashmir in the early nineties, the people were told that 'azadi' (independence) was 'just around the corner' and they believed it. However, even after all the bloodshed and violence that is continuing even today, 'azadi' is nowhere in sight. Similarly, when New Delhi abrogated Article 370, we were told that this move was "illegal"



as it violated United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on Kashmir and were assured by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan that Islamabad would approach UNSC on this issue as well as take this case to International Court of Justice (ICJ) and get this decision reversed.

Though UNSC held meetings to discuss Kashmir, but in the absence of any resolutions or directions, these discussions didn't achieve anything and thus, even after more than a year, Article 370 still remains abrogated. To make matters worse, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi's promise taking this "illegal" action taken by New Delhi to ICJ remains unfulfilled. We were also told that Islamabad had called for an emergency meeting of OIC foreign ministers to discuss Article 370 abrogation and compel New Delhi to reverse its decision, but no such exclusive meeting has been held. All we have is the OIC's 'categorical rejection' of this decision.

However, with OIC members states

(with exception of Pakistan), continuing to maintain extremely cordial diplomatic ties with New Delhi post Article 370 abrogation, it's obvious that the Niamey resolution is no different than the dozens of similar ones adopted by OIC in the past! OIC members might feel that they have fulfilled their moral obligation towards the people of Kashmir and thus would have returned home with a clear conscience. However, those for whom the OIC members had collectively criticised New Delhi, have been left wondering what good would the 'categorical rejection' of Article 370 abrogation declaration do to the 'self-determination' movement!

The Niamey declaration also states that "We reiterate the OIC's principled position on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute for a peaceful settlement in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions". From this, it's evident that while it has criticised abrogation of Article 370, but by reiterating that its "principled position on J&K" is its "peaceful settlement

(in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions," OIC has also made its disapproval of the 'armed struggle' absolutely clear. This brings back to focus the frequently asked question about whether 'armed struggle' is helping or harming the Kashmir cause?

On January 20, 2006, during his visit to Pakistan administered Kashmir (PaK), Hurriyat (M) chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq had remarked of how "Our fight on the political, diplomatic and military fronts (has) not achieved anything other than creating more graveyards." One and a half decades may have passed since then but what Mirwaiz said then still remains relevant today.

Views expressed are author's own and do not necessarily reflect that of Kashmir Observer

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## Bequeathed To Biden

Trump is leaving Biden a landmine field in the Middle East

Joe Macaron

US President Donald Trump has caused much damage by questioning the legitimacy of the US elections and the victory of his opponent, Joe Biden. His refusal to accept the results of the vote has not only caused much trouble at home but it has also undermined the image of the United States abroad and its moral authority to preach smooth power transition and commitment to democratic ideals to foreign leaders.

This, along with the policies he is leaving behind after four years in the White House, is setting up a turbulent transition for Biden at home and most probably a rough start for the new administration abroad, especially in the Middle East.

In recent weeks, Trump's administration has been giving unprecedented attention to the region. At least four US officials have visited Israel and close Gulf allies in recent weeks: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Special Representative for Iran and Venezuela Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs R Clarke Cooper from the State Department and the White House adviser, Jared Kushner.

Meanwhile, Trump has ramped up sanctions on Iran and is suspected of giving a green light for Israel to kill Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. A US aircraft carrier group led by the nuclear-powered USS Nimitz has also moved back into the Gulf region. This offensive posture seems linked to US domestic politics rather than to a clear policy objective.

Allies of the outgoing administration in the Middle East may have congratulated Biden, but they are also giving the impression that they will join hands with Trump and the political opposition to the Democratic White House he will soon lead.

Still, they, along with the rest of the Middle East, are gearing up for the Biden presidency. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman now

seems inclined to resolve the dispute with Qatar (even though it is not clear yet if he will give this foreign policy win to Trump or Biden) and ease relations with Turkey; he is also more cautious about normalisation with Israel. MBS is aiming to defuse tensions so he can start on the right foot with the Biden administration.

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi seems to be making conciliatory moves. The Egyptian government has been releasing political prisoners in recent weeks. In Turkey, Erdogan has felt less constrained to let go of his son-in-law Berat Albayrak as finance minister whose primary added value until recently was being the indispensable contact person for Kushner and Trump's White House. Iran is also trying to avoid escalation in the region, hoping to potentially restore nuclear talks with Biden and get US sanctions relief.

It seems Middle Eastern leaders are expecting Biden's presidency to be the exact opposite of Trump's and to bring back aspects of Barack Obama's. But this may not be the case, as his recent appointments of national security officials have shown. However, the new administration will certainly change the way US foreign policy is conducted in at least three ways.

First, institutional decision making will be restored in Washington. US foreign policy under Trump was dangerously personalised by a leader with narcissistic and authoritarian inclinations, which helped foreign leaders gain more influence in the White House. Officials who challenged his authority were fired from his administration or pushed to resign and those who stayed were loyalists or opportunists. Traditional foreign policymaking was sidelined and so was inter-agency cooperation. Trump did not trust key institutions like the Pentagon and the State Department, which were defunded or marginalised under his administration.

Once Biden and the Democrats are officially in power, Middle East leaders will no longer be able to

get their way by exchanging late-night WhatsApp messages with Trump's son-in-law or pretend the US State Department is a trivial agency. They will have to turn to traditional diplomacy, dealing with the embassies and official emissaries. The re-establishment of this institutional process also means a return to rivalries between US agencies over foreign policy issues, most notably in the Middle East. This will likely slow down the decision-making process in Washington.

Second, the Biden administration will bring back the predictability of US foreign policy. The domestic turmoil of Trump's presidency – the high-level investigations, the impeachment, the racial tensions, the Twitter rants, the constant change of appointed officials, etc – affected not only US politics but also political dynamics abroad.

The outgoing president's penchant for unconventional foreign policy moves – using tariffs as a political tool, bashing allies, casually issuing threats to use force, and engaging traditional foes like North Korea's Kim Jong-un and Afghanistan's Taliban – also brought uncertainty on the international scene. Biden will likely bring back positive engagement with traditional allies, especially in Europe, and return to foreign policy rhetoric that can be more easily anticipated.

Third, there will likely be a major shift in the US priorities in the Middle East. The Biden administration will most likely align with the thinking of the Washington establishment, seeking to pull US resources out of the Middle East to focus on deterring Russia and China, a move that Trump is now making more difficult by antagonising Iran.

The Biden administration will seek to mitigate conflicts across the Middle East and will most probably face resistance from concerned actors looking to maximise their strategic positions. This expected shift of priorities in Washington to deter Russia and China on a global scale will be most probably be viewed by Middle East leaders once again as a sign of weakness

and as an affirmation of the limits of US power.

Trump has overly invested in the Middle East with emphasis on a transactional approach, and Middle East leaders should prepare to not to be overindulged by Washington in the next four years. His core approach was the advancement of an Arab-Israeli alliance against Iran at the expense of traditional Arab partners like Jordan, and the support of disparate allies ranging from Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman.

Unlike Trump, the Biden presidency will most probably be reactive instead of proactive in the Middle East. This means minimal engagement with Iran, complex relations with Turkey and the appeasement of Israel. Biden will be somewhere between Trump and Obama and will have to reckon with Trump's legacy in the Middle East, which includes new preconditions to strike a deal with Iran and a timid Arab-Israeli normalisation process.

Some Middle Eastern leaders are wary of the coming change in Washington. If the Biden administration sets a new tone in exposing their authoritarianism or goes too far in engaging the Iranian regime, these staunch Trump allies might be inclined to ignore Biden's demands on human rights issues and exploit their new alliance with Israel to stand their ground. They can directly cooperate with Israel or use its clout in Washington to pressure the Biden administration.

The legacy of the outgoing Trump presidency may offer some opportunities for the new administration moving forward, but the regional challenges will persist. The Trump team has already planted a field of foreign policy landmines in the Middle East and clearing it over the next four years will be a fraught endeavour. Middle East leaders will test Biden early on and the new US president will have to show some spine if he is to be taken seriously over the next four years.

Al Jazeera

# Pandemic, Mental Health and Social Media Overuse

Carlin Barnes and Marketa Wills

**During this pandemic, it is particularly important that we recognise the potential negative consequences of social media use not only because many of us are turning to these platforms with an increased frequency but also because there are specific issues relevant to the 2020 pandemic and social media issues that can have a negative impact on our mental health**

This year the Covid-19 pandemic has sparked a major uptick in social media usage. As people around the world have been unable to spend quality time with friends and family members, due to social distancing measures, many have relied heavily on their devices as the only means for interaction. Undoubtedly, there are numerous benefits to using social media. Many old and new platforms became the primary manner to stay current with accurate news and health information, connect to loved ones, participate in viral challenges and stay on top of celebrity gossip.

But despite the positive benefits of social media, evidence has shown that there are harmful consequences as well — especially as it pertains to our mental health. Research suggests that the regular use of social media platforms is linked to an increase in the incidence of anxiety, depression, ADHD, eating disorders and addictions among users.

During this pandemic, it is particularly important that we recognise the potential negative consequences of social media use not only because many of us are turning to these platforms with an increased frequency but also because there are specific issues relevant to the 2020 pandemic and social media issues that can have a negative impact on our mental health. Here are a few that we have noted:

#### Increased used of screens

As we spend more time at home, our overall use of technology has increased. This includes tablets, phones, televisions and computer monitors. All of this screen time greatly increases our overall exposure to a frequency of light referred to as blue light. This blue light interferes with melatonin metabolism and leads to poor sleep and irritability which impacts our mental health.

#### Information overload

Reports of increasing numbers of death, illness, grief, unemployment, loss of businesses, food insecurity, evictions and homelessness are constant reminders of the pandemic-related devastations that currently grip our nation. This repeated sharing of disturbing news can negatively impact the mental health of those social media users who are overexposed to this tragic material. Feelings of anxiety,



depression, increased irritability, and excessive worry are likely consequences of being exposed (or overexposed) to this deadly health crisis information.

#### Covid-19 misinformation

From conspiracy theories to false information about cures, there is an abundance of misinformation spread on social media platforms about the novel coronavirus. Overexposure to inaccurate and false information can be confusing and overwhelming, ultimately leading to increased anxiety, mistrust, stress, and depression.

Social media was certainly not designed to negatively impact our mental health, but as with all things, there is often the good and the bad. To preserve your energy, it's recommended that you regularly unplug, and focus your time and energy on the people and things around you that are of importance to you. Here are some important social media usage tips to optimise your mental wellness during this world health crisis:

- Take an occasional social

media "holiday": if the intensity of social media is getting to you, delete your apps for a pre-specified period of time to "turn down the heat" generated on social media. This will help you recenter and calm down and use your energies to what matter most.

- Set time limits: With more time being spent at home, there is more downtime in which to engage in social media surfing. Make sure that while you're on social media, you're focused on aspects that truly matter to you. Allow yourself the opportunity to be intentional and thoughtful as you set your online priorities.
- Use other methods of communication: So many times, we default to using social media to connect with our peers because it's easy and convenient. Use this time to rediscover other forms of communication. Send a card in the

mail, or pick up the phone and give your loved one a call. This will give you the personal connection that you crave and will keep you from scrolling through your feed.

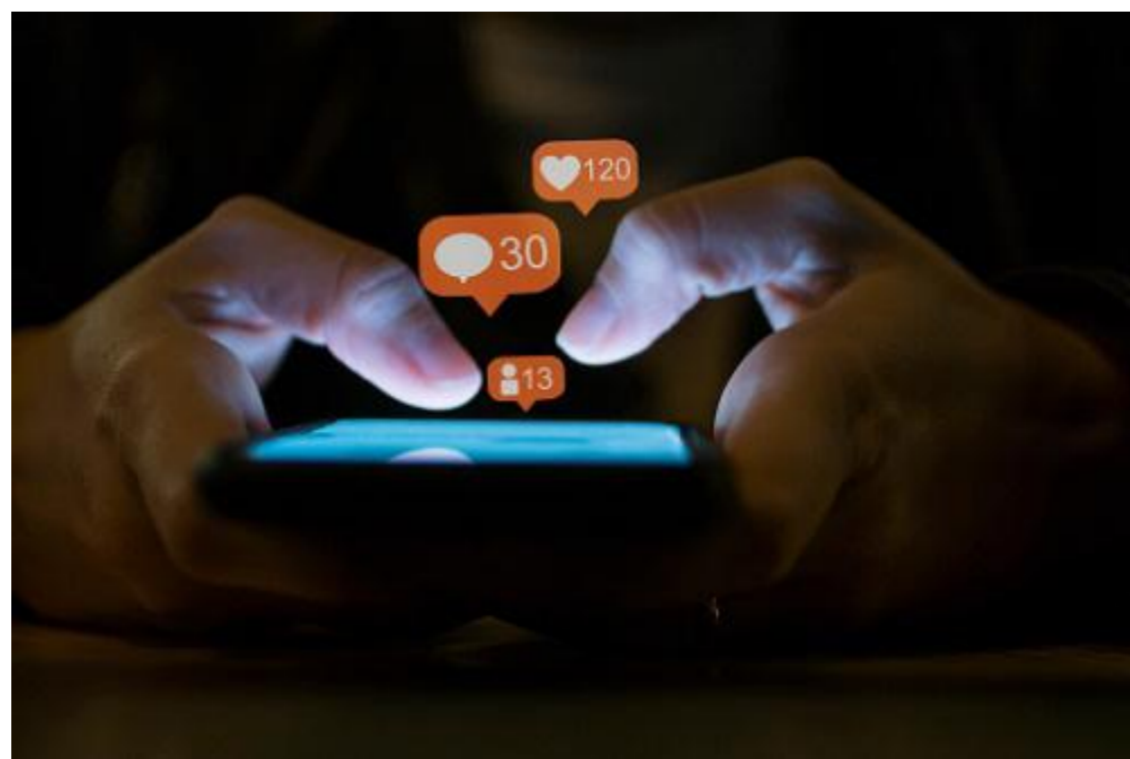
- Turn your notification settings off: Out of sight, out of mind? We think so. Turning off notifications from your phones and tablets will make cut down on the time that you are interrupted from real world interactions, and will hopefully, limit the amount of time that you spend on them.
- Be a responsible user: Seek out and share accurate Covid-19 pandemic and political information from credible sources. Many social media platforms struggle to appropriately monitor all content that is posted. Flagging potential misinformation can help stop the spread of false information.

*Psychology Today*

## When Flaunting Online Is Both A Blessing And Curse

Alvin Cabral

**I can imagine either the awe you may feel or the rolling eyes that come automatically. Keep it cool, folks. Keep it simple. Or, better yet, keep it to yourself. Mixed blessings can be a heavy burden.**



Now... how many times have you wanted to, or at least thought of, responding with go to hell?

You've probably seen it. Hop on to your social media account and you're likely to run across someone who's describing something as 'blessed'.

Blessed to have this. Blessed to have that. Blessed to be feeling like this. Blessed to be feeling like that. Blessed to be whatever I can think of.

Now... how many times have you wanted to, or at least thought of, responding with go to hell?

Social media tends to overplay things. If I remember correctly, one of my first — if not the first — encounter with such a bit is when some gal was flaunting her new car with the adjectives including, of course, 'blessed'.

Here's my beef with that post: The car in question was the fruit of a business that was basically a pyramid model, and you know how those

schemes work. And by the way, the car was a garden-variety, very affordable Ferrari. (If you aren't fluent in sarcasm, cease reading right now).

If that's the way you feel, being 'blessed' for everything life throws at you, fine, go ahead. No one's stopping you. But at least be sensitive about how others would react. I particularly feel bad for those 'used' in that pyramiding biz; quite sure they saw that because that post is apparently part of the strategy to 'inspire' others to sell more (and get their own Ferraris in the process).

Religion is a very sensitive topic. I'm fine with criticism, but do it with respect, just like I do when I speak on something, particularly on topics in other beliefs that I'm completely oblivious to. Learning is one of those big rooms for improvement; it doesn't make you less of a person to admit to not knowing something, more so to signify your intent to acquire new knowledge.

And to overplay religion — anything, as a mat-

ter of fact — can have serious consequences. Some things don't cross over very well, especially if you force the issue on connecting something that is sometimes pointless.

Just like the other day in my hometown, a popular basketball player rocked a pair of uber-rare Air Jordans specifically designed for the Philippine market on his social media account and, you guessed it, he described the moment as being 'blessed'. There were only 150 pairs of the coveted shoe that went on sale, and the only way to even have the chance to purchase one is to enter an electronic raffle.

Expectedly, there were not-so-kind reactions. One netizen in particular suggested that Mr Player should've given the chance to others, no matter how slim, to cop a coveted pair. Player fired back saying he was only made to wear the kicks by Nike, a fair point but still leaves a bad taste in, this case, the feet, if you'd like to play the rich-get-richer card.

As a sneakerhead myself, I had a paradoxical feeling: Happy for him because he got it, but at the same time disappointed. Apparently, his pair was No.149, so I thought, yeah, maybe Nike should've given him his own pair if the intent was to hype it, not take one out of the already few 150 pairs up for grabs.

So, if I may defend those I'm targeting (how ironic), the underlying burden of fault doesn't seem to always rest on them. It may be a knee-jerk reaction for getting or experiencing something they know only a few others would get. Or maybe it's part of a deal with whatever they're promoting. We'll never know for sure, but the problem is to what degree is the bragging at — and I'd bet you a hefty sum that you know at least one person in your circle who posts things just to rub it in to others.

This is just one example of the countless others you encounter, and I can imagine either the awe you may feel or the rolling eyes that come automatically. Keep it cool, folks. Keep it simple. Or, better yet, keep it to yourself. Mixed blessings can be a heavy burden.

But yeah, I still feel a bit salty not being able to learn of that sneaker raffle earlier. I'm just hoping there's a blessing in disguise waiting to unravel itself upon me.

*Khaleej Times*

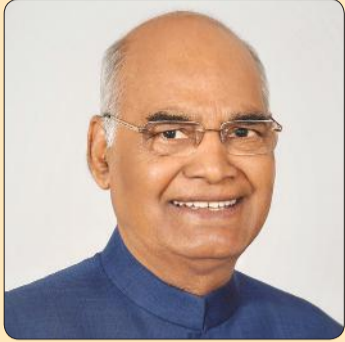




GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

COMMANDANT GENERAL, HOME GUARDS CD&SDRF J&K

MESSAGE



**Ram Nath Kovind**  
President of Republic of India

I am happy to learn that the Civil Defence and Home Guards Organisations are celebrating their 58th Raising Day on December 6, 2020.

Members of the Civil Defence and Home Guards organisations have upheld the highest traditions of voluntary work in the service of the nation. I am sure that both the organisations will keep up these traditions and serve the community with their customary zeal and dedication in the coming years.

On the occasion of their 58th Raising Day, I extend my greetings and good wishes to all the members of the Civil Defence and Home Guards and their families and wish the organisations every success in the times to come.



MESSAGE



**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister of India

It is a pleasure to learn about the 58th Annual Day of Civil Defence and Home Guards on December 6, 2020.

Displaying utmost dedication and professionalism, organisations like Civil Defence and Home Guards have been untiring in their efforts towards nation-building. Their role in maintaining internal security, performing civil defence duties and protecting life and property during crises has been laudable.

The humanitarian assistance provided by both these organisations in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the nation's resolute fight against the pandemic. The continued endeavour of the members of Civil Defence and Home Guards to encourage people towards continuing with precautions without being complacent or negligent is vital to our fight against Corona.

May the occasion inspire members of both the organisations to continue to serve the nation with renewed devotion and commitment.

Heartiest congratulations and best wishes for the 58th Annual Day to all members of Civil Defence and Home Guards and their families.



**Amit Shah**  
Home Minister of India

संदेश

यह वर्ष का विषय है नागरिक सुरक्षा एवं गृह रक्षक संगठन द्वारा दिनांक 06 दिसम्बर, 2020 को अपना 58वाँ स्थापना दिवस मनाया जा रहा है।

परंपरागत रूप से, दोनों संगठन संकट के समय में राष्ट्र को मूल्यवान निस्वार्थ सेवा प्रदान करते रहे हैं। कोविड-19 महामारी के खिलाफ लड़ाई में भी नागरिक सुरक्षा और गृह रक्षक संगठनों की प्रतिबद्धता और सकारात्मक योगदान प्रशंसनीय है। मुझे विश्वास है कि वे वर्तमान कोविड-19 परिदृश्य में उपयुक्त व्यवहार के लिए समुदाय को प्रेरित करते रहेंगे और भविष्य में भी समर्पण और प्रतिबद्धता के साथ काम करेंगे।

नागरिक सुरक्षा एवं गृह रक्षक संगठन के वार्षिक दिवस के अवसर पर उनके आदर्श वाक्य "सर्व भूत हिते रतः" एवं "निष्काम सेवा" के साथ समुदाय और राष्ट्र को सजवत बनाने की दिशा में सकारात्मक योगदान की अपेक्षा करता हूँ।

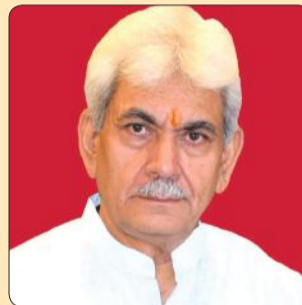
इस अवसर पर मैं नागरिक सुरक्षा एवं गृह रक्षक संगठन के समस्त पदाधिकारियों, सभी सदस्यों और स्वयंसेवकों को अपनी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ प्रेषित करते हुए सभी भविष्य के प्रयासों में सफलता की कामना करता हूँ।

शुभकामनाओं सहित !

(अमित शाह)



MESSAGE



**Manoj Sinha**  
Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir

I am happy to learn that the 58th Raising Day of Home Guards and Civil Defence is being celebrated on 6th December 2020.

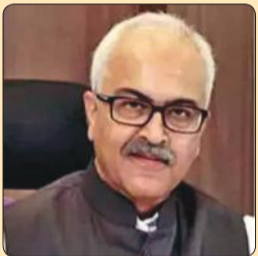
I commend all the Home (Guards and Civil Defence) volunteers for rendering yeoman services to the nation by serving as an auxiliary support to the police & civil administration and assisting them in maintaining law and order, managing internal security situations, besides their indispensable role in mitigating the problems of people in case of any disasters.

The significant role being played by our Home (Guards and Civil Defence) organizations helping the community in any kind of emergency, besides promoting communal harmony and assisting the administration in protecting weaker sections and participating in socio-economic and welfare activities is praiseworthy.

On the occasion of their Raising Day, I extend my greetings to all the officers, members and volunteers of the Home (Guards and Civil Defence) organization and wish them high success in future.



MESSAGE



**Ajay Bhalla (IAS)**  
Home Secretary  
Government of India  
North Block New Delhi

1. On the occasion of 58th Annual Day of Civil Defence and Home Guards on 6th December 2020, I extend my sincere greetings and good wishes to all the members of two organizations and call upon them to rededicate themselves in true spirit, to the motto of "सर्व भूत हिते रतः" and "निष्काम सेवा" to the community.
2. The Civil Defence and Home Guards personnel support the citizenry in moments of crises and are the epitome of selfless community service. These voluntary organizations continue to play an important role in harnessing community efforts at the time of crisis. The dedicated efforts of both the organizations in augmenting the State response mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic is praiseworthy.
3. I am sure that both the organizations will continue to render valuable service in the important task of nation building.



MESSAGE



**B. V. R. Subrahmanyam (IAS)**  
Chief Secretary  
Jammu and Kashmir

I am pleased to know that the Home Guards/Civil Defence organization is celebrating its 58th Raising Day. On this occasion, I extend my warm greetings and felicitations to all the officers and members of the organization.

The Home Guards & Civil Defence personnel have been serving as auxiliary support to the Police and Civil Administration and have over the years acquired skills and expertise in successfully handling both natural and manmade disasters. The organization also complements the efforts of the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

I wish the Home Guards success in its future endeavours and hope that it will continue to work for public good with utmost dedication, zeal, and commitment.



MESSAGE



**Shaleen Kabra (IAS)**  
Principal Secretary to the Government,  
Home Department

The Home Guards/Civil Defence, as a committed, vibrant & disciplined Organization has rendered valuable services to the Nation by safeguarding civilian lives and property in times of emergencies, natural calamities & disasters, and by playing its part in field of Public awareness and community capacity building, apart from aiding the Police & Civil Administration, in the times of normalcy.

To achieve the vision of a safe and disaster resilient Nation, the HG/CD organization has a very vital role to play, in the highest tradition of its selfless service to the Nation.

On the occasion of its Raising Day on 6th December, 2020, I extend my warmest greetings and felicitations to all the members of the organization for the good work done by them.



MESSAGE



**Md Jawed Akhtar (IPS)**  
Director General  
Fire Services, Civil Defence  
& Home Guard  
Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt  
of India

1. Civil Defence and Home Guards volunteers play a vital role in rendering selfless service to the nation. Their contribution to the community as first responders towards relief & welfare measures, maintaining internal security and search & rescue work during war, natural/man-made disasters have been invaluable and praiseworthy. In the COVID-19 pandemic, both the organizations have emerged as true "corona warrior" and acted as a real "force multiplier" to the local / state administrations.

2. I am confident that the courage discipline and sense of dedication of all those associated with Civil Defence and Home Guards will enable them to serve our country with greater zeal and enthusiasm in pursuance of their motto "सर्व भूत हिते रतः" and "निष्काम सेवा" respectively.

3. I extend my heartiest greetings to the members of Civil Defence and Home Guards Organization on the occasion of their Raising day on 6th December 2020 and wish them all the success in their future endeavors.



MESSAGE



**Dilbag Singh (IPS)**  
Director General of Police  
Jammu & Kashmir

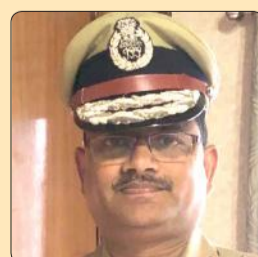
It is heartening to note that the Civil (Defence and Home Guards) of the UT is celebrating its Rising (Day) on 6th December 2020. Extending my heartiest greetings and the Best wishes to the members of these community based voluntary Organizations on this occasion is a matter of joy for me.

The Civil defence and Home (Guards) have emerged as key players in the disaster management mechanism of the UT and proved to be an asset to various levels of administration. The continued reliance of Police authorities on Home Guards and Civil Defence is a tribute to the contributions made by organization. Their contribution to the society has been vital and has been acknowledged over the years.

It gives me immense pleasure to express my deep appreciation for the contribution they have made during the past years in dealing the varied arising emergencies and wish great success in future as well.



MESSAGE



**Dr. B. Srinivas (IPS)**  
Homeguards/ Civil Defence & SDRF  
J&K - Jammu

On the occasion of 58th Raising Day of Civil Defence and Homeguards on December-06-2020, heartiest greetings and best wishes to all the members of Civil Defence and Homeguards volunteers of the organization.

The Civil Defence and Homeguards have emerged as key players in the Disaster Management mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir. They are also playing a vital role in contact tracing, isolation/quarantine of suspected and positive cases of pandemic COVID-19, thereby facilitating the work of various levels of administration. The continued reliance of Police authorities and public on Civil Defence and Homeguards is a befitting tribute to the commitment of all the members of organisation.

It is hoped that all the members of Civil Defence and Homeguards shall continue to perform with the same zeal and enthusiasm in the coming years.

