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TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS EFFECTIVE IN COUNTRIES WITH LOW NUMBER OF COVID-19 CASES: LANCET STUDY
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CHRISTCHURCH ATTACK INQUIRY REPORT RELEASED

Royal Commission report noted that police deployed 'an inappropriate concentration of resources' probing...



Wisdom Quote!

"A smart person knows how to talk. A wise person knows when to be silent."
—Roy T. Bennett

news DIGEST

Mirza Waheed Awarded SA Grant

SRINAGAR: Kashmiri novelist Mirza Waheed is among 48 writers who have bagged a grant worth more than ₹ 185,000, (Approx Rs 1,82,03,820) from The Society of Authors. The grant is awarded to enable writers to complete works in progress including queer auto-fiction, forgotten histories, and books about post-colonial and the natural world. The grants totalling ₹185,750 will support writers by either buying them time to write or helping with research costs. For one writer, their grant represents the opportunity to follow "in my anarchist great-grandmother's footsteps" in Ireland and **More On P2**

Justice Bindal Appointed Acting CJ

SRINAGAR: President of India on Tuesday appointed Justice Rajesh Bindal as the acting chief justice of Jammu and Kashmir High Court. "In exercise of the power conferred by Article 223 of the Constitution of India, the President is pleased to appoint Justice Rajesh Bindal, senior-most Judge of Common High Court for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh, to perform the duties of the office of Chief Justice of that High Court with effect from 09th December, 2020 consequent upon the retirement of Kumari Justice Gita Mittal, Chief Justice, Common High Court for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh," reads an order by the President.

Treat Pensioners With Respect: Govt Missive

SRINAGAR: The Director, Accounts and Treasuries, Kashmir on Tuesday issued necessary instructions for the Treasuries Officer of Kashmir division while dealing with pensioners. As per a circular issued here, the Director instructed all Treasury Officers/officials to treat all pensioners with dignity and deal with them in a polite manner. He directed them to acknowledge documents submitted by the pensioners with receipt and proper stamp. He also directed District Treasury Officers in respect of sub treasuries falling under his/her jurisdiction to take periodic review of pensioner grievances.

UK Gives 1st Doses Of Covid-19 Vaccine As World Watches

LONDON: British health authorities began rolling out the first doses of a widely tested and independently reviewed Covid-19 vaccine on Tuesday, starting a global immunisation programme that is expected to gain momentum as more serums win approval. The first shot came early in the morning at one of a network of hospital hubs around the country where the initial phase of the United Kingdom programme will be rolled out on what has been dubbed "V-Day."

Public health officials are asking the public to be patient because only those who are most at risk from Covid-19 will be vaccinated in the early stages. Medical staff will contact people to arrange appointments, and most will have to wait until next year before there is enough vaccine to expand the programme. "I think there's every chance that we will look back on [.. Tuesday] as marking a decisive turning point in the battle against coronavirus," said Simon Stevens, the chief executive officer of England's National Health Service.

The first recipient was grandmother Margaret Keenan, who turns 91 next week. She received the shot at University Hospital Coventry at 6:31am.



Keenan says she feels "so privileged to be the first person vaccinated against Covid-19." "It's the best early birthday present I could wish for because it means I can finally look forward

to spending time with my family and friends in the New Year after being on my own for most of the year," she said.

The first 800,000 doses are going to people over 80 who are either hospitalized or already have outpatient appointments scheduled, along with nursing home workers. Others will have to wait their turn.

Among those older Britons scheduled to get vaccinated is Hari Shukla, of Newcastle. "When I received the telephone call, I was very excited I got the opportunity of joining in and taking part in that, he said. "So we are very very pleased and happy and excited as well.

Buckingham Palace refused to comment on reports that Queen Elizabeth II, 94, and her 99-year-old husband, Prince Philip, would be vaccinated as a public example of its safety.

"Our goal is totally to protect every member of the population, Her Majesty, of course, as well," Dr June Raine, chief executive of Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, told the BBC. **More On P2**

J&K Reports 6 More Covid Deaths, 470 New Cases

OBSERVER MONITORING DESK

SRINAGAR: At least six more people died of coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday while 470 new cases, including nine security personnel and four minors were detected in the Union Territory, taking the number of people infected by the virus to 114038.

Among the victims, three each were from Kashmir and Jammu divisions, thus taking the fatality count to 1761, officials said Tuesday. In Valley, the three victims included a 70-year-old woman from Budgam, a 60-year-old man from Kupwara and a 72-year-old from Anantnag. In Jammu division, the three victims hailed from Doda, Kathua and Ramban districts.

With these deaths, the total fatality count in the Valley has reached 1133 and 628 in the Jammu region. Srinagar district with 427 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (318), Baramulla (165), Budgam (104), Pulwama (86), Kupwara (86), Anantnag (81), Doda (58), Bandipora (55), Kulgam (52), Udhampur (52), Rajouri (50), Kathua (43), Ganderbal (40), Shopian (37), Samba (33), Poonch (22), Ramban (21), Kishtwar(20), and Reasi (10). **More On P2**

HC Asks CBI To File Action Taken Report

J&K Govt's Review Petition To Be Heard On Dec 11

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Tuesday asked the CBI to submit its Action Taken Report (ATR) in a sealed cover on the progress in cases registered to probe alleged irregularities in the Roshni Act and fixed December 11 for hearing a review petition by the Union Territory administration to review its earlier order in this case.

Chief Justice Gita Mittal, who retired on Tuesday, and Justice Rajesh Bindal, appointed as the acting head, listed the case for Friday after allowing the

urgent hearing motion filed by the government through its additional advocate general (AAG) for preponement of the date in the now-scrapped Roshni Act. "We are informed by Ms Monika Kohli that the report of the CBI is ready and she is filing it during the course of the day.

"We direct that any report by the CBI shall be filed in a sealed cover and presented to the Bench on the date of hearing in court," a two-page order of the court said while listing the case for December 11. **More On P2**

Mehbooba Placed Under House Arrest

SRINAGAR: Former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was placed under house arrest at her Gupkar residence on Tuesday morning to prevent her from visiting hilly areas of Central Kashmir's Budgam district where nomadic Gujjar families are being evicted by the authorities. According to Iltija Mufti, her mother was scheduled to visit remote areas of Budgam district where scores of summer huts of Gujjar families **More On P2**

Snow, Rains Disrupt Life, Close Highways

SRINAGAR: Many areas across north Kashmir including the ski-resort of Gulmarg and Gurez valley received heavy snowfall for the second day on Tuesday, while the plains were lashed by rains. MET Office said there would be a decrease in precipitation in the J&K from Wednesday.

Snowfall continued in many areas in the higher reaches of the valley on Tuesday with Gulmarg, in north Kashmir, recording about seven inches of fresh snowfall, officials said. They said other areas like Gurez, Mughal Road and Zojilla axis on

Srinagar-Leh road also received fresh snowfall which was going on when the last reports came in.

The officials said most places in the plains of the valley received heavy rains which continued this morning.

The fresh snowfall and rains have led to the closure of the Srinagar-Leh road connecting the Kashmir valley with Ladakh u as well as the Mughal Road the alternate road-link connecting the valley with the Jammu region, the officials said. The MET Office on Monday issued an "Orange Colour" weather **More On P2**

J&K Eyes Gulf Food Sector



SRINAGAR: With an aim to promote its horticulture produce in the Middle East and tap the Gulf market, a 20-member delegation of businessmen and government officials from Jammu and Kashmir is participating in the UAE-India Food Security Summit 2020, starting Tuesday. Organised by the Consulate

General of India in Dubai in association with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and Invest India, the two-day event brings several key stakeholders from both the countries on one platform to share their experiences, deliberate on solutions and explore ways to further increase the collaboration **More On P2**

Families Of Kashmiri Men Detained In New Delhi Hold Protest

Accuse Delhi Police Of Arresting The Trio On "Flimsy Grounds"

SRINAGAR: The families of three Kashmiri men arrested in New Delhi on charges of militancy, held a protest here on Tuesday alleging their kin have been detained by the special cell of Delhi Police on "flimsy grounds".

Braving chill and heavy rains, the families of the three detained men, Reyaz Ahmed Rather and Shabir Ahmed Gojri, both residents

of Nasrullah Pora and Muhammad Ayoub Pathan of Gondhipora village of Budgam, assembled at Press Colony here on Tuesday and staged a protest over their arrest by the Delhi police on "coerced charges".

Carrying placards, the family members, including women alleged that all the three men were not even remotely connected **More On P2**

All 5 Men In Police Custody For 4 Days

NEW DELHI: Five persons suspected to have militant links and arrested after an "encounter" here were remanded for custodial interrogation of four days by a Delhi Court on Tuesday. **More On P2**

Himayat Career Opportunity. Major Initiative to get you skilled & placed. Counselling begins from Dec 7, 2020 to December 18, 2020. Table with columns: S. No, Name of the PIA, Date of Counselling, Timings, Course Name/Trade, Course Duration, Minimum Education Eligibility, Venue/Address, Panchayati Ward, Block, District.

ISSUED BY: Himayat Mission Management Unit (HMMU) Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, J&K

DIPK-NB-4477/20

PMO reviews implementation of Flagship Schemes in UTs

J&K applauded for better performance in ONORC, PMJAY, PMSVANidhi, and ODOP

JAMMU: Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Pramod Kumar Mishra today chaired a high-level meeting to review the implementation of flagship schemes of the Government of India in all the Union Territories.

Chief Secretary, J&K, B V R Subrahmanyam along with Secretaries of various departments participated in the meeting.

Extensive deliberations were held to review the progress of 16 flagship schemes including One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC), Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMKAY), Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), PM SVANidhi, PM formalization of micro food processing enterprises, among others.

Principal Secretary to PM applauded the efforts of the J&K Government to efficiently implement schemes like One Nation One Ration Card, PM SVANidhi, Ayushman Bharat, and PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises.

It was informed that J&K has ensured universal digitization of ration cards, Aadhar seeding of beneficiaries, installation of ePoS devices at all fair price shops to ensure the biometric authenticated sale of subsidized ration, besides providing nation-wide portability services



to the beneficiaries.

Further, under PM-JAY, the Chief Secretary informed that J&K has empanelled 229 hospitals, besides augmenting the government health and wellness infrastructure to provide

cashless healthcare to approximately 6 lakh eligible families covering approximately 27 lakh population. Additionally, the UT Government is shortly rolling out its prestigious universal healthcare scheme 'SEHAT', to

extend free-of-cost healthcare to all its citizens.

Under PM SVANidhi, it was appraised that in Jammu and Kashmir a working capital loan up to Rs. 10,000 is sanctioned within 16 days; to the registered street vendor through the Housing & Urban Development Department.

While reviewing the progress of all the Union Territories, P.K. Mishra emphasized ensuring coverage of all the eligible beneficiaries under the flagship schemes in a time-bound manner. He directed the concerned ministries to develop suitable review mechanisms to ensure that the intended benefits reach the targeted population.

Recovered Covid-19 persons should get vaccinated too: DAK

Srinagar, Dec 08: With Covid-19 vaccine getting close to approval for public use in India, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Tuesday said people who have recovered from Covid-19 infection should also get vaccinated.

"If you already had the virus and recovered, you still need to get vaccinated with a Covid-19 vaccine," said DAK President and influenza expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

"Those who recover from Covid-19 infection are getting infected with the virus again," he said.

DAK president said we

immunity may be much stronger and lasts much longer than immunity built by contracting the virus." "That means even if you have recovered from the virus, you should get the vaccine."

Dr Nisar said vaccine would protect you from getting Covid-19 infection and prevent you from getting seriously ill even if you do get the virus.

Getting vaccinated may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from Covid-19.

If enough people are

Those who recover from Covid-19 infection are getting infected with the virus again

were under the impression that if a person gets infected with the virus, he/she will develop antibodies and will not get the disease again.

"But many people who recover from Covid-19 do not develop antibodies," he said adding "even those who mount adequate antibody response, their antibodies fade over time and they become susceptible again."

"What the virus is doing is in some way compromising aspects of our immune response leaving people vulnerable to repeat infections," said Dr Nisar "Vaccine will get around this."

He said there is evidence that vaccine induced

vaccinated, we may even end the year-long pandemic.

He said Covid-19 vaccine is a two-dose schedule with the second dose to be given 21 days after the first dose. The maximum effectiveness of the vaccine was observed 7 days after the second dose. That means full protection is achieved 28 days after the initiation of the vaccine.

"While Vaccine is needed for all, it is not recommended for pregnant women and children under 16 years of age. The vaccine hasn't been tested on expecting mothers and kids. But trials in these age groups are ongoing or planned," said Dr Nisar.

Apni Party will never indulge in politics of deceit: Mir

SRINAGAR: Apni Party Senior Vice President Ghulam Hassan Mir on Tuesday remarked that his party has committed not to indulge in politics of deceit or promise anything to the people that is not achievable by any means.

Addressing a series of party campaign meetings in villages like Sanoor Kalipora, Makhama, Wuhangam, Rathun and Chewdara falling within DDC elections constituency Rathun Beerwah, Mir said that Apni Party has not promised anything anywhere in J&K except for holistic development through the current elections.

"At a time when other political parties have changed their goalposts as per their past practices, Apni Party stands devoted to its agenda of peace and progress through the route of development," Mir observed.

The Apni Party senior vice president advocated for massive participation in DDC polls so as to have a council of grassroots level representatives at district

levels who would determine the contours of the developmental programmes as per their requirements.

"The end result of these elections is unlike what is being propagated by many regional political parties who compare these polls with some referendum by the people. One fails to understand the adacuity of these political parties who think they can still hoodwink the people through their misleading slogans," Mir averred.

He added that DDC elections are purely meant for the development and planning programmes which will be formulated by the grassroots level elected representatives as per the demands of their respective constituencies. Mir expressed gratitude to the people for reposing trust and confidence on the vision and agenda of Apni Party leadership which is manifested by the increasing number of people including political veterans joining this party from across Jammu and Kashmir.

Department of Soil & Water Conservation Office of the District Officer Soil & Water Conservation Division Baramulla / Bandipora Office at Kanthbagh Court Road Baramulla Short Tender Notice e-NIT No: 04 of 2020-21 Dated: - 07-12-2020 For and on behalf of Honorable Lt. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, e-tenders are invited from approved and eligible contractors registered with Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir/ Central Govt. organization for the following works. Table with 7 columns: S. NO, Item of Work, Adv Cost (Rs in Lacs), E/M (Rs in Lacs), Class of Contractors, Cost of Tender documents, Time of Completion. Includes details for three items related to fence erection and a list of conditions and dates.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir J&K Services Selection Board Zum Zum Building Rambagh, Srinagar (www.jkssb.nic.in) FINAL NOTICE. Whereas, J&K Services Selection Board issued final select list of candidates for the post of "Junior Staff Nurse (GMC)" Anantnag Divisional Cadre Kashmir pursuant to Advertisement Notification No. 08 of 2019, Item No. 001 and forwarded the same to the indenting department for further course of action; and Whereas, recommendation of some candidates were kept withheld due to some deficiencies, which the said candidates were called upon to furnish the same within 30 days from the date of publication of select list; and Whereas, such candidates were given a notice vide No. SSB/Secy/Sel/44/2020/K/3429-31 dated 22.09.2020 to submit their requisite documents for re-lease of their withheld recommendation within a period of 21 days from the date of publication of said notice.

DIAL-EMMA TRAFFIC POLICE: 9419993745, 01998-266686 PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883 PDD: 0194-2450213 FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES: 2479488,2452222,2452155 CAPD: 18001807011 SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

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RAILWAYS SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259 ANANTNAG: 01932-228243 BARAMULLA: 0194-102029 BUIBERA: 01932-228243 PAMPORO: 01933-294132 PATTAN: 01954-293507 QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

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

PRAYERS FAJR 5: 54 ZUHR 12: 22 ASR 3:45 Magrib 5:25 ISHA 6:50

This Day In History

- 1910 - French troops occupy Moroccan harbor city Agadir. 1917 - British forces under General Allenby capture Jerusalem. 1918 - French troops occupies Mainz. 1924 - Netherlands & Hungary trade treaty signed. 1931 - Japanese army attacks Chinese province of Jehol. 1931 - Spain becomes a republic. 1941 - 1st US WW II bombing mission in Far East, Luzon, Philippines. 1941 - China declares war on Japan, Germany & Italy. 1948 - UN General Assembly unanimously approves Convention on Genocide. 1951 - West German voters approve merger of 3 states to form Baden-Wurttemberg. 1957 - 1st Japanese ambassador to Israel. 1961 - SS-Obersturmbannfuhrer (lieutenant colonel) Adolf Eichmann found guilty of war crimes in Israel. 1961 - Tanganyika gains independence from Britain, takes name Tanzania. 1962 - Tanganyika becomes a republic within British Commonwealth. 1965 - Nikolai Podgorny replaces Anastas Mikoyan as president of Soviet Praesidium. 1968 - NLS (a system for which hypertext and the computer mouse were developed) is publicly demonstrated for the first time in San Francisco. 1970 - OPEC meeting in Caracas establishes 55 percent as minimum tax rate and demands that posted prices be changed to reflect changes in foreign exchange rates. 1973 - Arab oil ministers announce a further production cut of 5 percent for January for non-friendly countries. 1975 - Jelena Bonner receives Andrei Sacharov's Nobel Prize. 1975 - Iraq completes nationalization by taking over the BP, CFP, and Shell shares of the Basrah Petroleum Company. 1978 - Pioneer Venus 2 drops 5 probes into atmosphere of Venus. 1983 - US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site. 1984 - Great Britain performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site. 1984 - Iranian commandos end day hijack of Kuwaiti plane. 1987 - Palestine uprising begin in Israeli-occupied West Bank. 1990 - Gunda Niemann skates ladies world record 3k ladies (4:10.80). 1994 - 5m meteor 1994 XMI passes within 100,000 km of Earth. 2006 - Moscow suffers its worst fire since 1977, killing 45 women in a drug rehabilitation center. 2012 - 13 people are killed and 10 are injured after a bus rolls off a cliff and falls 100 meters in Taiwan. 2012 - Incumbent Ghanaian president John Mahama wins the general election amidst allegations of fraud. 2012 - The Social Liberal Union Party and Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta win by a landslide in the parliamentary elections. 2014 - CIA Torture Report released, detailing the CIA's use of torture on detainees between 2001-2006. 2015 - Attack on Kandahar airport by Taliban forces kills at least 37 before Afghan forces retake control.

From KO Archives

American FBI team arrives in Sgr

Observer News Service

NEW DELHI: A two-member team of US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) today left for Srinagar in connection with the mysterious disappearance of the four foreigners kidnapped in 1995, official sources said. The sources said this was a routine visit by the FBI officials as per the requirement of the United States laws where they have to submit a report every quarter. Six foreigners — John Childs and Donald Fred Hutchings (both US nationals), Paul Wells and Keith Mangan (UK nationals), Dirk Hasert (German) and Hans Christian Ostro (Norwegian) — had been kidnapped in July 1995 from Pahalgam hills in South Kashmir. The group responsible for kidnapping identified itself as Al-Faran. While Childs managed to give a slip to his abductors, the head of Norwegian abductee was found severed near Anantnag in August 1995. The fate of other four hostages despite hectic search operation carried by the government and later by German and British police remains unknown. (Kashmir Observer, 09 December, 2000)

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Why The PDP Needs Clarity, Not Ambiguity



GOWHAR GEELANI



Both sides appeared to have made compromises on their respective positions to form the coalition government in 2014, which lasted till June 2018. While the BJP did not press for abrogation of Article 370 and agreed to maintain the erstwhile state's constitutional position, the PDP did not include its vision of self-rule and joint mechanism for Jammu and Kashmir in the alliance document (Agenda of Alliance)

Peace in Afghanistan

Nine months after the US and Taliban signed the peace agreement that paves the way for return of Taliban to power in the country, there has been little progress in the intra-Afghan talks so far. On a positive note though, the Afghan government and the Taliban have agreed framework rules for peace talks. The talks hosted by Qatar's capital Doha are hoped to lead to end of the ongoing two decade long war in the country. But the peace efforts have hardly reduced violence. There has been a steep rise in violence amid an accelerated withdrawal of US troops. Besides Taliban attacks, the ISIS too has increased its footprint in the country.

Meanwhile, despite losing the US presidential election, Donald Trump has ordered a drawdown of American forces in the country to around 2,500 by January. Critics of the peace efforts believe this would embolden Taliban and persuade it to play for time and try toppling the regime once all the US troops have left the country. Such a prospect can plunge the country deeper into civil war.

It will be interesting to see how the new US administration under Joe Biden that will take over on January 20 will deal with the situation. Many observers expect Biden to be more nuanced in his approach. Pakistan hopes its concerns to be accommodated more in the new US administration. In 2008, Pakistan had conferred Biden with the second highest civilian honor, 'Hilal-e-Pakistan'. Joe Biden and Senator Richard Lugar were behind the proposal to bring \$ 1.5 billion non-military aid to Pakistan. Biden will also want to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, but he is expected to be a steadier hand.

However, eventually the peace and stability in Afghanistan will have to be the responsibility of the regional powers. And it is unlikely to happen if the regional powers pursue their disparate interests in the war-torn country. The US will also need to make some subtle adjustment in its Afghanistan policy to make it work. In its current form, the policy almost entirely neglects the regional geo-politics, prevailing issues and the contending interests of the neighbouring countries like India and Pakistan which essentially keep the conflict going in Kabul. So rather than an Afghanistan-centric policy, US needs a broader regional approach to work for an integrated solution to the conflicts and the competing interests that in turn fuel the war in Kabul.

Here's hoping that unlike Trump whose approach was transactional in nature, Biden administration takes a more integrated view of the regional situation in his dealings. This alone will help promote the cause of regional peace than the approach pursued by Trump.

In my last column for Kashmir Observer, I traced the history of the J&K National Conference (NC) since the 1930s. I argued why the region's oldest political formation needs to revamp and reinvent itself. In this latest piece, I will talk about the J&K People's Democratic Party (PDP), another major regional unionist force in Jammu and Kashmir. The PDP should stop taking refuge in ambiguity and doublespeak and summon courage to walk and talk Kashmir.

Does a weakened PDP have the political will to side with Kashmir?

Many theories have been floated with regards to the formation of the PDP in the late 1990s. One of the most talked about is that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was allegedly behind the PDP's creation. The aim, according to this theory, was to thwart any future attempts by any single regional political force to blackmail New Delhi through the J&K Legislative Assembly.

Another interesting theory is that the Jama'at-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir, a socio-political and religious party which stands proscribed for now, also allegedly lent its support to the PDP in the Assembly elections. One of the many allegations is that the PDP leaders in the past have also sought help from a banned militant outfit. No concrete evidence is produced to corroborate this premise, though.

Be that as it may, the two decade-long political journey of the PDP has caught people's attention.

The Caravan in its January 2016 cover story reported on the view that the PDP, "was a creation of the National Democratic Alliance government, launched to fill the need of a 'pro-India party'" in Jammu and Kashmir. The Caravan story also quoted Liaqat Ali Khan, a former commander of the Ikhwan, a government-sponsored counter-insurgency group, that "all the Indian agencies were directed to support the PDP."

About the genesis of the PDP, the Caravan story argued that, "the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) government funded and supported the PDP to prop up opposition to the National Conference." The "purported reason for this move" was that the NC under the leadership of Farooq Abdullah had passed the autonomy resolution in the J&K Legislative Assembly with two-thirds majority.

This, according to the memoir of India's former deputy prime minister L K Advani, had "shocked" India and the A B Vajpayee-led government in New Delhi. Advani in his autobiography My Country My Life while talking about the NC's autonomy resolution in a chapter entitled Dealing With The Kashmir Issue writes: "The nation was shocked on June 26, 2000, during the Vajpayee government's rule in New Delhi, when the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly adopted a report of the State Autonomy Committee (SAC) and asked the Centre to immediately implement it. The SAC recommended return of the constitutional situation in Jammu and Kashmir to its pre-1953 status by restoring to the state all subjects of governance except defence, foreign affairs, currency and communication."

In the J&K Legislative Assembly the autonomy resolution was adopted by voice vote. The view is that New Delhi wanted to avoid any similar embarrassment in future. A strong regional party could have passed any resolution in the assembly to cause further discomfort to New Delhi. According to this view, the PDP was formed to divide the Muslim vote bank in J&K and consolidate the Hindu vote in the plains of Jammu.

Farooq Abdullah too has made such claim in the past. When the NC started asking for greater regional autonomy in the late 1990s and recommended the restoration of a 1952 agreement with New Delhi, the PDP came up with a new slogan — Self-Rule.

On its part, the PDP has officially denied both charges.

In early 2000, the patron of the PDP late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had famously and also controversially said that, "Kashmiri militants don't need guns anymore because their representatives are

now in the Assembly". The Sayeed-led PDP in 2002 forged a partnership with the Congress to form a coalition government on a three-year rotation basis. From 2002 until 2005, Sayeed acted as the Chief Minister, while from 2005 to 2008, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad took over as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, the PDP's slogan was "healing touch" and it also talked about the resolution of J&K and advocated "Self-Rule" and "Joint Mechanism" as a viable solution. This was obviously a step ahead of the NC which always favoured regional autonomy, turning the clock backwards to 1953.

Interestingly, late Sayeed chose a party symbol that was telling in many ways. The pen and the inkpot. And the green flag. Everything was reminiscent of the erstwhile Muslim United Front or Muslim Muttahida Mahaz. In miming the MUF symbol was political messaging. It has been alleged that the PDP intentionally chose the party symbol for it had already been popularised among the Kashmiri masses by the MUF in the late 1980s.

Meanwhile, a fractured mandate in the Assembly elections of 2014 resulted in the formation of a coalition government that had the PDP and the BJP as partners. This alliance was described as "ideologically antithetical" and an "unholy alliance". Key Kashmir watchers also predicted this partnership as "political suicide" for the PDP. However, the PDP defended its alliance arguing that the electoral arithmetic dictated terms.

Late Sayeed's decision to ally with the BJP came as a shock to his own supporters. They could not comprehend why he would join hands with the Narendra Modi-led BJP.

Sayeed, on his part, described the PDP-BJP

joint venture as a "paradigm shift" in the political history of Jammu and Kashmir. In Spy Chronicles RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace, a book based on conversations between Amarjit Singh Dulat and Asad Durrani and written by journalist Aditya Sinha, India's former spymaster Dulat argues that, "Mufti underestimated Modi, overestimated himself, and found himself in a fix."

Nonetheless, both sides appeared to have made compromises on their respective positions to form the coalition government in 2014, which lasted till June 2018. While the BJP did not press for abrogation of Article 370 and agreed to maintain the erstwhile state's constitutional position, the PDP did not include its vision of self-rule and joint mechanism for Jammu and Kashmir in the alliance document (Agenda of Alliance).

It was for the first time in the history of Jammu and Kashmir's electoral politics that BJP, in March 2015, became part of any coalition government. This was unacceptable to a majority of people of the restive region because of the BJP's anti-Muslim track record.

The rest, as they say, is history.

In 2020, the PDP as a political force is finding itself on a sticky wicket. It is weaker as many of its senior leaders have deserted the party. Big names which have bid adieu to the party include co-founder Muzaffar Hussain Beig, Altaf Bukhari and Mohammad Rafi Mir. The party's youth leader Waheed Ur Rehman Parra has been arrested and is accused of allegedly seeking help for the party from the banned militant outfit, Hizbul Mujahideen. The party summarily denies the charge and terms Parra's arrest as "politically motivated".

Former Chief Minister and PDP President Mehbooba Mufti's movement, her party claims, has been restricted by the J&K administration on the orders of the BJP. The party members allege that New Delhi wants to break the PDP by lending support to the Apni Party led by a PDP deserter, Altaf Bukhari.

Sometimes, the PDP is in jest referred to as the Papa Daughter Party. The joke is a reference to late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and his daughter Mehbooba Mufti. It is a challenge for the party to walk the talk. It has thus far failed to practice what it preaches. In an interview with The Indian Express, Tasaduq Mufti conceded that the PDP had become a "partner in crime" when it joined hands with the BJP. One of the main reasons behind the PDP's current state of affairs is its ambiguity and lack of political will to side with the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Its loyalty keeps swinging like a pendulum from Delhi to Kashmir, raising doubts about its very intent and purpose.

Gowhar Geelani is an author-journalist

OTHER OPINION

The dangers of misinformation

Over the weekend, Haryana's health minister Anil Vij announced that he tested positive for the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), leading many to draw connections with his participation in the trials of one of the vaccine candidates. The immediate media coverage and the social media conversations that followed conflated Mr Vij's diagnosis with the trial in a way that suggested that the inoculation of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech may be ineffective. In reality, it is not known whether the minister was given a placebo or the actual inoculation. Even if he did get a shot of Covaxin, it is not meant to be protective until he gets at least two doses (he got only one) and his immunity has had 14 days after that to build the necessary protection against Covid-19.

This is not the first instance in which inadequate information or improper understanding of a scientific process as complex as vaccine development has gained traction on mainstream as well as social media. Last week, cricketer Harbhajan Singh seemingly implied that recovery from natural infection appeared to offer more protection than vaccines, citing efficacy numbers that, in reality, hold no equivalence with disease recovery rates. A little earlier, at the end of November, the coverage of the adverse effect in a volunteer participating in the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine trial in Chennai amplified allegations that were later disproved.

Helped by misleading semantics and a lack of awareness, such conversations around vaccines are prone to misinformation and could erode trust. This problem has been particularly pronounced in the West — recent polls showed only 60% of Americans are willing to take a vaccine — although it has not taken hold in a country like India, where most people have seen disease more closely. The enormous gains from vaccine campaigns like that of polio are still largely fresh in everyone's minds. But this does not mean Indians are any less susceptible to misinformation on an issue where a difference between a headline and nuance could often be the line dividing fact and myth. Recent studies have shown that when it is amplified by sources that typically have high trust — like news organisations and celebrities — the spread of misinformation is more damaging and harder to mitigate. In these times, such groups must prioritise nuance. We must listen to experts first, before not just voicing but also forming our own opinions.

Hindustan Times

One of the main reasons behind the PDP's current state of affairs is its ambiguity and lack of political will to side with the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Its loyalty keeps swinging like a pendulum from Delhi to Kashmir, raising doubts about its very intent and purpose.



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International Anti-Corruption Day

International Anti-Corruption Day is celebrated every year on 9 December all over the world. On 31 October 2003, the United Nations passed an anti-corruption pact and since then the day has been celebrated. The main purpose of this day is to eliminate corruption in order to maintain a prosperous, value-oriented society all over the world. On this day, many activities like conferences, speeches, rallies, exhibitions, dramas etc. are organized by the United Nations and the respective member

states with the spirit of fighting corruption.

Corruption is spreading very fast but it is not only a problem of any society, province or country; it has corrupted every person and system, it is necessary to stop this process and not wait. Power and selfishness have shown moral cowardice in perfecting corruption. Because of this, the confidence in the people got so much down that even the man who was standing on the right side seems to be false, corrupt and immoral. Eyes find truth

on that face. Corruption is a serious crime that undermines moral, social and economic development in all societies.

In today's time, no country, region or community has survived from corruption. It has spread to all parts of the world whether it is political, social or economic as well as weakens democratic institutions, contributes to government instability and slows down economic growth, we have to control over this huge problem. To achieve this, the United Nations decided to or-

ganize Anti-Corruption Day.

The question is what is corruption? Simply put, corruption refers to a kind of dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those who have power. It also spoils the structure of society. It kills people from their freedom, health, wealth and sometimes their lives.

Lalit Garg
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The solution to India's dangerous doctor shortage

Dr. G. Richard Olds

India's domestic medical schools can't supply those doctors alone. They don't have the capacity to educate that many people. Each year, Indian medical schools turn away thousands of qualified applicants.

India is facing a severe physician shortage. The country needs roughly 600,000 more to meet the World Health Organization's recommended ratio of doctors to patients.

As the population grows, India will need as many as 2 million more doctors by 2030, according to a study in the Indian Journal of Public Health.

India's domestic medical schools can't supply those doctors alone. They don't have the capacity to educate that many people. Each year, Indian medical schools turn away thousands of qualified applicants.

International medical schools can provide the doctors India needs. For decades, these institutions have produced skilled physicians who are more than capable of addressing India's healthcare needs.

India is short on doctors of all types, particularly specialists. The country only has 20 percent of the surgeons and gynaecologists it needs. More than three-quarters of the country's community health centers lack a single OB/GYN.

This dearth of doctors harms Indians' health. A 2018 study published in The Lancet, a medical journal, found that "insufficient healthcare access" has worsened the burden of non-communicable diseases like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes in India. More than one in five Indians suffers from one or more chronic diseases.

Plenty of Indians want to become doctors. This year, almost 1.6 million students registered for the NEET exam, the standardized test required to gain admission to domestic medical schools.

But many who perform well on the test and have the potential to become top-notch doctors don't receive a single acceptance letter from an Indian medical school. The Christian Medical College in Vellore offered a spot to just 0.25 percent of applicants in 2015. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi receives upwards of 90,000 applicants but only



Graduates of international medical schools practice in a range of specialties worldwide, from paediatrics and surgery to obstetrics and gynaecology.

has space for 72 students. That's an admission rate of 0.08 percent.

Altogether, Indian medical schools have space for just 5 percent of the students who take the NEET exam.

By comparison, the acceptance rate at Harvard Medical School -- one of the most selective schools in the United States -- is 3.3 percent. Less than 6 percent of applicants gain admission to Yale's medical school.

International medical schools can help promising Indian students who would like to become doctors achieve their dreams -- and eventually fill gaps in India's physician workforce.

Graduates of international medical schools practice in a range of specialties worldwide, from paediatrics and surgery to obstetrics and gynaecology.

Few medical schools are as international as the one I lead, St George's University on the Caribbean island of Grenada. Our students come from nearly 100 countries, including India. Now students from India can start their medical education at Ramaiah University in Bengaluru. After one year in India, they move on to our campus in the Caribbean for two years of instruction before completing their clinical work in the United

Kingdom, United States, or Grenada.

Additionally, St. George's allows students to earn a doctor of medicine degree, a more prestigious alternative to the "MBBS" undergraduate degrees offered at Indian institutions.

The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare just how severe India's doctor shortage is. International medical schools can supply the physicians the country needs to narrow that shortage -- and provide a pathway to professional success for talented Indians.

G. Richard Olds, M.D., is president of St. George's University (www.sgu.edu)

Vaccine and International Travel

Adrian Esterman

The United Kingdom became the first country to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for widespread use. Following a review by the country's drug regulator, the UK government announced it will begin rolling out the vaccine next week.

Other countries are likely to follow soon, authorising the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and possibly other leading candidates too. Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration says it's continuing to assess the Pfizer/BioNTech data.

The world has been eagerly awaiting a COVID vaccine, touted since early in the pandemic as our best hope of returning to "normal". A big part of this is the resumption of international travel.

Certainly, an effective vaccine brings this prospect much closer. But a vaccine alone won't ensure a safe return to international travel. There are several other things Australia and other countries will need to consider.

International travel in the age of a COVID vaccine

When people are vaccinated before boarding a flight, we can have confidence there will be significantly less COVID risk associated with international travel. However, the data we have at the moment doesn't tell us everything we need to know.

Let's take the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine as an example. They have reported the efficacy of their mRNA vaccine to be 95% in preventing symptomatic COVID-19, having tested it on around half of the 43,000 participants in their phase 3 trial (the other half received a placebo).

The vaccine appears to be safe with only mild side-effects in some participants. And notably, the study included people aged 65 and over and those with health conditions that put them at higher risk of more severe disease.

However, the study hasn't officially reported the efficacy of the vaccine against becoming infected, as opposed to displaying symptoms. While it's encouraging to know a vaccine stops people getting sick, this point is important because if people can still become infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), they may still be able to spread it.

Ugur ahin, BioNTech's cofounder and chief executive, believes the vaccine could reduce transmission by 50%. This puts something of a dampener on vaccina-



It's going to take months — or, more realistically, years — to vaccinate everybody who wants to be vaccinated. It won't be feasible to expect every single person travelling internationally to be vaccinated.

tion being the key to the safe resumption of international travel.

At this stage, we also don't know how long immunity will last for those vaccinated with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. But as the trial will continue for several more months, some of this data should become available in 2021.

Not everyone will be vaccinated straight away, so we'll still need quarantine. It's going to take months — or, more realistically,

years — to vaccinate everybody who wants to be vaccinated. It won't be feasible to expect every single person travelling internationally to be vaccinated.

There are several countries that appear never to have had community transmission. As of November, these included many Pacific island nations such as Tonga, Kiribati, Micronesia, Palau, Samoa and Tuvalu.

Then there are countries that have

COVID-19 under control with little, if any, community transmission. Examples include Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam and Singapore.

People arriving in Australia from these countries pose very little risk and should not need to quarantine, whether vaccinated or not. For other countries, it would very much depend on their epidemic situation at the time.

Some organisations have already devel-

oped COVID risk ratings for different countries or jurisdictions. For example, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) rates the COVID situation in each European country as "stable", "of concern" or "of serious concern".

These risk assessments are based on factors including each country's 14-day COVID case notification rate, the proportion of tests coming back positive, and the rate of deaths.

Clearly, people from high-risk areas or countries will still need to quarantine on arrival, unless they have been vaccinated.

Testing

Many countries now require a negative COVID test certificate before entry. For example, Spain requires a negative PCR test no more than 72 hours before travelling.

Similarly, some airlines, such as Emirates and Etihad, are mandating COVID testing before travel.

It would also make sense to have rapid antigen testing available at airport arrivals or border crossings. Although not as accurate as PCR tests, these tests would provide a second check that a traveller hasn't incubated COVID-19 on the way to their destination.

Even with vaccination, testing will still be important, as vaccination doesn't guarantee a passenger is not infected, or infectious.

Certificates and passports

Once COVID-19 vaccines become accessible, countries and airlines may well require visitors to produce a certificate of vaccination.

Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce has suggested all Qantas international passengers from next year would be required to have a COVID vaccination certificate.

There are also many groups around the world working on immunity passports and technologies to track travellers' virus status.

For example, the International Air Transport Association is developing a digital health pass which will carry testing and vaccination status.

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The Conversation

New Zealand's Ardern Apologises As Report Into Mosque Attack Released

Agencies

Wellington: New Zealand has released an almost 800-page report into the March 2019 killing of 51 Muslim worshippers at two mosques in the city of Christchurch.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry report concluded that, while intelligence services had directed their efforts away from investigating right-wing threats and instead focused heavily on the "threat

In hindsight, while there were circumstances that could be linked to the Australian attacker's plan, the signs were too "fragmentary" and it was difficult to put together to establish evidence that merit immediate action, it said.

The inquiry was formed to look into the authorities' response and to determine whether the attack could have been prevented.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern apologised for the govern-



of Islamist extremist" activity, they could not have been alerted of an imminent attack.

The report, released Tuesday, took issue with Christchurch authorities for deploying "an inappropriate concentration of resources" on "other terrorism threats" in the country, distracting them from threats such as that posed by white supremacists.

However, the report said, "No single aspect of it [information available to authorities] could have alerted public sector agencies to an impending terrorist attack."

ment's shortcomings, saying: "While the commission made no findings that these issues would have stopped the attack, these were failings nonetheless and, for that, on behalf of the government I apologise.

"Ultimately, this roughly 800-page report can be distilled into one simple premise: Muslim New Zealanders should be safe. "Muslim New Zealanders should be safe. Anyone who calls New Zealand home, regardless of race, religion, sex or sexual orientation should be safe," Ardern said following the release of the report.

Australia To Make Facebook, Google Pay News Outlets For Content

Agencies

Sydney: Australia finalised plans on Tuesday to make Facebook Inc and Google pay its media outlets for news content, a world-first move aimed at protecting independent journalism that has been strongly opposed by the internet giants.

Under laws to go to parliament this week, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the Big Tech firms must negotiate with local publishers and broadcasters how much they pay for content that appears on their platforms. If they can't strike a deal, a government-appointed arbitrator will decide for them.

"This is a huge reform, this is a world first, and the world is watching what happens here in Australia," Frydenberg told reporters in the capital Canberra.

"Our legislation will help ensure that the rules of the digital world mirror the rules of the physical world... and ultimately sustain our media landscape."

The law amounts to the strongest check of the tech giants' market power globally, and follows three years of inquiry and consultation, ultimately



spilling into a public brawl in August when the U.S. companies warned it may stop them offering their services in Australia.

Facebook Australia managing director Will Easton said on Tuesday the company would review the legislation and "engage through the upcoming parliamentary process with the goal of landing on a workable framework to support Australia's news ecosystem."

A representative for Google declined to comment, saying the company had yet to see the final version of the proposed law.

Until recently, most countries have stood by as advertisers redirect spending to the world's biggest social media website and search engine, starving newsrooms of their main revenue source and bringing widespread shutdowns and job losses.



Nurse May Parsons prepares 90-year-old Margaret Keenan, the first patient in the UK to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, at University Hospital, Coventry, England on December 8, 2020 [Jacob King/Pool via AP]

'V-Day': UK rolls out vaccine, 90-year-old woman first in line

Agencies

London: Margaret Keenan, a 90-year-old grandmother from Britain, has become the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine outside of a trial following its rapid clinical approval.

An early riser, Keenan received the jab at her local hospital in Coventry, central England, on Tuesday morning at 06:31 GMT, a week before she turns 91.

"It's the best early birthday present I could wish for because it means I can finally look forward to spending time with my family and friends in the New Year after being on my own for most of the year," said Keenan.

The UK began rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday, dubbed "V-Day", the first Western country to start vaccinating its general population in what was hailed as a decisive watershed in defeating the coronavirus.

On Saturday, Russia be-

gan vaccinating thousands of doctors, teachers and others at dozens of centres in Moscow with its Sputnik V vaccine. That programme is being viewed differently because Russia authorised use of Sputnik V last summer after it was tested in only a few dozen people.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock, usually reserved, said he felt "quite emotional", adding that 70 hospitals in the country would start the vaccine programme.

The mass inoculation will raise hope that the world may be turning a corner in the fight against a pandemic that has crushed economies and killed more than 1.5 million, although ultra-cold storage and tricky logistics will limit its use for now.

The UK has recorded 61,000 COVID-19 related deaths - more than any other country has reported in Europe, and over 1.7 million cases.

Oksana Pyzik, a teaching fellow at University College London's School of Pharmacy,

told Al Jazeera: "It is wrong to take what we would do in a regular year and apply that to this circumstance, because the sense of urgency, the funding and the level of collaboration have enormously shifted - that is what has made this possible.

"We expect that [other] vaccines that are not too far behind."

'Decisive turning point'

UK public health officials are asking the public to be patient because only those who are most at risk from COVID-19 will be vaccinated in the early stages.

Medical staff will contact patients to arrange appointments, and most will have to wait until next year before there is enough vaccine to expand the programme.

"I think there's every chance that we will look back on... (Tuesday) as marking a decisive turning point in the battle against coronavirus," said Simon Stevens, the CEO of England's National Health Service.

WHO Against Mandatory Covid-19 Vaccines

Agencies

Geneva, Switzerland: The World Health Organization said Monday that persuading people on the merits of a Covid-19 vaccine would be far better than trying to make the jabs mandatory.

The WHO said it would be down to individual countries as to how they want to conduct their vaccination campaigns against the coronavirus pandemic.

But the UN health agency insisted making it mandatory to get immunised against the disease would be the wrong road to take.

"I don't think that mandates are the direction to go in here, especially for these vaccines," Kate O'Brien, director of the WHO's immunisation department, told a virtual

news conference.

"It is a much better position to actually encourage and facilitate the vaccination without those kinds of requirements.

"I don't think we envision any countries creating a mandate for vaccination."

O'Brien said there may be certain professions in which being vaccinated might be required or highly recommended, such as respiratory technicians and intensive care medics in hospitals, for the safety of both the staff and the patients.

But WHO experts admitted there was a battle to be fought to convince the general public to take the vaccines as they become available.

The organisation's emergency director Michael Ryan said people needed to ask themselves what they were willing

to do in order to protect themselves and those around them.

"The vaccine story is a good news story. It is the victory of human endeavour, potentially, over a microbial adversary," he said.

"We need to convince people and we need to persuade."

As for making vaccines mandatory, he said: "I think all of us who work in public health would rather avoid that as a means for getting people vaccinated.

"We are much better served to present people with the data and the benefits and let people make up their own minds.

"There are certain circumstances... where I would believe that the only responsible thing would be to be vaccinated," he added.

Afghan Civilian Deaths From US Air Raids Rose By More Than 300 Percent

Agencies

Kabul: Deaths of Afghan civilians in air raids carried out by the United States and its allies "increased dramatically" since 2017 when Washington loosened its criteria and escalated attacks on the Taliban, according to a report released on Monday.

ing more Afghan civilians than at any time in its history".

She said that in the first six months of 2020, 86 Afghan civilians were killed and 103 injured in AAF air raids.

In the three subsequent months, as Afghan-Taliban talks continued in Doha, the toll intensified, with 70 civilians killed and 90 injured.

The number of civilians killed annually in US and coalition air attacks soared by 330 percent to some 700 civilians in 2019, said Neta C Crawford, co-director of the Costs of War Project at Brown University. More civilians died in 2019 than any other year since the beginning of war in 2001, according to the report.

She urged a negotiated ceasefire while the two sides discuss a deal, to avoid more civilian injuries.

The US pulled back on air raids after striking an agreement with the Taliban in February 2020. But the Afghan Armed Forces stepped up their own as they entered talks with the rebels. While total deaths from air attacks has fallen, attacks are now coming from Kabul's forces and have accelerated in recent months.

The Afghan Air Force (AAF), Crawford wrote, is now "harm-

ing more Afghan civilians than at any time in its history".

But with the US accelerating the withdrawal of its troops, some worry that the Taliban could take advantage to further pressure Kabul's forces, sparking reprisals.

"Unless there is a ceasefire, both sides will continue trying to gain a tactical advantage while negotiations are under way. The toll on civilian lives is likely to increase," Crawford wrote.

According to the UN, at least 32,000 civilians have been killed and another 60,000 wounded in the last decade, when the organisation began compiling the data.

'Mount Everest 86 Centimeters Higher Than India's Calculation'

Press Trust of India

Kathmandu: Nepal and China today jointly announced that the revised height of the world's highest peak Mount Everest was 8,848.86 metres, about 0.86 metres or 86 centimeters more than the previous measurement done by India in 1954.

The Nepal government decided to measure the exact height of the mountain amid debates that there might have been a change in it due to various reasons, including the devastating earthquake of 2015.



The new height of Mt Everest, the world's highest peak, is 8,848.86 metres, China and Nepal jointly announced today, China's state-run Xinhua news agency said in a brief report.

Nepal recalculates the height of Mount Everest at 8848.86 metres, the country's Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali announced in Kathmandu.

The new height is 86 centimeters more than the previous measurement. According to the measurement done in 1954 by Survey of India, the height of Mount Everest is 8,848 metres.

According to China's past measurement, the height of Mount Everest is 8844.43 metres which was four metres less than India's calculations.

The media reports said Chinese surveyors have conducted six rounds of scaled measurement and scientific research on Mount Everest and released the height of the peak twice in 1975 and 2005, which was 8,848.13 metres and 8,844.43 metres respectively.

In Tibetan language, Mount Everest is known as Mount Qomolangma.

China and Nepal settled their border dispute in 1961 with the boundary line passing through the summit of Mount Everest.

Mount Everest is located in the collision and compression zone between the edges of the Indian plate and the Eurasian plate, where crustal movement is very active.

NEWSMAKERS

Sheikh Sabah reappointed Kuwait PM

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah has reappointed Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah as prime minister following parliamentary polls in the Gulf Arab state, which is facing its worst economic crisis in decades.

Sheikh Nawaf asked Sheikh Sabah to nominate members of a new cabinet for approval, state media said on Tuesday.

While the emir has the final say in state matters, the prime minister traditionally helps navigate the often tense relationship between the government and Parliament, where opposition candidates made gains in Saturday's legislative vote.

Sheikh Sabah, who had



been foreign minister since 2011 before being elevated to the post of premier in late 2019, faces the urgent task of overcoming legislative gridlock on a debt law that would allow Kuwait to tap international debt markets in order to plug a growing budget deficit.

Frequent rows and deadlocks between cabinet and the assembly, the Gulf region's oldest and most out-

spoken, have led to successive government reshuffles and dissolutions of Parliament, hampering investment and economic and fiscal reform in the cradle-to-grave welfare state.

The oil policy of the OPEC producer, which is set by a Supreme Petroleum Council, and foreign policy, which is steered by the emir, are unlikely to change under the new government.

US 'Like A Third World Country': Trump As He Alleges Election Fraud Again

Washington: President Donald Trump has likened the US to a "third world country" as he blasted the "rigged" election, reiterating his unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud in the presidential polls.

The election was a "disgrace to our country", Trump told reporters at the Oval Office of the White House on Monday during a ceremony to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to wrestler and coach Dan Gable.

"It's like a third-world country - these ballots pouring in from everywhere, using machinery that nobody knows ownership, nobody knows anything about. They have 'glitches', as they call them. Glitches. The glitches weren't



glitches. They got caught sending out thousands of votes - all against me," he said.

Democratic leader Joe Biden won the November 3 presidential election over Trump, who is continuing his legal efforts to upend his victory. Trump, a Republican, has allowed the official start of

Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat, alleging massive voter fraud and electoral malpractice.

However, state election officials and the media have denied such large-scale fraud. Election officials in key battleground states have declared Biden the winner, giving him

an unofficial 306-232 edge in the Electoral College that determines the outcome of US presidential contests.

The Trump campaign has filed multiple lawsuits in several states, most of whom have been dismissed so far.

"If you look at the polls, it was a rigged election. You look at the different states. The election was totally rigged. It's a disgrace to our country," Trump told reporters, responding to a question ahead of the next week's meeting of electors who would cast their vote, formally putting their stamp on Biden's victory as the next US president.

"This was like from a third-world nation. I think the case has been made. Now we find out what we can do about it. But you'll see a lot of big things happening over the next couple of days," Trump said.

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