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P3 NEWS SMC DEPUTES 74 SNOW CLEARANCE MACHINES

Srinagar Municipal Corporation on Saturday sentoff 74 snow clearance machines from its transport yard for 74 electoral wards....

P5 THINK AN UNCANNY TRIP TO TARSAR AND MARSAR

In the month of July 2019, almost 15 days before scrapping of Article 370 on August 5th, we (an eight-member group) planned to go for a trekking...



P6 WORLD BIDEN TO REVIEW WHETHER ROHINGYA

The incoming Biden administration will launch an interagency review to determine whether Myanmar's...



Widom Quote!

The best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person.

— Andy Rooney

NEWS DIGEST

3-Year-Old Missing Boy Found Dead

SRINAGAR: In a heart wrenching incident, the body of a minor boy was recovered from a water body in Shalteng area of the city outskirts, hours after he went missing, reports said Saturday.

Three-year-old Salim Sofi's body was recovered by the joint team of police and Fire & Emergency department from a stagnant water body behind his house in Shalteng area of the city outskirts on Friday

Cab Overturns In Boniyar, 3 Hurt

SRINAGAR: Three passengers were injured on Saturday when the cab carrying them overturned in Boniyar area of Baramulla district. Khadim Hussain, Husan Jan and Ishaq Khan, all residents of Bagna Salambad in Uri were injured on Saturday morning when the cab (JKDQ-3477) they were travelling in turned turtle at Challan area of Boniyar, reports said. All the injured, reports said, were removed to the nearby PHC for treatment.

Mentally Unsound Woman Found Dead

SRINAGAR: A mentally unsound non-local woman was found dead on Saturday in Kupwara district of north Kashmir. The body of the woman was found near Regipora Bridge in the district on Saturday morning, reports said. The woman, according to the report, used to wander in the north Kashmir district for the last 7-8 years. Meanwhile, a local news agency GNS quoted an unnamed police officer as saying that the body

Teen Girl 'Strangles' Herself To Death

SRINAGAR: In a shocking incident, a teenage girl on Saturday allegedly strangled herself to death at her home in Handwara area of Kupwara district. The 15-year-old girl (name withheld) hanged herself to death at her home in Kenyal village of Handwara on Saturday afternoon, reports said. However, the reason behind her taking this extreme step was not immediately known. Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance

Hideout Busted In Poonch: BSF

JAMMU: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Saturday claimed to have busted a militant hideout in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir and recovered a large cache of arms and ammunition. The hideout was unearthed this afternoon during a search operation in Doba Mohalla forest area in Hadiguda, 10 kms from Mandi town, a spokesperson for the force said. He said the search operation was launched by the BSF

Man Steals Rs 10 Lakh On Fake Gunpoint, Held

Press Trust Of India

BANIHAL: A man was arrested on Saturday for allegedly looting over Rs 10.5 lakh from a shop after brandishing a fake pistol in Banihal town in Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. The fake pistol along with the stolen money was recovered after disclosure by the arrested thief, identified as Syed Zaffer Shah of Yakmanpora-Pattan village of north Kashmir's Baramulla district, a police



Underground Tunnel Along Pak Border

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Saturday claimed to have detected another underground tunnel, constructed by Pakistan at the International Border (IB) to facilitate infiltration of militants into Jammu and Kashmir, in Kathua district during the past 10 days, a spokesperson of the border guarding force said. The secret tunnel was detected during an anti-tunnelling operation in the border outpost Pansar area of Hiranagar sector, he said.

Parliamentary Panel Reviews Status Of Rail, Road; Aviation Projects In Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The visiting Parliamentary Standing Committee (PSC) delegation on Saturday reviewed status of rail, road and aviation projects on the last leg of their three day visit to Kashmir. The Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee (DRPSC) on transport, tourism and culture, headed by its chairman, T G Venkatesh held a meeting with the officers of civil



File Photo: Abid Bhat

aviation, tourism, home, culture, transport, railways here today, an official spokesperson said. The Committee, he

said, received brief from the officers of these departments about the status of ongoing and proposed projects.

"The committee held a threadbare discussion on initiatives of the Central Govt taken for promotion of tourism, road connectivity, railway connectivity, airport expansion, air travel related issues and BRO projects," he said. As per the official spokesperson, the PSC panel emphasized upon the officers of transport, railways and civil aviation departments to take concrete steps for safety of passengers besides checking the accidents in their respective jurisdictions.

Fresh Snowfall Grounds Flights, Blocks Kashmir Highways



Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Many parts of Kashmir, including Srinagar,

received fresh snowfall on Saturday, the third time this month, even as the minimum temperatures across

the Valley increased due to an overcast sky, officials said. Earlier, Kashmir had received heavy snowfall

Flight Operations Halted

Flight operations at Srinagar airport remained suspended on Saturday in the wake of snowfall in the Valley, officials said. The snowfall began early in the morning. No flight operations took place at the Srinagar airport today, an official of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said. He added that the runway at the airport was not available for flight operations due to the accumulation of snow. It snowed for the most part of the day, so it was not possible to clear

Hundreds Of Vehicles Stranded On Highway

BANIHAL: Traffic on the 270-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway was suspended on Saturday following fresh snowfall in high-altitude areas, including on both sides of the Jawahar Tunnel, the gateway to the Kashmir



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

KO Photo: Abid Bhat



Traffic Chaos In Sgr, Elsewhere

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Despite timely prediction of snowfall by the Meteorological Department in Kashmir, authorities yet again failed to clear all the roads in most parts of Kashmir following fresh spell of snowfall. People across the valley had to face huge inconvenience at greater levels as the

...From LoC To LAC

India Following Netaji's Footsteps: PM



Press Trust Of India

KOLKATA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose would have been proud to see that the country has become strong and is following his footsteps from the Line of Control (LoC) to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The LoC divides Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan, while the LAC separates India and China.

Bose would have also been proud that the government he dreamt of is fighting a pandemic with vaccines developed by it, and gave a befitting reply whenever its sovereignty was challenged, Modi said on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary

Kupwara Man Dies Of Covid-19

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Kashmir Valley on Saturday reported another death due to coronavirus, even as 94 more fresh cases of Covid-19 were detected across the Union Territory during the last 24 hours, taking the toll cases tally to 1, 23,946, officials said.

An 82-year-old man from Lakreshan village of Kupwara succumbed to coronavirus on Saturday, taking the total fatality count in

Ground, Aerial Survey In Place For R-Day Functions In Kashmir

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Amid apprehensions of militant attacks, a multi-layer security arrangement coupled with ground and aerial survey has been put in place for the smooth conduct of January 26 celebrations across the Kashmir Valley

Government forces have also intensified frisking operations across Kashmir especially in the capital city of Srinagar and on various



File Photo: Abid Bhat

points on Srinagar-Jammu and Srinagar-Baramulla.

A senior police officer said that fool-

Govt Confirms Bird Flu In Crows, Migratory Birds In Kashmir

Cases Detected In Anantnag, Pulwama, Kulgam And Budgam

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The government has confirmed bird flu among crows and migratory birds in four districts of the Valley, days after lifting a ban imposed on the import of poultry items from other states of the country, reports said Saturday.

Bird flu has been confirmed in 12 States -- Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat,



Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab -- for crow/migratory/wild birds,

Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a statement.

According to the reports, avian flu has been confirmed among crows and migratory birds in Anantnag, Pulwama, Kulgam and Budgam districts of the Valley though no such case has been detected in poultry birds. The government has also reportedly notified alert zones around the radius of 10 kms where avian flu cases have been reported.

FAKE STATE SUBJECT CERTIFICATE CASE

Court Dismisses Bail Plea Of Punjab Resident

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: A court here on Saturday dismissed an anticipatory bail application of a man from Punjab who is wanted by the Crime Branch Jammu for his alleged involvement in managing a fake Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) for claiming residential status of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state.

A Crime Branch spokesperson said it strongly contested



anticipatory bail application of Manjeet Singh of Jalandhar and got it dismissed by the court of 3rd additional sessions Judge, Jammu, on merits of the case.

The case was registered against the accused

Old Rs 100, 10 & 5 Notes To Be Dumped

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is planning to withdraw the old currency notes of Rs 100, 10 and Rs 5. The notes will reportedly go out of circulation by the end of March or April as the top bank is planning to withdraw them permanently. However, there is no official confirmation from the RBI as yet on the matter.

As reported by several media publications, Assistant General Manager (AGM) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) B Mahesh while

Fresh Snowfall

for over four days from January 3 and moderate snowfall on January 9.

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir received one feet snow, the officials said.

Kupwara, also in the north, received 5.6 cm snow. Qazigund in south Kashmir received about one cm, Pahalgam 19.4cm and Srinagar 11.4 cm, they said.

Reports of snowfall were also received in other areas in the higher reaches of the Valley and Jammu region including on both sides of the Jawahar Tunnel along the Srinagar-Jammu national highway, the officials said.

The highway was closed for traffic due to heavy snowfall around Jawahar tunnel. In Nagrota, traffic authorities made repeated announcements requesting the drivers to return back saying there were no changes of traffic resuming on the highway.

A traffic official assured the travellers that Jammu to Srinagar traffic will be allowed once the highway is thrown open for vehicular movement again.

The snowfall also affected flight operations at Srinagar airport due to the accumulation of snow on the runway, the officials said. No flight landed or took off from the Srinagar airport, they said.

The Meteorological Department here has forecast light to moderate snowfall at scattered to widespread places in the plains of Kashmir and hilly areas of Jammu along with rain and thunder in the plains of Jammu till the forenoon on Sunday.

It said there is a possibility of heavy snowfall at isolated places over the Valley, especially in the higher reaches.

After this, the weather department said, the weather is likely to remain mainly dry till the end of this month.

Meanwhile, the night temperatures increased across the Valley due to the cloudy sky, bringing some relief to residents from the intense cold wave conditions.

The minimum temperature at most places in the Valley last night was above the normal for this time of the season, the officials said.

Srinagar city recorded a low of minus 2.0 degrees Celsius, up from minus 6.1 degrees Celsius the previous night.

The minimum temperature in Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district settled at minus 4.8 degrees Celsius last night, up from minus 6 degrees Celsius the night before.

Pahalgam in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 1.3 degrees Celsius, over five notches up from the previous night's minus 7.0 degrees Celsius.

The night temperature in Pahalgam was over six notches above the normal for this time of the season.

Qazigund recorded a minimum temperature of 4 degrees Celsius, the official said.

Kupwara recorded a low of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius while Kokernag recorded a low of minus 4.5 degrees Celsius.

Kashmir is currently in the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan', a 40-day period of harshest winter when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies including the famous Dal Lake here and the water supply lines.

The chances of snowfall are the maximum during this period and most areas, especially in the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall.

While 'Chillai-Kalan' began on December 21 and will end on January 31, the cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day 'Chillai-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold). (PTI)

Hundreds Of Vehicles

valley, officials said. Deputy Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Shamsher Singh said the slippery condition of the road on both sides of the Jawahar Tunnel forced the suspension of traffic on the highway around 11 am. The snowfall started on both sides of the Jawahar Tunnel in the early hours of Saturday and so far, around four inches of snow have accumulated on the ground," he said.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) pressed its men and machines into service to clear the road of snow, but the continuous snowfall and the slippery conditions are hampering their efforts, the officer said, adding that over 100 vehicles had managed to cross the Jawahar Tunnel before the traffic on the highway was suspended.

The closure of the highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, left hundreds of vehicles stranded on the stretch between Udhampur and Banihal.

One-way traffic was allowed from Jammu towards Srinagar as vehicles on the road ply alternatively between the twin capitals of Jammu and Kashmir in view of the ongoing work of the four-lane highway project.

Meanwhile, the traffic police on Saturday announced that no vehicular movement shall be allowed on Jammu-Srinagar highway from either side in view of shooting stones/mudslides at several places, snow accumulation around the Jawahar Tunnel and inclement weather prediction issued by MeT department.

Mughal Road continues to remain closed due to heavy snow accumulation

The snowfall started in the high-altitude areas of the Union Territory on Saturday, while Jammu and other regions in the plains witnessed rainfall.

The meteorological department has forecast light to moderate snowfall at scattered to widespread places in the plains of Kashmir and the hilly areas of Jammu, along with rain and thunder in the plains of Jammu. (PTI)

Traffic Chaos

authorities failed to clear the snow which made the roads slippery. Massive traffic jams across the city were witnessed today and it took hours for people to reach their destinations.

"Due to slippery conditions, vehicles are unable to ply on the roads, where is administration, where is SMC", a commuter questioned.

The residents in Srinagar said that the administration has not been able to clear the snow covered roads yet again, which made the roads slippery causing difficulties for commuters.

Many ambulances were also seen slipping on roads because of snow accumulation which prevented many patients from reaching the hospitals on time.

"Due to slippery conditions, vehicles were unable to ply on the roads, had snow been cleared on time things would have been different, we are not witnessing snow for the first time", said an irked commuter.

Provincial Administration Kashmir had directed all the officers to stay alert and keep the men and machinery ready to tackle any post snowfall situation in the valley.

Similar reports were received from North Kashmir's Bandipora district which witnessed moderate to heavy snowfall on Saturday and gave a tough time to commuters and patients as majority of the roads were not cleared of the accumulated snow which continued throughout the day.

According to the locals, the main roads Bandipora-Srinagar road and Sopore-Bandipora road witnessed massive traffic congestion owing to the un-cleared roads of snow.

The inner links of the majority of the villages around town outskirts and even the town itself also remained buried under the snow.

"I got stuck for hours on Bandipora-Sopore road due to accumulated snow as the road was also slippery", Mohammad Shafi a commuter said.

Angry over missing an important appointment, Shafi said, "The administration showed no concern this time and left us to lurch in cold".

The same situation was witnessed on Bandipora-Srinagar road with massive traffic congestion stretched to kilometres owing to the slippery condition of the road.

At least two critically ill patients required advanced treatment and had to be shifted to Srinagar in 4X4 vehicles which were kept on standby by the district authorities owing to snowfall predictions.

Apart from the situation on the main roads, the Bandipora district which recorded around 6-7 inches deep snow in pains with higher reaches witnessing more snowfall, gave a tough time to commuters and critically ill patients.

"It took me hours to travel some of the kilometres to the district hospital Bandipora as the inner links to our village were not cleared of snow", Shahid a local villager said. (KNO)

India Following

of Netaji being celebrated by the Centre as 'Parakram Diwas'.

"I sometimes wonder how Netaji would have felt if he had seen how a new and strong India is taking shape," he said at a programme held in the Victoria Memorial Hall here.

"Netaji had dreamt of a strong India, from LAC to LOC we are following his footsteps. Whenever our sovereignty was challenged, we have given a befitting reply," he said while adding that the country has a strong force and modern fighter aircraft such as Tejas and Rafale.

Flight Operations

the runway for the flight operations, he said. The official said all flights for the day were cancelled due to the bad weather.

Over 50 flights operate from the Srinagar airport daily. (PTI)

Kupwara Man

J&K to 1929, officials said. With his death, the fatality count in Valley reached 1210 while 719 persons lost life to the pestilence in Jammu division.

Srinagar district with 453 deaths tops the list followed by Jammu (370), Baramulla (173), Budgam (117), Kupwara (95), Pulwama (88), Anantnag (84), Doda (64), Bandipora (61), Udhampur (57), Kulgam (54), Rajouri (55), Kathua (51), Ganderbal (46), Shopian (39), Samba (39), Poonch (24), Ramban (21), Kishtwar (22), and Reasi (15).

Meanwhile, 94 more cases of Covid-19, including fourteen travellers and a soldier were reported across J&K during the last 24 hours, officials said. While Kashmir reported 65 fresh cases, the remaining 29 were confirmed by the officials from Jammu division. Eleven among the 20 districts in J&K recorded no fresh cases, the officials said.

Giving district wise details, they said that Srinagar reported 38, Baramulla 3, Budgam 6, Kupwara 2, Anantnag 8, Ganderbal 4, Kulgam 1, Shopian 3 and Jammu 29 new cases of Covid-19.

Moreover, officials said, 88 more patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals including 23 from Jammu Division and 65 from Kashmir Division. (With GNS inputs)

Ground, Aerial

proof security arrangements have been put in place to ensure smooth conduct of all R-day functions across the Valley.

"There is ground surveillance and there will be aerial surveillance. So both human and technical means will be used to ensure incident free R-Day. Militant presence is there but will thwart all their plans that are aimed at disrupting the R-Day functions," the official said, when asked about the preparations in place for smooth conduct of January 26 functions in Srinagar and elsewhere.

He said that all security agencies are maintaining a close synergy. "We have intensified frisking across the Valley, especially Srinagar. We urge people to cooperate with the security officials during frisking as it is for their safety," he said, adding that "hope weather will improve in the days ahead so that all functions are held smoothly."

The police official further said that this time, there is very less frisking on roads in Srinagar and elsewhere. "We are not unnecessarily stopping vehicles and frisking them," he said.

Meanwhile, commuters travelling on various roads in Srinagar and on highways alleged that they were subjected to harassment by the security personnel, who asked them to show identity cards, vehicle papers and dashboards of vehicles, which led to traffic snarls at various important junctions.

A police source said that special checkpoints have been set up in Srinagar which is on a high alert and drones too have been pressed into service to keep a close watch on suspects.

"Sniffer dogs too are being used in and around the venue and roads leading to the main venue in Srinagar SK Stadium Sonwar stand closed for all types of vehicular traffic," he said.

In view of the bad weather in Kashmir, the divisional administration has made alternate arrangements if the weather further deteriorates on January 26.

"We have kept alternate arrangement ready in all districts if weather turns bad on R-Day eve," said Divisional Commissioner Kashmir P K Pole—(Agencies)

HC Notice On

Court judge justice Rajnesh Oswal issued a notice to the respondent UT government, besides State Election Commission (Election Authority) and directed them to file a response by or before, the next date, fixed on January 27.

The court also directed the registry to list the case in the first 10 cases in the cause list and said "subject to objections, any action taken by the respondent no 4 (State Election Commission) shall be subject to the further orders of the court".

The maiden DDC elections to 280 constituencies spread over 20 districts - 10 each in Kashmir and Jammu divisions - were held in November-December last year.

Formally issuing the reservation rules, the Union Territory administration accorded 33 per cent reservation to women while scheduled castes and scheduled tribes will get reservation based on their population.

For reservation to women, as per the rules, the districts will be arranged alphabetically and every third district will be reserved for them.

Allocation of seats of the chairpersons to be reserved for women shall be made on a three-point roster system after arranging them alphabetically, which means the districts falling alphabetically at numbers 3, 6, 9, 12, 15 and 18 will be reserved for women.

The petitioners challenged the change of reservation roster of chairpersons of the DDCs for women, claiming that the arrangement is contrary to the statutory rules providing reservation from 1, 4, 7, 10 and so on.

The Congress has also been strongly advocating introduction of anti-defection norms and the system of open voting to check horse-trading in the upcoming elections to the DDC chairpersons.

"When the formula of roster of reservation had already been prescribed and notified in October 24, 2020 for DDC members and DDC chairpersons for women as well as SCs/ST, why the same is sought to be changed now, after the results when the eligible candidates are known," J-K Congress chief spokesperson Rvinder Sharma said.

He said the Panchayat Raj Act, as amended in 2014, provided for reservation of 1/3rd seats to be reserved for women, including women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and since it is first time that such a reservation is being provided for DDC chairpersons, the same has to be started from serial number one.

In the next round after the next election to the district bodies, the roster point shall move further.

"How the government has arbitrarily started the reservation roster from serial number three, six, nine and so on," he questioned and raised the significant point of law, alleging it is an attempt to favour some like-minded candidates by the government.

Raising serious questions over the failure to introduce the anti-defection provisions in these important elections of the DDC, held on party basis, Sharma said the doors of horse-trading and corruption have been kept wide open, which is a flawed approach to such a significant democratic institution.

Govt Confirms

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary sounded caution over the reported cases of avian influenza in Kashmir.

"Human or Poultry contact with Wild/Migratory birds (like feeding sources) needs to be strictly avoided," Choudhary posted on popular micro-blogging website Twitter.

His tweet further added that animal husbandry department (AHD) teams were on the job from farms to wetlands.

"Let's be careful about biosecurity," he said in the Tweet.

On Saturday, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a statement that bird flu in poultry has been confirmed so far in nine states of Kerala, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhhand, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

The ministry said that the control and containment operations (Cleaning and Disinfection) are going on in the affected epicentres of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttarakhhand and Kerala.

"Compensation is paid to farmers whose poultry birds, eggs and poultry feed are culled/dropped of by the State as per the Action Plan," the statement said.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD) provides funds to states and Union Territories on a 50:50 sharing basis.

All states are reporting to the Department on a daily basis regarding the control measures adopted by them based on the "Revised Action Plan for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza 2021".

The current bird flu outbreak comes barely a few months after India on September 30, 2020, declared the country free from the disease. India notified the first outbreak of

avian influenza in 2006.

Earlier this week, food regulator FSSAI issued detailed guidelines in view of the bird flu scare. It advised consumers not to eat half-boiled eggs and undercooked chicken, and ensure proper cooking of poultry meat.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) also urged consumers and food businesses "not to panic" and ensure proper handling and cooking of poultry meat and eggs for safe consumption.

The regulator mentioned that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated it is safe to consume poultry meat and eggs and there is no epidemiological data to suggest the disease can be transmitted to humans through cooked food. (With PTI inputs)

Court Dismisses

at Crime Branch Jammu in 2003. The charges against the accused were proved and subsequently the charge-sheet was produced in the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Jammu in September 2006.

However, during the trial of the case, presence of the accused was sought by the court but they did not appear before it which led to adjournment of the court, he said, adding the accused kept on evading his presence before the court and consequently proceedings under Section 512 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) were initiated against him for effecting his arrest.

He said the accused remained at large and kept on evading his arrest by changing his locations frequently.

However, Crime Branch Jammu continued to raid his possible hideouts, the spokesperson said, adding sensing his arrest, the accused moved an application for his anticipatory bail before the court.

He said the general warrant for arrest under Section 512 of the CrPC issued by the court would remain effective till its execution.

Man Steals

Khurshid Ahmed Shah lodged a written report at the Banihal police station, alleging that an unidentified thief struck his shop when he had gone to offer Friday prayers and decamped with a bag containing Rs 10,54,070 after terrorizing his 13-year-old son at gun-point.

After the incident, special teams were formed on the directions of Senior Superintendent of Police, Ramban, Haseeb-ur-Rehman and all check points were alerted, he said, adding the team raided several places, took assistance of technical teams and also checked various CCTV footages which finally led to the arrest of the accused.

He said the stolen money and the fake pistol were found concealed in a car parked near the railway chowk at Banihal.

Old Rs 100,

speaking at the District Level Security Committee (DLSC) and District Level Currency Management Committee (DLMC) meeting, stated that the old currency notes of Rs 100, Rs 10 and Rs 5 will eventually go out of circulation as RBI plans to withdraw them by March-April.

It is to be noted that the new notes of Rs 100, 10 and 5 have already come into circulation in exchange for the old notes.

New currency notes of 100 rupees were released by the Reserve Bank of India in 2019. According to sources, in order to avoid the chaos that was seen during the demonetisation period, the RBI is not in favour to withdraw circulation of any old note. And to keep the system streamlined, the apex bank has been bringing new notes in the market, ensuring its circulation before it makes a decision to finally put an end to the circulation of old currency notes.

Man Steals

Haseeb-ur-Rehman and all check points were alerted, he said, adding the team raided several places, took assistance of technical teams and also checked various CCTV footages which finally led to the arrest of the accused.

He said the stolen money and the fake pistol were found concealed in a car parked near the railway chowk at Banihal.

Underground Tunnel

This is the second underground tunnel detected by BSF personnel in Hiranagar sector during the past 10 days, fourth in the past six months along the IB in Samba and Kathua districts and 10th in the past decade.

On January 13, a 150-metre-long tunnel was detected in Bobiyaan village in the same sector.

A BSF officer said the latest tunnel is believed to be 150-metre-long originating from the Pakistan side with a depth of about 30 feet and three feet diameter.

The whole area was cordoned off and further details are awaited, he said.

Parliamentary Panel

He said that the officers of NHAI and Railways gave a powerpoint presentation about their ongoing and completed projects.

"While briefing about the activities of the Committee during visit, the Chairman said that the Committee would make recommendations to the Central Govt about the issues raised by the officers, stakeholders and common people, who met them during the programme, for immediate necessary action," he added.

Earlier on January 21, the official spokesperson said, the Committee held a detailed meeting with senior officers of divisional administration and

reviewed the progress of the developmental projects taken up in Kashmir Valley.

"The Committee also visited Gulmarg on Jan 22 and had on the spot assessment of tourism related infrastructure and winter sports activities going on there. On the occasion there, the local people from different trades met the members of the committee and apprised them about their difficulties and sought the intervention of the committee. They raised the issue of extension of lease to the hotels, creation of employment opportunities for locals of Srinagar and Gulmarg," he said.

He further said that a group of SMC councillors, headed by Deputy Mayor, met the Committee and raised among other issues the exorbitant airfare being charged by airways operating in Srinagar especially during winter and blockage of road.

"They demanded capping of air ticket prices as it directly affects the tourism section as well as the common people of Kashmir. The Committee assured them to take up the matter with the concerned ministries while submitting their report and recommendations," the official spokesperson said.

Also, he said, a delegation of Artists of Kashmir Valley, headed by Mohammad Amin, met the Committee and apprised about the problems they are facing in their profession.

Joint Secretary Rajya Sabha, J.Sundriyal, Secretary, Tourism, J&K Govt. Sarmad Hafiz, senior officers from Union Ministry of Transport and Highways, Civil Aviation, Railways, Tourism besides Airport Authority of India, BRO and JK Tourism and R&B Departments were present in the meeting.

3-Year-Old

night, news agency KNO reported Saturday. The minor boy from Ghalib Abad locality of Shalteng, the report said, went missing from his home around 3: 00 pm on Friday.

The report further said that the desperate family informed the general public through social media that their son has gone missing. The family and the locals also started searching for the boy but could not trace him

Quoting an unnamed official, the report said that a rescue operation was launched shortly after the matter was reported to the Parimpora police station.

"The movement of the boy was traced through the help of CCTV Cameras after which the police zeroed in at the said spot and the body was fished out then late Friday evening," he added.

Cab Overtuns

Block Medical Officer (BMO) Boniyar, Parvaiz Ahmad Masoodi told news agency GNS that the trio had received minor injuries.

"As new X-ray plant is undergoing installation at PHC Boniyar so they have to be shifted to GMC Baramulla," he said.

Mentally Unsound

has been taken for legal-medico formalities to the hospital and proceedings under section 174Crpc have been initiated in this regard.

Teen Girl 'Strangles'

of the incident and started further investigations in this regard. (KNS)

Hideout Busted

on specific intelligence information. It led to the recovery of an AK-47 rifle with three magazines, 82 rounds, three Chinese pistols with five magazines and 33 rounds, and four hand grenades.

An Under Barrel Grenade Launcher (UBGL) and a wireless set were also found at the hideout, the spokesperson said, adding the BSF is searching the area despite incessant rains.

Further details are awaited. (PTI)

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER PULWAMA

No.ARTO/Pul/2021 Date:-23/01/2021

NOTICE

Whereas joint application has been received by this office from Mr.Asif Bashir Thoker S/O Bashir Ahmad Thoker R/O Dadsara Tral Pulwama(Party No.1st) as Transferor, (Seller) Owner of the Vehicle Tata DI 207 Bearing Regd. No.JK13D-0187 (Commercial/ Non-Commercial) covering under R/P No.N/A. and M/A United Goods Tpt.Co. Partner Mohd Hafeez Khan R/O Panthachowk Srinagar (Party No.2nd) as Transferee (Purchaser) requesting for transfer of R/C & R/P of the above noted Vehicle from party No 1st and 2nd. And Cancellation of hire purchase agreement with JK Bank Dadsara Tral Pulwama. Before the case is disposed off on its merit, anybody have any objection regarding the proposed transfer Amy file his objection within (7) days from the publication of this notice to the office of the undersigned. No any representation / objection shall be entertained after stipulated period.

Sd/- Assistant Regional Transport Officer Pulwama

از عدالت نائب تحصیلدار ایگزیکٹو محترم دیو اول
مضمون کا خلاصہ درج ذیل ہے: صاحب نام محمد عارف خان ولد محمد عبداللہ خان ساکن موضع تریچھ تحصیل ڈگام
برادھلگان ڈیپارٹمنٹ سرٹیفکیٹ نمبر ڈی 2000-20-01 کوٹ ہو گیا
ایشیا مراد گاہی ہیرا خاس دعام
محاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدد میں درخواست مائل دفتر ذمہ دار زیکاروٹی ہے اس سلسلے میں عملد لیڈ
رپورٹ طلب کیا گیا ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ مائل کا والد 20-01-2020 کو کوٹ ہو گیا
نہیں ہے۔ اس سلسلے میں ایک مزدور صاحب مائل کا انفرادی کتبہ ذیل ہے
محمد عارف پسر 55 سال گھر پلو کام
محمد عارف پسر 35 سال مزدوری
محمد اشفاق خان پسر 28 سال مزدوری
بہادر پسر 26 سال زرتعلیم
تیسرے پسر 20 سال زرتعلیم
چشم پسر 19 سال زرتعلیم
اس سلسلہ کوئی انفرادی زمین ہے سرٹیفکیٹ اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کوئی مکرر اعتراض ہو تو وہ
اپنا اعتراض ساتھ ہی مامدر دفتر ذمہ دار پیش کرے مگر عدالت نے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول
نہیں ہوگا

نائب تحصیلدار shk

Srinagar Airport Upgradation Must For Kashmir Tourism: JKHC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Hoteliers Club highlighted the issue of frequent flight cancellations at Srinagar Airport due to low visibility and bad weather with the delegation of Parliamentary Standing Committee who were on a 4-day tour to Kashmir, a statement issued here said.

While interacting with the committee, J&K Hoteliers Club informed the delegation that Kashmir tourism receives major jolt due to flight cancellation and frequent Srinagar - Jammu road closures on account of bad weather and snowfall.

The JKHC urged the Parliamentary Committee that the Government of India may be impressed upon improving landing facilities at Srinagar airport so that planes can land and take off at minimum visibility.

The JKHC interacted with the Parliamentary delegation in Srinagar and also at Gulmarg



Secretary General Tariq Rashid Ghani represented the JKHC during the meetings at Srinagar - Jammu road closure. It sought regulation of the airfare on Srinagar route. In view of the August 2019 and subsequent Covid Lock-

down, Hoteliers Club said that the hospitality sector suffered colossal losses for over a year which needs to be compensated.

The Club sought immediate interest free cash assistance to the hospitality sector for its survival and also revival plans.

The Hoteliers Club also raised concern over the ban on repairs and upgradation of the hotels at Boulevard in Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonmarg which it said has damaged these properties.

"Government should allow repairs of the existing hotels at these locations or else the properties will be ruined and which will have an impact on the tourism industry," said Tariq Ghani during the interaction meeting.

The Hoteliers Club also sought extension of the land leases to the hotels at tourist resorts without delay.

"Besides, the Government of India should start extensive Kashmir promotion plans at national and international level."

GOVERNMENT SHOULD ALLOW REPAIRS OF THE EXISTING HOTELS AT THESE LOCATIONS OR ELSE the properties will be ruined and which will have an impact on the tourism industry,"

SMC Deputes 74 Snow Clearance Machines

SRINAGAR: Srinagar Municipal Corporation on Saturday sent off 74 snow clearance machines from its transport yard for 74 electoral wards of the city for snow clearance purposes.

Mayor Srinagar Junaid Azim Mattu sent off the snow clearance vehicles.

Besides Chief Sanitation Officer, Chief Transport Officer, Chief Enforcement Officer, Xen Mech, Chairman Public Health and Sanitation, Enforcement Officer Central, Enforcement Officers and various Corporators also accompanied the Mayor.

Mayor directed the concerned to immediately go for clearance of important stretches leading to hospitals, religious places, main roads and other vital des-



He further passed on directions that all the 74 machines will be stationed at wards only so that in case of continuous heavy snowfall the machines will be constantly put to operational mode for swift removal of snow.

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE SCHEME

Plants With 90 Percent Subsidy Distributed in Srinagar

SRINAGAR: The Director, Horticulture Kashmir, Ajaz Ahmad Bhat today visited Fruit Plant Nursery (PPN) Zakura, here to take stock of various activities including de-weeding, hoeing and other operations going on in the nursery.

He directed the concerned to ensure that all operations are completed well in time.

The Director on the occasion distributed plants on 90 percent subsidy among the citizens of district Srinagar Under Backyard Horticulture Scheme.

He said during the current plantation season about 4 Lakh plants of different varieties have been distributed in Kashmir division, out of which 60,000 have been distributed in Srinagar alone.

He also instructed Chief Horticulture officers of the Kashmir Divi-



sion to ensure wide publicity of the scheme through electronic and print media so that people can avail benefits under this scheme. The Director also briefed growers about the benefits under the newly launched schemes viz. 'Operation Greens- Top to Total' and PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM FME) as part of

...ROAD SAFETY MONTH

DC Sgr Inaugurates Seminar

SRINAGAR: As part of ongoing Road Safety Month, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary today inaugurated a Seminar here organised by Traffic Police, Srinagar.

The seminar was organised to debate issues faced by various stakeholders while ensuring road safety and finding out ways and means to counter them.

Noted religious scholar Mufti Nazir Ahmad was the Special Guest on the occasion, while Director Social Welfare, SSP Traffic City, Addl. Commissioner, Dr Kangoo (B&J Hospital), Cultural Officer (CO) Education Department were among other speakers present at the event.

The DC Srinagar on the occasion made an appeal to road users to adhere to the traffic laws for their own safety and for the safety of others.

Mufti Nazir Ahmad delivered a detailed talk on use of roads and following traffic rules in light of Hadith.

SSP Traffic City in his welcome address highlighted the socio economic issues including hospitalization woes connected to road accidents and appealed to all stakeholders to play their role.

4 Gamblers Held In City: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Saturday claimed to have arrested four gamblers in a raid in the Zakura area of this capital city. Acting on an input, a team from police station Zakura carried out a raid at Shah Hamdan Colony and arrested four gamblers from the spot, a police spokesperson said Saturday. Besides playing cards, he said, an amount of Rs 79000 was also recovered from their possession. "They have been arrested and shifted to PS Zakura where they remain in custody," he added.

The police spokesperson identified the accused as Manzoor Ahmed Dar, Bilal Ahmad Wani, Javid Ahmad Khan and Fayaz Ahmad Bhat. "Accordingly, a case vide FIR No. 06/2021 under relevant sections of law have been registered at Police Station Zakura and investigation has been initiated," he added.

LAWDA Demolishes Illegally Raised Structures In Sgr Areas

SRINAGAR: The Enforcement Wing of Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) today conducted demolition operations in Friends colony Shalimar, Nigeen, Saderbal, Habak and Kohna Khan Dalgate (Western Foreshore Road).

During the demolition drive, one third storey, one garage, third storey/attic, one second storey and one tin shed raised illegally by the violators were demolished on the spot.

As per an official statement legal action in terms of lodging of FIR's against the violators have also been taken wherever necessary.

Meanwhile, the public residing within the LDA jurisdiction and in the lake are hereby directed not to



go for any sort of illegal constructions/ encroachments, without obtaining proper building permission from the competent authority. It was given out that strict action in terms of conducting demolitions followed by lodging of FIR's shall be taken against violators who try to raise the constructions in the In-Lake / Green Belt areas.

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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 1644 - Parliamentary army wins battle of Nantwich, Cheshire, English Civil War
- 1722 - Tsar Peter the Great begins civil system
- 1892 - Battle of Mengo, Uganda: French missionaries attack British missionaries
- 1900 - Battle of Tugela-Spionkop, South Africa (Boers vs British army)
- 1901 - Denmark and the US sign a treaty under which Denmark will sell the Danish West Indies to the USA for \$5 million, but the sale will be postponed until 1917
- 1924 - Benito Mussolini disallows non-fascists work union
- 1969 - Students protest the erection of steel gates around the London School of Economics
- 1972 - Japanese Sgt. Shoichi Yokoi is found hiding in a Guam jungle, where he had been since the end of World War II.
- 1975 Fastest Earth-bound object, 7200 kph, in vacuum centrifuge, England.
- 1977 Massacre of Atocha in Madrid: five labor lawyers murdered by fascists in Madrid during the Spanish transition to democracy.
- 1979 - US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1983 - Hulk Hogan pins Iron Sheik for World Wrestling Federation title
- 1984 - Apple Computer Inc unveils its revolutionary Macintosh personal computer
- 1985 - 15th Space Shuttle (51-C) Mission-Discovery 3 is launched.
- 1986 - South Yemen Premier Haydar Bakr al-Attas becomes interim-president
- 1986 - Voyager 2 makes 1st fly-by of Uranus (81,593 km), finds new moons
- 1993 - Soyuz TM-16 launches
- 1997 - The Swiss government and several banks and businesses agree to create a memorial fund for victims of the Holocaust
- 2003 - The United States Department of Homeland Security officially begins operation
- 2006 - Walt Disney International and Bob Iger announce it is buying computer animation film studio Pixar for \$7.4 billion
- 2011 - At least 35 died and 180 injured in a bombing at Moscow's Domodedovo airport.
- 2017 - President Trump withdraws the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA)



HIJRI CALENDAR

10

JAMADI

-UL-SANI

1442

PRAYERS

- FAJR 6:07
- ZUHR 12:42
- ASR 4:15
- MAGRIB 5:56
- ISHA 7:20

From KO Archives

CEASE-FIRE EXTENDED BY ANOTHER MONTH

Observer News Service

NEW DELHI - Despite reservations from within, government today extended the cease-fire in Jammu and Kashmir by a month beyond republic day to give peace every chance and asked Pakistan to curb and control militant activities of organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad.

"The present ceasefire is being extended (for restoring peace in the state) by another month," External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters outside Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 7 Race Course Road residence.

The Cabinet Committee on Security headed by the prime minister discussed the situation in Jammu & Kashmir for three hours before deciding to extend the truce.

"Yes, the CCS felt that despite the continuing violence unleashed by the militant groups, especially by Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, the government must extend the ceasefire by another month," Singh said.

But the government is still debating the issue of clearing the proposed travel plans of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference delegation which wants to go to Pakistan for talks with militant commanders based there.

Government believes violence must be ended and peace, which has been welcomed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir, given every chance. The CCS took the decision of cease-fire extension notwithstanding views of sections within the government opposing extension. The entire security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly acts of cross-border terrorism and militant acts against civilians, was reviewed at the CCS meeting.

The CCS meeting was attended by home minister LK Advani, Jaswant Singh, defence minister George Fernandes, finance minister Yashwant Sinha, deputy chairman of planning commission K.C. Pant, national security advisor Brajesh Mishra, army chief Gen. S. Padmanabhan besides other top officials.

Singh said Vajpayee's peace initiative on Ramadan eve was taken despite heinous acts of terrorism and violence against innocent people.

Asked about the possibility of Indo-Pak talks on the Kashmir issue, he said India has always been in favour of a dialogue and will remain so. A congenial atmosphere has to be created and the onus for that lies on Pakistan. Dialogue on one hand and gun-talk on the other does not work, he said.

The ground situation in Jammu and Kashmir as well as on the border and the Line of Control (LoC) was reviewed in its entirety, Singh said, adding that chief minister Farooq Abdullah was informed and consulted in the matter. Singh said the views of major political parties was also taken into consideration while taking the decision.

On Islamabad's stand that it was unable to control militant organisations, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, which were carrying out violent activities, highly-placed sources today said we do not buy Pakistan's argument that they have no control over these groups: They are controlled and directed by Pakistan.

They said the main aim of Vajpayee government's announcement of extending the cease-fire by a month* beyond January 26 was to meet people's desire for peace in Jammu and Kashmir. Tell the international community that India sincerely wanted to end violence and also address Pakistan for a positive response.

We have been able to convince the people in the state that we sincerely want to give a chance to peace, they said adding that the international community has appreciated New Delhi's gesture across the board.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 24 January, 2001)

KASHMIR OBSERVER

IS AVAILABLE AT ALL LEADING NEWS AGENCIES

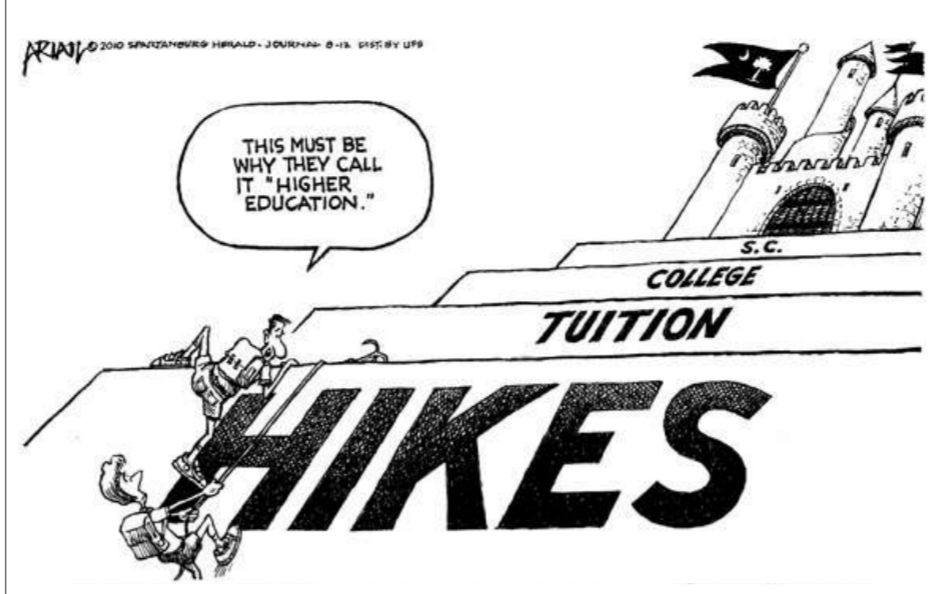
از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار ترہگام با اجلاس سجاد احمدیٹ
مضمون کاغذات درخواست منجانب راج محمد ڈار ولد غلام محمد ڈار
ساکرہ موضع کون تحصیل مذکورہ برآمد عطا گی بیکوار ڈار ایڑا
سرٹیفکیٹ (RBA) تحت 294 SRO
استہتار بمبراد آگانی ہر خاص وعام
محلہ مندرجہ عنوان اعداد میں در خواست سائل دفتر پڑا میں زیور کوئی ہے اس مسئلے میں پڑا حلقہ سے
رپورٹ شملہ پڑا کو طلب کیا گیا ہے جس سے عاں ہے کہ سائل موضع کون تحصیل مذکورہ میں
بہاں پڑا ہے کہ کی مہا نامہ LPC 7000 روپے ہے اور کہ پڑا فرزند مشتعل ہے
غلام محمد ڈار ولد غلام محمد ڈار مزدوری 38 سال سر بروکہ
صبرینہ بیگم زوجہ غلام محمد ڈار گھریلو کام 36 سال
راج محمد ڈار پسر گھریلو کام 18 سال
مہک پانڈت گھریلو کام 13 سال
اس کے علاوہ کوئی فرزند نہیں ہے سرٹیفکیٹ اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی کوئی تداریک یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ
ایمانداری یا اعتراض ساتھ ہی اندر دفتر پڑا میں پیش کرے معیار کے لئے معذرت کوئی کسی تداریک یا اعتراض قابل قبول
نہیں ہوگا
نائب تحصیلدار FKO

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
MECHANICAL IRRIGATION DIVISION SRINAGAR,
NEAR J&K BANK (ZALDAGAR)
Telefax No. 0194-2503195 e.mail Id: xenmidsrinagar@gmail.com
Sub:- "Extension in bidding for e-NIT No. 69 OF 2020-21, Dated: 23-12-2020.
Part-(2) i.e. "Providing and fitting of 200 mm foot valves at Lift Irrigation Scheme Chanthan Gulabpora."
Part-(4) i.e. "Providing and fitting of control valves at Lift Irrigation Scheme Repora Old.
Ref:- This office e-NIT No. 69 OF 2020-21, Dated: 23-12-2020.
EXTENSION NOTICE 3
In view of the fact that 26th January being a National Holiday. The critical dates are again extended as under:-
Bid submission/ Document download / sale end Date 27/01/2021 at 1400 hrs
Date and time of Bid opening 28/01/2021 at 1400 hrs
Rest of the terms and conditions shall remain un-altered as laid down in the original e-NIT.
No. MIDS/Ts/3739-44 Dated:- 23-01-2021
DIPK-12091/20
Executive Engineer,
Mechanical Irrigation Division,
Srinagar

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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NO HOLDS BARRED



The biggest losers of 2021, however, are likely to be developing countries. They lack both the economic resources to acquire enough vaccines, and the public health systems to treat large numbers of COVID patients

Private Spoon Feeding

It's a menace. Period.

Riyaz Kazmi

It is noteworthy to mention here that even students of elite private schools, where fee structures always keep skyrocketing, also take tuitions in the private coaching centers. Are not the administrators of these schools answerable and accountable for the quality of education as well?

Time again, a wave of moral depravity starts spreading its tentacles and underpinning the current sad state of affairs. Once the board exams were over, the private coaching centers couldn't wait for a day or two to give some space or breather to all those dead tired candidates whom they aim to tempt and trap by their aggressive marketing gimmicks. When business or weather vagaries are out of gear, at least this sector has created such a hype and urgency among the parents to shell out their hard earned money and enroll their children in these centers without giving a second thought.

For me, coaching centers or companies are one and the same thing; they know how to achieve sales targets by aggressive marketing campaigns. Since 5th Aug 2019, when all other businesses were incurring huge economic losses and continue to do so, private coaching is one of the pursuits which is in full bloom and mushrooming rapidly.

It is annoying and astonishing to be a witness to this unending rat race. Earlier it was STD outlets, now building malls, investing in diagnostic centers or establishing coaching centers have become the norm of the day for most of the Kashmiris.

There are certain things which have not changed or have created this situation over the last 3 decades and if we do not take a call at the earliest, things will turn uglier in near future. Some of the lacunas that we are still facing are as under:

Tunnel Vision

Here in Kashmir, a majority of parents cannot think beyond MBBS and BE/B.Tech. It seems as if they have put on blinkers and are unable to see the other good things around. It doesn't matter to them whether these reluctant or aspiring doctors and engineers have the ability or not but most of them are being pushed against the wall and they haven't found the way or the freedom to do that which they like the most. There are hundreds of new emerging fields

which if pursued sincerely, will not only help students sustain but they can shine and prosper as well. Parents need to be very realistic about suitable fields where children can willingly work hard to prove themselves.

Lack Of Counseling

It should be one of the responsibilities of the schools to counsel all those out going students who had spent more than 18 long years to pursue their studies there. Who better can understand these kids than the teachers who had taught them for years to guide and help them to choose the fields where they can easily excel and be independent. By this initiative, poor students will not become an easy prey for exploitation.

Lack of Exposure

Had there been proper life coaching lessons being imparted among the students to guide and groom them reasonably, things would have been very much different and bright. They could have enough confidence to try new fields and never remain stuck to medical/non medical fields only. Unfortunately, we are only after achieving academic excellence without trying out the experience and exposure to various life changing and challenging experiences.

Brawling Hotspots

It does come as a surprise for us to see teenagers fighting quite frequently in the areas where coaching centers have sprung up. These have become their favorite hangout spots. They are rough and rude. There is so much of chaos on the streets due to traffic snarls when these young boys get involved in road rage and medieval duels for teenage romances. Shouldn't there be a check and tab over such incidents? Those at the helm of affairs should understand that no other girl should have to suffer like our martyr Romana or are they only concerned about their course fee?

Exorbitant Fee Structure

When the entire valley is bearing

the brunt of economic strangulation, it seems as if these centers are left unbridled to charge as much as they can without any rule and reasonability. "Chalta Hai Chalnay Do" (who cares). This has become the mindset of people who have the power and authority. Orders remain only on papers while the ground action and implementation is a distant dream.

Excessive Intake

Unfortunately, when the enthusiastic parents out of their hard earned money arrange the course fee, they forget to take other things into account while enrolling their wards. They overlook the class capacity in these tuition centers which is always stretched beyond the maximum limit. Shouldn't these parents introspect and see whether their children will be receptive and responsive in such a crowded atmosphere?

Derailed Education System

One of the major reasons for this mess is the poor quality of education in the secondary and higher secondary schools run by the government. There seems hardly any accountability on behalf of the government teachers, lecturers and professors. There is no check on their performance and nothing has been done to evaluate whether they are capable enough to deliver or not.

Mere delivering of one or two lectures is not going to work, given the hefty monthly salaries they are drawing from state exchequer. It should be the moral and social responsibility of the state employed teachers to create such a competitive, convenient atmosphere in the government run institutions that the enrolled students shouldn't feel a need to rely upon private coaching centers. This is not only going to save their precious time but can ease off the financial burden on their families as well. It is high time for the government teachers to come out of their comfort zone and start delivering for the greater good of the society. In this regard, district administrations should assign duties to a team of dedicated officers who will regu-

larly monitor the attendance in these institutions.

It is noteworthy to mention here that even students of elite private schools, where fee structures always keep skyrocketing, also take tuitions in the private coaching centers. Are not the administrators of these schools answerable and accountable for the quality of education as well? In the West and the Middle East, we hardly see students being encouraged to take private learning lessons. Everything is done then and there in the schools. Why can't we implement the same system here to put an end to this nuisance of "private spoon feeding"?

Conclusion

First and foremost, it is the responsibility of the administration to see if there is an adequate competent staff available in the schools and colleges who can smoothly meet the requirements of the students. In every college, new state of art teaching tools like language labs, smart classes are being procured and placed at the disposal of the teachers and students so that the teaching process becomes easy and effective. But if some scrupulous elements still create loopholes that push students into the trap of private coaching centers, then it will be nothing but a sort of moral corruption and ugly blot on those who could change these mal practices despite having the authority but lack concrete action.

Let's not be so ignorant and irresponsible that we create a space and hand over the helm of affairs to those who are trying to convert our 'Makhtabs' into money minting entities, enterprises and exploitation units!

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer

The author can be reached at Riyazahm72@gmail.com

The coronavirus has crippled the world economy. Global GDP suffered its sharpest drop since the end of the second world war in 2020, millions were unemployed or furloughed, and governments pumped trillions of dollars into their economies to prevent greater damage.

Nevertheless, a 2021 recovery is very uncertain. China's economy is growing strongly again, but many of the world's richest nations may not fully rebound until 2022 at the earliest.

Inequality is also rampant. While America's 651 billionaires have increased their net worth by 30% to US\$4 trillion, a quarter of a billion people in developing countries could face absolute poverty, and up to half the global workforce may have lost their livelihoods.

Advantage Asia

The speed at which the pandemic can be contained will have a huge bearing on how the world economy performs. In the race between new virulent strains of the virus and the vaccine roll-out, early victory is by no means assured. Even rich countries that have secured most of the available vaccines may fail to inoculate enough people to provide herd immunity until the end of 2021. In developing countries, where vaccines will generally be scarce, the virus is expected to spread further.

The big winners are likely to be countries like China and South Korea that succeeded in suppressing COVID-19 early. China's economy is projected to grow in 2021 by 8%, over twice that of the most successful western countries even before the pandemic.

China's export-led economy has actually benefited from lockdowns in western countries. Western demand for services like entertainment and travel may have declined, but demand for household consumer goods and medical supplies has increased. Chinese exports to the US have reached record levels despite the high tariffs imposed by the Trump administration.

China is also expanding its economic influence throughout Asia, with a new free trade area in the Pacific and huge infrastructure projects along its trade routes to Europe and Africa. It is investing in

advanced technologies to reduce its dependence on western supply chains for components such as semiconductors. China could now overtake the US as the world's largest economy within five years, twice as fast as previously predicted.

Harder times elsewhere

For rich countries such as the US, UK and those in mainland Europe, the picture is less rosy. After brief recoveries in summer 2020, their economies stagnated. This was driven as much by the second wave of the pandemic as lockdowns. In the US, for instance, employment and growth closely tracked the pandemic rather

The big winners are likely to be countries like China and South Korea that succeeded in suppressing COVID-19 early. China's economy is projected to grow in 2021 by 8%, over twice that of the most successful western countries even before the pandemic.

than the unevenly applied lockdowns as business and consumer confidence slumped. Even with some recovery next year, these economies are expected to be 5% smaller in 2022 than if the crisis had not occurred.

The biggest losers of 2021, however, are likely to be developing countries. They lack both the economic resources to acquire enough vaccines, and the public health systems to treat large numbers of COVID patients. They also can't afford the huge government subsidies that have prevented mass unemployment in Europe and the US. With demand for their raw materi-

als crippled by the recession in the west, and little aid available from rich countries to alleviate their large debts, they can ill afford further lockdowns.

Even formerly fast-growing countries like Brazil and India are facing hard times. Many millions of poor workers in the informal sector are being forced back to their villages and urban slums to face mass poverty and even starvation.

Meanwhile South Africa, the wealthiest country in Africa, may have left it too late to obtain enough vaccines to stem the rapid rise in infections. It has taken a collective approach by becoming a member of the COVAX programme. The programme aims to ensure that poorer

countries do not lose out, but it has yet to achieve results.

The new divide

The economic effects of the pandemic have been hugely varied across society. Those in full-time work, often in highly paid jobs working from home, have accumulated substantial savings since there is less to spend wages on.

The very rich, especially in the US, have benefited from huge stock market increases driven by pandemic successes like Amazon, Netflix and Zoom – and this

looks likely to continue. The big question for the economy is whether in the coming year those with secure jobs and high incomes will return to their previous spending patterns, or hold on to their savings in the face of continuing uncertainty.

In contrast, many who have lost jobs or businesses or been furloughed will struggle to find new work or return to their previous income levels – especially since low-wage sectors such as retail and hospitality are unlikely to recover fully after the pandemic. This group includes many younger people, women and ethnic minorities.

The inequality could be increased as rich governments scale back the huge subsidies being used to keep many workers employed or furloughed. Rishi Sunak, the UK chancellor, gave clear indications of this intention in his November spending review.

In the US, the political deadlock over further relief spending was only resolved at the last minute, and Republicans will probably now aim to minimise Biden-administration spending despite the profligacy of the Trump years. Europe has just reached an unprecedented agreement to provide EU-funded aid to member states most affected by the pandemic, but tensions over the extent of the package and the recipients will probably continue.

Cooperation could ease the adjustment to a post-pandemic world. But international cooperation during the pandemic has been weak, and economic tensions have further undermined the world's commitment to free trade – not a good start for Brexit Britain. Domestically, redistribution of wealth and income through higher taxes could give western governments more resources to deal with the victims of the pandemic, but will be politically difficult in a continuing recession.

Social unrest has been one consequence of previous pandemics. Let's hope that this time, we find the wisdom to tackle the gross inequalities revealed by COVID-19, and build a fairer world.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer.

The Conversation

An Uncanny Trip to Tarsar and Marsar

Firdous Ayoub Parray

In the month of July 2019, almost 15 days before scrapping of Article 370 on August 5th, we (an eight-member group) planned to go for a trekking trip to Tarsar and Marsar—the two famous lakes in the Himalayan mountain range of Pahalgam (Anantnag). Thousands of tourists visit these eye-catching places every year to enjoy the beauty of Pahalgam and its upper parts. As it was our first ever trekking trip to the mountains in Kashmir, we started collecting the necessary belongings, which would prove helpful and useful in trekking.

On 2nd August, after Friday prayers we left from Tral, our home town, by hiring a Sumo and took the route via Sirgufwara, and we reached Aru valley at 8 pm. After reaching Aru, which has its unique beauty with lush green meadows, mountains full of deodar and pine, some of the members set up camp and some others went in search of the ponies to carry our bags. We had already taken our home-made meals for dinner. All of us were excited to start our trekking the next morning.

On 3rd August, we woke up early in the morning, had our breakfast/ tea and started packing our stuff, and by 7 am we were ready to start our trekking. We hired a pony to carry our bags. The horse man was very humble and kind hearted and we enjoyed his company and he provided us all the basic information about the twin lakes. After trekking through dense forests for about three hours, we reached another camping site called Lidderwat. The route goes along the banks of Lidder canal. Lidderwat is a combination of two words meaning two streams fusing together and forming a single stream; these streams have their origins from famous mountain peak Kolhai glaciers and Tarsar Lake, respectively.

After having lunch and a brief rest, we started our journey again, towards our destination and the trail was now a bit hectic because of a sharp and rocky mountain. After traveling some miles, we needed to cross the stream but the bridge was not trustworthy. After crossing the bridge, we came in contact with a trekking group from Pune; we had a brief interaction with them and clicked some photographs and moved on. Finally we reached Hamwas, a place on the banks of a stream; and the horse man suggested we pitch the tents there and we obliged. We were feeling very exhausted because of the two hours trek from Lidderwat. Some members were assigned to set up tents and some others were busy in collecting the firewood. Everywhere one could see the nomads and their Kothas (nomad houses) and they were busy with their cattle rearing. They offered us tea, as we provided them some medicines as one of their kids was suffering from high



fever and cold.

On 4th August, everyone woke up early in the morning to have the finest and amazing look of Kolhai mountain peak, which becomes visible only for a few minutes and is then covered with clouds again. After having our breakfast, we started our trek again through another valley, named as Sekwas. Finally, after trekking for about four hours, we had our first look of Tarsar lake (a combination of two words: 'Tar' means a pass and 'sar' means a lake). All of us tried to capture this exciting, amazing and astounding moment in photographs by our cameras and mobile phones. It was a thrilling and exciting moment indeed. Walking along the length of this lake, the colours changed from blue to brown to greenish as a result of different sun

As we reached Aru, all the shops and hotels were closed. It was very shocking and astonishing as no one had any idea of what had actually happened or will happen. Everyone was taking their guesses as there were lots of rumors. No one actually knew what was happening, at the moment, in Kashmir

angles. We saw at least 5 to 6 different colours, which is a distinctive and unique feature of Tarsar Lake only. After spending some time at the lake, we decided

to move towards Marsar Lake locally known as "Killer lake" (a combination of two words: 'Mar' means to kill/ death and 'sar' means a lake) as most of the time, it is covered with clouds. There are a number of myths regarding this lake. After clicking some photographs of this lake, we were now ready to return back to our base camp at Aru Valley. To reach Aru valley as early as possible, we kept on moving/ trekking continuously and took brief pauses, by taking a rest of 4 to 5 minutes at some places. We reached Aru valley around 7 pm but were very much exhausted and tired, due to continuous walking from Tarsar to Aru.

As we reached Aru, all the shops and hotels were closed. It was very shocking and astonishing as no one had any idea of what actually happened or what will hap-

pen. Everyone was taking their guesses as there were lots of rumors. No one actually knew what was happening, at the moment, in Kashmir. This was more due to the reason that none of the mobile networks, except BSNL, works at Aru. So we too were worried about it and had no idea now as to how we could reach our home. We somehow managed to contact our family by using the mobile phone of a local person. Due to an unpredictable, highly tense, situation our family members told us to arrive home at the earliest, as no one knew exactly what was happening and, thus, the whole Kashmir valley was in shock.

Thus, we tried to hire a cab from Aru valley to our home town, and tried to convince many cab drivers but unfortunately no one was ready (due to disturbing situation, which was more perturbing due to a number of rumours and all this turned futile and finally we had to stay at Aru for the whole night. Somehow we tried to sleep amidst this atmosphere full of worries and fears.

On 5th August, we woke up early in the morning and one of the cab drivers agreed to drop us at Pahalgam. Once we reached Pahalgam, we were surprised and shocked to see roads blocked and police and armed forces everywhere on the road. A policeman questioned us about our place of departure and destination and after this place we were not permitted to move ahead anymore. However, they permitted us to move, by foot, but in pairs, and not as a group. After waiting more than half an hour, we started moving by foot towards home, with the hope that we will get a cab or any other vehicle. After walking some miles, we saw a tipper coming and requested him for a lift; he gave us lift up to Sirgufwara village. Once we reached near Higher Secondary School Sirgufwara, we faced a police party there. They stopped and questioned us and didn't allow us to move further. But after about 10 minutes, they allowed us to move towards our homes.

Now, we again found ourselves walking some miles. We were continuously looking for a cab but couldn't find one. As we reached Mahind village, we saw a cab and one of our group members talked to the cab driver about dropping us at our home in Tral. After a brief conversation, he agreed to drop us at our home town, Tral, saying that Tral was his favorite town. This was, all by luck, and due to this cab driver, we reached safely to our respective homes on 5th August at 5 pm.

The author is pursuing Masters in Mass Communication & Journalism at Islamic University of Science & Technology (IUST) Awantipora, Kashmir. Feedback at firdousparray546@gmail.com

Daily soaps: Lacking sanity

Feryal Ali Gauhar

I am back. With a vengeance. Teeth sharpened, claws twitching like a cat about to devour a recently mutilated mouse. It has been torturous watching the scenes which shall be placed on the slaughtering block and chopped up, frame by frame, deconstructed, dismantled and disembowelled for the deeper meaning inherent in what otherwise appears to be nothing but a poorly conceived and executed attempt to entertain the viewing masses.

When I set out to analyse the fare that is being produced and aired in the name of entertainment, I had only a vague idea how insidious the design of this industry could be, how dangerous the kinds of notions that form the foundation of the scripts that are acted out, literally, by men and women who may just be doing what seems to be a 'job'.

Is it possible that the damage inherent in the roles and scenarios being played out escapes the entire production team? Can an actor actually take on a character without analysing the significance of the dialogue, the narrative, the denouement of the entire plot line? Apparently, all of this is possible. Apparently, there is no need to consider the implausibility of certain events or to reconsider the retrogressive nature of certain cultural notions that reinforce already existing values that are neither just nor desirable.

Let us begin with addressing the issue of sanity and its lack thereof. In the soaps viewed, more than just a few appear to base their 'drama' on the madness of the potential heroine: this can be an unwed young woman, a married young woman, a childless young woman, or a recently divorced young woman. The common factor shared by this rich variety of characters is that they are deeply, irretrievably unhappy and, not to overstate this, that they are young.

They are also usually fair complexioned, reasonably pleasant looking, with hair the colour of a Makrani sunset. They are usually totally powerless; they haven't got a college degree; they do not work; and they have no ambition to do anything other than get married, have children and attend to the whims and fancies of husbands, mothers-in-law and sundry neighbours who breeze in and out of bedrooms, lounges, kitchens and courtyards, with nothing to do other than enquire about the unwed daughter, the married one, the childless one and, of course, in conspiratorial whispers, the divorced one.

Now, the various reasons the aforementioned young women are rendered insane present themselves as follows: the unwed daughter has lost it since she has not received the right marriage proposal; the married one has stopped speaking since she has married the wrong man; the childless woman weeps endlessly, copious glycerine tears pour-



The very fact that these frail, jobless, sad yet meticulously made over characters display symptoms which are not very hard to distinguish from the daily pattern of their behaviour speaks volumes for the deviousness of the minds responsible for churning out script after vacuous script.

ing out of mascaraed eyes, endlessly berated for being barren; and the divorced woman stares at walls uselessly for she is just a used good, a burden on her parents and hard-working or, alternately, jobless brothers.

A divorced woman is a shunned woman so her madness does not really count. She must have been mad to start with and that could be the reason why she was not able to keep a marriage going, despite having married the wrong man, of course. No sympathy for such marital miscalculations! The strange behaviour of the unwed girl, the wrongly married girl and the childless girl with a womb as vacant as the look in her eyes, however, is something that needs redressal.

In families across the country, supposedly depicted in the plethora of soaps being broadcasted night and ceaseless day, young girls are seen sitting or lying down on beds, doing nothing, sitting on sofas with golden frames and lurid upholstery to make up for the rapid conversation and insipid histrionics, or they are opening gates for milkmen, vegetable vendors or total strangers who happen to form a link to the riveting happenings which shall unfold scene after painful scene.

Therefore, given that these young women have

absolutely nothing else to do other than lounge around like lizards sunbathing on a rock, it should certainly not come as a surprise when one of them stops talking or starts staring at unseen things on walls littered haphazardly with calendars several years too old, clocks whose hands do not move and pictures of cats and babies, and red roses growing in some distant garden (a metaphor for kittens and babies growing in a distant womb, clearly).

The very fact that these frail, jobless, sad yet meticulously made over characters display symptoms which are not very hard to distinguish from the daily pattern of their behaviour speaks volumes for the deviousness of the minds responsible for churning out script after vacuous script. Once the non-symptoms of supposed madness have been detected and acknowledged, usually through a protracted process of pointless and rhetorical question asking ('kya ho gaya hai bitya ko?'), the responsible adults in the young girl's family make a beeline for the mysterious yet familiar environs of dubious men who claim to have the solution up their sleeve, or in the pot, so to speak. Instead of consulting a doctor or even the local midwife (who has knowledge about 'wombs with no view' that would make the most competent obstetrician or gynaecologist blush with shame), the

local baba is sought out.

We step inside the baba's workplace for that is what it is, a fully equipped office of sorts, complete with dead goats' heads, severed hands of babies, bloodied chicken feathers, plastic skulls, a scatter of pins and needles, and lots and lots of green chillies and lemons, enough to make up a nice garnishing on a baara masaalay ki chaat. The place is ill-lit, except for a rush of HMI light filtering through a ventilator placed in a wall opposite the throne of the said pir baba.

Standing besides the pir baba is the Loyal Minion, the Assistant Director, Exorcism Branch of Retrogressive Ville, if you will. He is usually a slight man, not portly like his Master of Magical Ability. The assistant is poorly dressed, bereft of jewellery or any finery, and he squats or stands with gaze lowered, ready to strike if things get out of hand. And things do get out of hand as the satanic manifestation that has gotten a hold of the said sad-mad (young) woman reaches a fever pitch, with the pir baba shaking a lance or a jharroo at the said sad-mad woman, screaming horrific invective at the devil, urging the non-rent-paying shaitan to leave the body it has possessed or else there will be more shaking and shouting, and general pandemonium.

The script can veer into different directions at this point: an intervention takes place while the sad-mad maiden is being supposedly beaten to within an inch of her otherwise living-dead state. Sometimes it is a portly, stout, white-haired grandmother who finds her way through the labyrinth of narrow lanes and alleyways, not daunted by the creeping fog (smoke machines have a special place in the world of make-believe), determined to find the lost, sad-mad and soon-to-be-glad girl.

At other times it is a young man who steps in between the pir baba's jharroo and the supposedly possessed but nubile body of the sad-mad-and-not-yet-glad young woman.

Once the exorcism is over, the pir baba retires to his shady corner while the assistant director minion presses his master's legs or ushers out the grateful grandmother/young, unknown stranger man/the possessed woman and perhaps the rickshaw driver who appears out of the blue into said shady lane.

This then, is the method to the madness of the young-sad-mad-and-not-yet-glad woman. As the sun rises over the horizon the next day, we will know for sure that the coveted rishta has come, that the estranged husband has returned, that the longed-for child will blossom in the hitherto empty womb.

The views expressed are author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer

Dawn/Images

Iran Calls On Joe Biden To "Unconditionally" Lift US Sanctions



Agencies

TEHRAN: Iran on Friday called on the new US administration to "unconditionally" lift sanctions imposed by Donald Trump on the Islamic republic to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal, warning against any concessions.

Just two days after US President Joe Biden took office, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif published an op-ed in the US foreign policy magazine Foreign Affairs on Tehran's view towards saving the deal.

The agreement has been largely in tatters since former president Donald Trump withdrew from it unilaterally in 2018 and reimposed harsh sanctions as part of a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran.

Known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the deal was agreed between Iran, the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany.

It offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear ambitions and guarantees it would not seek an atomic bomb. Iran has maintained it has only pursued a civilian nuclear energy programme.

"The new administration in Washington has a fundamental choice to make," Zarif, who is considered one of the architects of the 2015 nuclear deal, wrote in the op-ed.

"It can embrace the failed policies of the Trump administra-

tion," or Biden "can choose a better path by ending Trump's failed policy of 'maximum pressure' and returning to the deal his predecessor abandoned," he added.

"But if Washington instead insists on extracting concessions, then this opportunity will be lost."

- 'Collective efforts' -
The sanctions targeted Iran's vital oil sales and international banking ties, plunging its economy into a deep recession.

Since 2019, Iran has suspended its compliance with most of the limits set by the deal in response to Washington's abandonment of sanctions relief and what Tehran deemed as Europe's inaction to provide it with the JCPOA's economic benefits.

The Iranian government has signalled a readiness to engage with Biden, who took office on January 20 and who has expressed willingness to return to diplomacy with Tehran.

Biden's pick for secretary of state, Anthony Blinken, said at a Senate confirmation hearing Tuesday that Trump's policies had made Iran "more dangerous".

Blinken confirmed Biden's desire for Washington to return to the nuclear agreement, but said that was conditional on Tehran's return to strict compliance with its commitments.

But Tehran has insisted that Washington must first lift all sanctions and return to its own JCPOA obligations.



Wuhan Returns To Normal As World Still Battling Pandemic

A year ago, a notice sent to smartphones in Wuhan at 2 a.m. announced the world's first coronavirus lockdown that would last 76 days.

Early Saturday morning, residents in the central Chinese city where the virus was first detected were jogging and practicing tai chi in a fog-shrouded park beside the mighty Yangtze River.

Life has largely returned to normal in the city of 11 million, even as the rest of the world grapples with the spread of the virus' more contagious variants.

Efforts to vaccinate people for COVID-19 have been frustrated by disarray and limited supplies in some places. The scourge has killed over 2 million people worldwide.

Traffic was light in Wuhan but there was no sign of the barriers that a year ago isolated neighborhoods, prevented movement around the city and confined people to their housing compounds and even apartments.

Wuhan accounted for the bulk of China's 4,635 deaths from COVID-19, a number that has largely stayed static for months. The city has been largely free of further outbreaks since the lockdown was lifted on April 8, but questions persist as to where the virus originated and whether Wuhan and Chinese authorities acted fast enough and with sufficient transpar-

ency to allow the world to prepare for a pandemic that has sickened more than 98 million. China on Saturday announced another 107 cases, bringing its total to 88,911. Of those, the northern province of Heilongjiang accounted for the largest number at 56.

Beijing and the eastern financial hub of Shanghai both reported three new cases amid mass testing and lockdowns of hospitals and housing units linked to recent outbreaks.

Authorities are wary of a new surge surrounding next month's Lunar New Year holiday and are telling people not to travel and to avoid gatherings as much as possible. Schools are being let out a week early and many have already shifted to online classes.

Mask wearing remains virtually universal indoors and on public transport. Mobile phone apps are used to trace people's movements and prove they are both virus-free and have not been to areas where suspected cases have been found.

Wuhan has been praised for its sacrifice in the service of the nation, turning it into a sort of Stalingrad in China's war against the virus, commemorated in books, documentaries, TV shows and florid panegyrics from officials including head of state and leader of the Communist Party Xi Jinping.

China has doggedly defended its actions in the early days of the outbreak, saying it helped buy time for the rest of the world while pushing fringe theories that the virus was brought to the city from outside China, possibly from a laboratory in the US.

After months of negotiations, China finally gave permission last week for the World Health Organization to send a team of international experts to begin investigating the virus' origins. They are currently undergoing two weeks of quarantine.

A panel of experts commissioned by the WHO criticized China and other countries this week for not moving to stem the initial outbreak earlier, prompting Beijing to concede it could have done better.

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong in southern China, thousands of residents were locked down Saturday in an unprecedented move to contain a worsening outbreak in the city.

Hong Kong has been grappling to contain a fresh wave of the coronavirus since November. Over 4,300 cases have been recorded in the last two months, making up nearly 40% of the city's total.

Authorities said in a statement that an area comprising 16 buildings in the working-class Yau Tsim Mong district will be locked down until all residents have been tested. **PTI**

Biden To Review Whether Rohingya Persecution Genocide



Agencies

The incoming Biden administration will launch an interagency review to determine whether Myanmar's persecution of its Rohingya minority can be called genocide.

President-elect Joe Biden's nominee to lead the State Department, Antony Blinken said Tuesday.

Antony Blinken made the statement during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and said that if confirmed, he would oversee the process, reports Anadolu Agency.

According to Amnesty International, more than 750,000 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, fled Myanmar and crossed into Bangladesh after Myanmar's military forces launched a crackdown on the minority Muslim community in August 2017.

Since August of that year, nearly 24,000 Rohingya Muslims have been killed by Myanmar's state forces, according to a report by the Ontario International Development Agency (OIDA).

Blinken's confirmation vote in the full Senate is expected as

soon as Wednesday, shortly after Biden is formally inaugurated.

In October last year, United States had sought an equal role from Myanmar's all neighbours with "broad and unified voice" so that Rohingyas can get the confidence back to return to their homeland without any fear of further deportation.

There have been cases against the country in the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

In November 2019, Gambia opened a case at the ICJ, against Myanmar for failing to prevent or punish genocide against Rohingya Muslims.

On November 14, 2019, the International Criminal Court opened an investigation for alleged crimes against humanity, such as deportation, acts of persecution and other inhumane acts, committed against Myanmar's Rohingya population on or after 1 June 2010.

In July 2020, Fortify Rights obtained two videos showing two Myanmar Army deserters—Private Myo Win Tun, 33, and Private Zaw Naing Tun, 30—confessing to mass killings of Rohingyas and other crimes and explaining the chain-of-command with regard to orders to "exterminate all" Rohingyas.

Biden Administration To Review US-Taliban Withdrawal Deal

Agencies

WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES: The Biden administration said Friday it will review a landmark US deal with the Taliban, focusing on whether the insurgent group has reduced attacks in Afghanistan, in keeping with its side of the agreement.

Washington struck a deal with the Taliban in Qatar last year, to begin withdrawing its troops in return for security guarantees from the militants and a commitment to kickstart peace talks with the Afghan government.

But violence across Afghanistan has surged despite the two sides engaging in those talks since September.

President Joe Biden's newly appointed national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, spoke with his Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib and "made clear the United States' intention to review" the deal, National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said.

Specifically, Washington wants to check that the Taliban is "living up to its commitments to cut ties with terrorist groups, to reduce violence in Afghanistan, and to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Afghan government and other stakeholders," her statement continued.

It added that Sullivan "understands that the US will support the



peace process with a robust and regional diplomatic effort, which will aim to help the two sides achieve a durable and just political settlement and permanent ceasefire."

Sullivan also discussed the United States' support for protecting recent progress made on women and minority groups' rights as part of the peace process.

The move was met with a sigh of relief from officials in Kabul after months of speculation over how the new administration would potentially recalibrate its Afghan policy.

Mohib, the Afghan national security advisor, tweeted that during the call the two sides "agreed to work toward a permanent ceasefire and a just and durable peace" in the country.

New UK Variant Of Coronavirus May Be More Deadly, Says Boris Johnson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Friday said early evidence suggests that the new variant of coronavirus that was detected in England towards the end of last year may be associated with a higher degree of mortality.

Based on preliminary data briefing by scientists at the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG), Johnson admitted that it would seem the new variant was deadlier but stressed that the two vaccines being administered in the UK -- Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca -- are effective against all variants.

In addition to spreading more quickly, it also now appears that there is some evidence that the new variant that was first identified in London and the south east [of England] may be associated with a higher degree of mortality. It is largely the impact of this new



variant that means the NHS [National Health Service] is under so much intense pressure, Johnson said in his address at a virtual briefing from 10 Downing Street in London.

All current evidence shows both vaccines remain effective against the old and new coronavirus variant, he said.

The new variant was first discovered in Kent, south-east England, and spread rapidly through London and then across other regions of the UK. It was already classified as a more

highly-transmissible variant but its risk level was so far not believed to be any greater than the original strain.

There is evidence that there is an increased risk for people who have the new variant, compared to the old variant," said Sir Patrick Vallance, the government's Chief Scientific Adviser who joined Johnson at the briefing.

He, however, stressed that the data is "uncertain", but suggests that for a man in his 60s, the risk of death with the new variant is 13 in 1,000 rather than the original 10 in 1,000, making it about 30 per cent more dangerous. But he pointed out that people who have received the vaccine appear to be immune to the new variant, and people who have previously been infected with the original variant appear to be immune to the new variant.

"So there's good news on the vaccine," said Vallance, stressing on the overall message of the importance of people strictly following the lockdown rules in place to keep the infections under control.

NEWS MAKERS

UK Imams Mobilize To Counter Covid-19 Vaccine Disinformation

Agencies

Imams across Britain are helping a drive to dispel coronavirus disinformation, using Jummah sermons and their influential standing within Muslim communities to argue that Covid-19 vaccines are safe.

Qari Asim, chairman of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (Minab) which is leading a campaign to reassure its faithful, is among those publicly advocating that the inoculations are compatible with Islamic practices.

"We are confident that the two vaccines that have been used in the UK, Oxford AstraZeneca and Pfizer, are permissible from an Islamic perspective," he told AFP.

"The hesitancy, the anxiety (and) concern are driven by misinformation, conspiracy theories, fake news and rumours."

Britain, the hardest-hit country in

Europe by the virus after registering nearly 95,000 deaths, is relying on its biggest-ever vaccination effort to end repeated cycles of lockdowns and restrictions.

However, a report from the scientific committee advising the government showed stronger mistrust of vaccines among ethnic minorities than the rest of the UK population.

It highlighted that 72% of Black survey respondents were unlikely or very unlikely to get the vaccine.

Among those from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds, the figure was 42%.

Imams are pushing back in particular at fears among Britain's estimated 2.8 million Muslims that the vaccines contain pork gelatin or alcohol, which are banned by Islam.

Asim said it was "legitimate" to question whether things were permissible under Islam but without paying attention to un-



founded claims.

Among the falsehoods spread about the vaccine are that it can modify DNA, make recipients sterile, or even involve inserting a microchip in the body.

Messages in Urdu

Misinformation around the coronavirus is all the more dangerous given several studies have shown that it can

impact minorities disproportionately.

"These are precisely the communities we should be trying to target," said Nighat Arif, a general practitioner based in Chesham, near London.

When she received her vaccination, she posted a video in Urdu on social media aimed at the language's speakers living in Britain.

"I'm hoping that because they see someone who looks like them, who is a practicing Muslim, wears a hijab, someone who is Asian who speaks their language, that's more relatable than something that's coming through from the government," she added.

Arif is still surprised by the refusal of certain patients to be inoculated, noting that they will often get vaccinated to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, or to visit Pakistan or India.

She blames conspiracy theories spread online, which contribute to the science behind the process "being lost."

J&K Sainik School Manasbal

(www.jksainikschool.in)

NOTIFICATION

Sub: Admission to class VI and IX Session (2021-22)

Online applications are invited from the eligible students of Kashmir Division & Ladakh UT (Boys only) for admission in class VI & IX session 2021-22 against available seats in the School. Application forms are available online on School website (www.jksainikschool.in). Student's fulfilling eligibility criteria can apply for the J&K Sainik School Entrance Examination admission test-2021(JKSSEE).

Eligibility to appear in JKSSSE-2021

Class	Date of Birth	Academic qualification.
VI	Between 02.07.2009 & 01.07.2011 (Both dates inclusive)	5 th pass from any Government Or private recognised School
IX	Between 02.07.2006 & 01.07.2008 (Both dates inclusive)	8 th pass from any Government or private recognised School

Important dates:

Online submission of forms & deposition of fee through Credit / Debit card / Net Banking. (Non-refundable)	From 25 th January, 2021 to 13 th February, 2021 (05:00 pm).
Tentative date of examination for Kashmir Division	04.04.2021 (Sunday)
Date of examination for Ladakh UT	To be notified separately

Candidates will have to submit the application form and fee of Rs 550/- (Rupees five hundred fifty only) online before the last date. Candidates are advised to read the prospectus carefully and go through the instructions regarding filling up of online application form available on School website. Candidates must ensure e-mail address and Mobile number provided in the online application form are their own or that of their parents, as all information / communication will be sent by School through e-mail on the given e-mail address or SMS on given Mobile number.

(Nazir Ahmad Dar)
Principal,
J&K Sainik School,
Manasbal.

Dated: 22.01.2021
JKSS/2272/Trgs

DIPK-NB-5263/20

NEWS

PIL in Delhi HC seeks direction to e-commerce websites to display product MRP, seller details

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: A PIL has been filed in the Delhi High Court seeking a direction to e-commerce websites to prominently display names of manufacturer, country of origin and MRP of products sold on their platforms.

The petition, which is likely to come up for hearing next week, claimed that the consumers are facing great difficulty due to such details not being mentioned on e-commerce platforms.

Petitioner Ajay Kumar Singh, a resident of Ghaziabad, said he regularly shops

products on e-commerce websites. Since the MRP of the product is not displayed the customers are forced to buy the product at a higher cost fixed by the manufacturers.

"Important rights of consumers are also being violated as they are not made aware of the seller at the time of purchase," the plea said.

The petition, filed through advocate Rajesh K Pandit, claimed that a large number of people are being affected due to such information not being provided by e-commerce websites.

It sought a direction to the Centre, Ministry of Consumer



from e-commerce websites. He said he has done due research and found that the requirements mandated under the Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020 and Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011, are not complied with.

"Economy of the entire nation would suffer in the event the e-commerce websites continue not to mention the MRP, seller details, manufacturing country/country of origin of

Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Fashnear Technologies Pvt Ltd, owner of e-commerce portal Meesho, to ensure that mandatory declarations of products offered for sale are displayed on websites and Legal Metrology Act, 2009 and Consumer Protection Act, 2019 complied with.

Besides, the petition has arrayed as parties Sociofy Enterprises Pvt Ltd and O (I) India Pvt Ltd, owners of e-commerce websites Glowroad and Shop101.

'Road Safety Awareness Training' for LL seekers begins at Kulgam

Observer News Service

KULGAM, JANUARY 23: In a bid to impart sense of road safety among commuters, drivers and riders in the district, MVD Kulgam in collaboration with District Information Centre, Kulgam on Saturday launched a new initiative 'Road Safety Awareness Training' as part of celebration of National Road Safety Month.

During this programme all Learner License (LL) and Driving License seekers will get refresher training from MVD officials.

The Safety instructors Mansoor Ahmad, Manzoor Ahmad and Suraj Kumar Pandita (Motor Vehicle Inspectors) took the LL applicants through a theory session on road rules, road signs and marking, riding gear and posture explanation and safe driving practices.

The applicants for a learning licence took training in

batches for the training class. On completion of the class, they were allowed to take the online LLR test in the computer lab.

Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Kulgam, Dr Mohammad Zubair Lattoo said that in Kashmir, awareness of correct and safe riding technique is a humongous challenge. So to aware the public about safer road techniques will change their attitude while on the roads.

He said the new road safety awareness training programme is unique as it merges education with enforcement and now, all new Learner License/Driving License seekers will get basic training on defensive driving, traffic rules, road signs and necessary safety measures to be a responsible road user. This will result in significant fall in road related accidents.

Petrol, Diesel Prices Touch All-Time Highs

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel prices in the country on Saturday touched new all-time highs after rates were increased for the fourth time this week. Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by 25 paise per litre each, according to a price notification from oil marketing companies.

This took the petrol price in Delhi to Rs 85.70 per litre and in Mumbai to Rs 92.28.

Diesel rate climbed to Rs 75.88 a litre in the national capital and to Rs 82.66 per litre in Mumbai, the price data showed.

This is the second consecutive day of rate increase and the fourth this week. In all prices have gone up by Re 1 per litre this week.

Fuel prices, which vary from state to state depending on local sales tax or VAT, are now at record highs in the country, prompting cries for a cut in excise duty to ease the burden on consumers.

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan earlier this week blamed Saudi oil output cut for the surge in oil prices but remained non-committal on tax cuts.

Top oil explorer Saudi Arabia has pledged additional



voluntary output cuts of 1 million barrels per day in February and March, which has led to price climbing to most since the pandemic broke out.

State-owned fuel retailers—Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL)—had on January 6 resumed daily price revision after nearly a month-long hiatus.

Since then, rates have gone up by Rs 1.99 a litre on petrol and Rs 2.01 in case of diesel.

This comes after international oil prices firmed up on hopes of demand returning

from the rollout of coronavirus vaccines in different countries, including India.

At that time the government had cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 1.50 per litre in a bid to ease inflationary pressure and boost consumer confidence.

Alongside, state-owned fuel retailers cut prices by another Re 1 a litre, which they recouped later.

This time, there are no indications of a duty cut so far.

Petrol and diesel prices are revised on a daily basis in line with benchmark international price and foreign exchange rates.

Vaccinate teachers, staff before reopening schools: DAK

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Saturday urged authorities in Jammu and Kashmir to vaccinate teachers and staff against Covid-19 before reopening schools.

"Vaccinating teachers and school staff is critical before getting students back in the classrooms," said DAK President and influenza expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

"We need to prioritize Covid-19 vaccination among teachers and staff to prevent disruption in learning," he said.

"Vaccine will protect them from the virus, allow them to teach in-person and ultimately keep schools open."

DAK President said we will be placing our teachers and school staff in grave danger if

we send them to teach in-person before being vaccinated.

"While children are less likely to get sick from Covid-19, they can spread the virus to teachers and staff at the school," he said.

"They can get infected at school and spread the virus to parents and grandparents at home who are more likely to develop severe disease."

Dr Nisar said schools are very dynamic places. This is not just about students coming and going, it is about students interacting with bus drivers, with other parents that come into school buildings to drop kids off. There is a lot of activity.

"Children tend not to follow social distancing and are not particular about personal hygiene," he said.

"The existing infrastructure

of most schools can be fertile grounds for virus transmission."

"We are reopening schools at a time when teachers would be spending most of time indoors with students with no ventilation and social distancing would not be achieved," said Dr Nisar.

"School reopening depends largely on the prevalence of Covid-19 in the local community."

While there's no standard metric for determining what rate of community spread is too high to have schools open, many epidemiologists say that when a particular area has more than 25 cases a day per 100,000, the area is considered in the red zone and should consider shelter-in-place advisories, which would include keeping schools closed," he said.

Mir Condemns JMC for Sunjwan Drive

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Apni Party Senior Vice President Ghulam Hassan Mir has condemned the way Jammu Municipal Corporation attempted to demolish structures in Sunjwan.

"It is a bizarre violation of the rights of the people who had constructed buildings much before JMC came into being. The officials did not follow rules," said Mir.

He demanded action against the officials responsible for creating chaos among the people without following the procedure. "Why don't these officials be punished for their unjustified acts?" said

Hassan Mir.

Mir further said that "The officials should face legal action under rules for harassing the common masses without any reason."

He questioned the selective approach of the JMC for creating fear psychosis among the people and apprehended that yesterday's situation which was created by the Corporation could have become a major law and order problem.

He warned against repeating such acts in future. "The officials who deliberately create law and order problems and promote mistrust among the communities should be booked under the law," he demanded.

Inclement Weather

Ramban Admin Asked to Make Arrangements for Stranded



Observer News Service

RAMBAN, JANUARY 23: District Administration, Ramban has put all the departments and executing agencies on high alert for immediate restoration of road connectivity and essential services amid the prevailing inclement weather conditions.

The District administration directed the SDMs and Tehsildars to make necessary arrangements for stranded passengers at RAHAT Centres as well as other designated shelter sheds in their respective jurisdictions.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioner, Mussarat ul Islam took a firsthand appraisal of road connectivity and other essential services and supplies status from the SDMs

of Banihal, Ramsoo and Gool, besides Tehsildars through virtual meetings.

The DC directed the officers to stay at their headquarters to deal with any emergency that may arise due to the rains and snowfall. He asked them to keep men and machinery on alert for meeting any eventuality.

He directed PWD, PMGSY, PDD, PHE, Health and Food Civil Supplies Departments to ensure availability of essential services as well as commodities especially in snow bound areas of the district.

Meanwhile, the DDC advised the people to avoid unnecessary travelling and start their journey on National Highway only after confirming the status of road from Traffic Police Control Room.

Dist. Administration establishes Emergency Control Room at Shopian

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 23: The District Administration Shopian has set up a round the clock Emergency Control Room at DC Office Shopian.

The Control Room has been established to facilitate the general public of Shopian in case of any emergency and to avoid any untoward incident due to another spell of Snowfall

in the hilly areas of the district.

Meanwhile, to avert any kind of emergency, availability of essential items and road connectivity, the general public of Shopian is advised to contact on following contact numbers viz.

01933-260044, 7006253282, 9018951846, 7006404127, 7006247870

Online orientation session on JEET scheme

JAMMU: Government Polytechnic College Jammu in association with ICT Academy, Chennai organized an online orientation session for students on Jammu & Kashmir Employability training (JEET) sponsored by AICTE.

The webinar was attended by the staff and a large number of students of various Polytechnics of J&K.

During the session, the

students get to know about various courses sponsored by the Government of India free of cost for Jammu Kashmir students such as cloud architecture & infrastructure services, cyber security infrastructure configuration, machine learning and artificial intelligence, data sciences and big data analysis, digital marketing, AutoCAD, business administration specialist, prod-

House catches fire in Boniyar

Baramulla: A residential house was gutted in a fire incident on Saturday morning in Boniyar in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Reports said that the fire broke out at around 10:00 am in Mir Mohalla locality of Pehlipora in Tehsil Boniyar.

They said that soon after the fire broke out people rushed to the spot and tried to douse the flames and the fire was brought under control.

NOTICE

My name was mentioned in metlife policy bearing no.00060978 as MOHAMMAD AYUB SHAH instead of SYED MOHAMMAD AYUB and need to rectify the same. If anyone is having any objection regarding the above may please contact Pnb Metlife India Insurance Company Ltd. Hadiqa Complex, Baghat, Barzulla, Srinagar within the period of seven days from published date.

Syed Mohammad Ayub
S/o: Syed Qamar Ud din
Cell: 9419022954

MJA

LOST OF RC

I have lost my RC Bearing Registration No. JK03D- 6931. Now applied for its duplicate if anybody has any objection in this regard may file at ARTO Anantnag within Seven (7) days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Name:- Shakeel Ahmad Ganie
S/O Mohd Maqboob Ganie
R/O Darigund Srigufwara Anantnag

MJA

Office Of The Custodian Evacuee Property Department Kashmir, Srinagar.

Dasti Quotations

Quotations affixed with revenue stamp worth Rs.5/- are hereby invited from Government approved/registered manufacturers/suppliers for providing and fixing of heavy duty carpet to the Samanbal Marriage Hall Kathidarwaza Srinagar and Sir Mohammad Iqbal Mini Convention Center Sanatnagar Srinagar as per quantity mentioned below.

- 100% Hand tufted pure wool Carpet 3000gm /Sqm = 2400 sfts.
- Wall to wall Acrylic carpet with felt backing = 5700 sfts.

The intending suppliers/ quotationers should submit their quotations duly written on their agency/company letterhead and must quote for all the items/services listed with reasonable rates which should be inclusive of all costs required to render the requisite services. The scope of work involves the removal of old carpets and laying of new carpets as per design and shade required in the establishments. The intending quotationers/suppliers must quote as per the below Book of Quantities (BOQ).

S.No	Description	Unit	Qty	Rate	Amount
	Removal of existing carpets and prepare floor/surface for fixing of new carpet.				
	Providing and fixing of 100% Hand tufted wool in 3000gm/Sqm carpet.				
	Providing and fixing of wall to wall Acrylic 1000gm with felt backing.				

The quotation accompanied with the samples of all required material and CDR worth Rs.50000/- (fifty thousand) pledged to Custodian Evacuee Property Kashmir should reach to the office of undersigned (Shaheed Gunj Srinagar) within 10 days after the publication of this notice. For further details feel free to contact 0194-2472839 during office hours.

Sd/-
Tariq Hussain Naik (KAS)
Custodian Evacuee Property
Kashmir Srinagar

DIPK-12078/20

No:-
Date:-

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

J&K SERVICES SELECTION BOARD

Hema Complex, Sector -3, Channi Himmat, Jammu

www.jkssb.nic.in

CORRIGENDUM

The J&K Services Selection Board has notified syllabi for various categories of posts advertised vide Advertisement Notification Nos 04, 05, 06 & 07 of 2020 vide Notice No. SSB/Secy/Sel/2021/498-501 dated: 19.01.2021. However, the syllabus of Sub-inspector (Sales Tax), Division cadre Kashmir, under Item No 123 has inadvertently been shown as Annexure "U".

It is clarified that the syllabus for the post of Sub-inspector (Sales Tax), UT Cadre/ Division cadre Kashmir/Division cadre Jammu, shall be same and as per Annexure "T" to the aforementioned Notice. Accordingly, all concerned are informed to take notice.

Controllor of Examinations,
J&K Services Selection Board
Jammu.

DIPK-11992/20
No.SSB/Secy/Sel/2020/502-05 Dated: 19.01.2021

India-England Tests In Chennai To Be Played Behind Closed Doors

Press Trust of India

CHENNAI: The first two Tests of the upcoming India-England series scheduled to be held at the M A Chidambaram Stadium will be played behind closed doors, a top official from the host association TNCA revealed. According to Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) secretary R S Ramasaamy, the two Tests would be played without spectators as per a BCCI directive, considering the prevailing COVID-19 situation.

will not be allowed for the two Test matches as a preventive measure in view of the virus situation," he told PTI.

Also, a circular dated January 20 has been sent out to TNCA members saying that the decision to play the matches behind closed doors was taken along with the BCCI.

"In view of the prevailing COVID pandemic, the BCCI has decided not to take any kind of risk with the safety of the players during the forthcoming India-England Test series," the circular read.

"As per the BCCI directive, the first two Test matches between February 5 and February 17 being held at M A

Chidambaram stadium will take place behind closed doors (No Spectators/Guests/Sub-Committee Members) as a preventive measure," it added.

The teams are expected to reach Chennai by January 27 and undergo testing before entering the bio-bubble.

It must be noted that the Indian government had recently announced that outdoor sporting events could be conducted with 50 per cent spectators after following the standard operating procedures.

The first Test is scheduled to start on February 5.



YES.. CROWD WILL NOT BE ALLOWED for the two Test matches as a preventive measure in view of the virus situation."

Rankireddy-Shetty Duo Crash Out Of Thailand Open After Defeat In Semis



Press Trust of India

BANGKOK: Tokyo Olympics medal contender Satwik Patil and Chirag Shetty's impressive run at the Toyota Thailand Open Super 1000 ended with a close semifinal defeat here on Saturday.

The world number 10 Indian pair, which won its maiden super 500 title in Thailand and entered the finals of French open super 750 event in 2019, lost 18-21 18-21 to world number nine Malaysian combination of Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in a 35-minute match.

The Indian pair had participated in Super 1000 events in 2018 and 2019 but this is the first time it entered the semifinals.

Satwik and Chirag couldn't bring their best to the fore as the Malaysian were more alert on court and also managed to diffuse any attack from the Indian pair to emerge victorious.

The Indian pair had a 4-2 lead early on but the Malaysians managed to claw back and eke out a slender 11-10 lead at the break. Satwik and Chirag stayed close till 15-16 when their rivals reeled off four points on the trot to eventually close out the opening game.

In the second game, the Indian duo was up 3-1 but again the Malaysians produced four straight points to move to 7-3. A precise serve and then their rivals finding the net helped Satwik and Chirag to narrow the gap before drawing parity at 8-8.

However, two smashes at the backcourt gave Aaron and Soh a three-point advantage at the interval. India couldn't breach the gap and with Chirag hitting long, the Malaysian grabbed six match points.

The Indian pair managed to save four match points before Chirag once again found the net as the Malaysians began celebrating.

SATWIK AND CHIRAG COULDN'T bring their best to the fore as the Malaysian were more alert on court and also managed to diffuse any attack from the Indian pair to emerge victorious.

Navdeep Saini Reveals Why He Bowled Again In Gabba Despite Suffering A Groin Injury

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: A groin strain prevented India pacer Navdeep Saini from giving his best in the Brisbane Test but fearing that he may not get such a big stage again, he remained at the beck and call of his captain and ended up bowling five overs despite injury.

The 28-year-old, who finally made his Test debut in the Australia series after years of wait, said he risked aggravating his injury by bowling in the second innings but given what was at stake, "it was a no-brainer".

"Ajinkya bhaiya asked me if I would be able to bowl with the injury. I just had to say yes," Saini, who was in the middle when Rishabh Pant hit the winning runs at the Gabba, told PTI.

Having taken four wickets in his debut game at Sydney, Saini suffered a groin strain in Australia's first Test after years of wait, said he risked aggravating his injury by bowling in the second innings but given what was at stake, "it was a no-brainer".

For someone who made a massive leap of playing Ranji Trophy for Delhi in 2013 straight from making a quick buck in tennis ball cricket across Haryana, Saini wondered about the timing of his injury as he had just realised his dream of playing Tests.

But the like of the rest of his teammates, he showed a steely resolve and carried on. "I was fine and suddenly I got injured. I was wondering 'why it is happening in such a crucial game and have got the opportunity to play after a long time'."

"I just wished if could keep going with that injury and support my team. I knew I might not get a stage like that again. Captain asked me if I could do it. I was in pain but said I would do with whatever I could."

"I am recovering now and should be fit soon," said the lanky fast bowler from Karnal who was fast-tracked into first-class cricket by former India opener Gautam Gambhir and



received his maiden Test call-up in back in 2018.

Saini, who has also played 10 T20 Internationals and seven ODIs, is not part of India's squad for the first two home Tests against England starting February 5 in Chennai.

Out of his four Test wickets, the first one was most special as he trapped another debutant, Will Pucovski, in front of the stumps with a full and fast incoming delivery.

"All wickets were special but yes you can't forget the first one. Because until that happens, you keep thinking about that first wicket."

With senior bowlers like Mohammad Shami and Umesh Yadav out of the series, the pressure to perform instantly had increased on the likes of Saini, who had not played Tests before but had a substantial experience of playing IPL and shorter formats for India.

Having not bowled with red-ball in Australia ever prior to the series, Saini said it was an enriching experience.

"It is easy to get excited in Australia with the bounce on offer. It is natural to think about bowling short balls then but Test cricket is not only about that, it is about patience and bowling in the same channel consistently."

"To be able to do well in Australia, you have to be mentally very strong, they don't give up till the every end.

The management was very supportive including the captain and Rohit bhaiya. They all told me to bowl the way I would bowl in Ranji Trophy," said Saini, who is back home after five long months in the world of bio-bubbles.

Mohammed Siraj, the find of Australia tour in coach Ravi Shastri's words, was seen counselling Saini consistently in the latter's maiden Test. It helped the Delhi pacer immensely as he and Siraj go back a long way.

"He is one of my best mates. We have played a lot together (for India A). We talk a lot about bowling. He was always there for me in the first game. Pace is important but he was telling me to also focus on line and length to be effective."

"Siraj is a very different bowler. He showed a lot of courage by staying back after his father's death. What he achieved was very crucial for the team and showed his character."

Talking about his extraordinary journey, Saini, son of a bus driver, said he never planned to be a professional cricketer, it was only fate at play.

"I played with tennis ball for the major part of my growing up years. It all started when I played Ranji trophy. That is when I felt I could play professionally. Before that I was just playing without an aim, I had no idea. It all happened step by step after I played for Delhi," added Saini.

Coach Pochettino Watches From Stands As PSG Rout Montpellier 4-0



Agencies

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain coach Mauricio Pochettino made a surprising return to watch Kylian Mbappe snap a four-game scoreless run with two goals as the league leaders crushed 10-man Montpellier 4-0.

PSG moved three points clear of second-place Lille, which can move level on points by winning at fifth-place Rennes on Sunday but has a vastly inferior goal difference.

In an unexpected sight at Parc des Princes stadium, Pochettino returned to coach PSG just one week after testing positive for the coronavirus.

"I feel better," Pochettino told broadcaster Telefoot before kick-off. "I'm allowed to be here tonight as long as I keep my distance."

Forwards Neymar and Mauro Icardi also netted for defending champions PSG.

The game became one-sided after Montpellier goalkeeper Jonas Omlin was sent off in the 19th minute for clattering into Mbappe just outside the penalty area. Omlin was replaced by Dimitry Bertaud.

Mbappe put PSG ahead in the 34th when he collected a pass from Angel Di Maria and lifted the ball over Bertaud. But the goal came with Montpellier midfielder Florent Mollet out of action after limping off with an ankle injury.

A flurry of action saw Mbappe set up Neymar in the 59th, before Icardi turned in right back Alessandro Florenzi's cross one minute later. Icardi then unselfishly set up Mbappe for an easy goal in the 62nd.

Mbappe's brace took him to the top of the scoring charts with 14, two more than Reims striker Boulaye Dia.

Pochettino had been expected to be replaced by assistant coach Jesus Perez, who stood in for him in last Saturday's away win at Angers.

Unlike in previous PSG matches, however, Pochettino wore a face mask throughout.

In Saturday's games, fourth-place Monaco will look to make it six games unbeaten when it hosts sixth-place Marseille.

Imposing Poland striker Arkadiusz Milik could make his Marseille debut after joining on loan from Italian club Napoli.

Wolves' Narrow Win Over 6th-Tier Chorley Proves FA Cup Character

Agencies

CHORLEY: Separated from Chorley by 109 places in the English football pyramid, Wolverhampton FC managed a single goal in its 1-0 win.

The Premier League millionaires also only managed a single shot on goal against the part-timers from the sixth tier.

Vitinha's 35-yard, swerving strike in the 12th-minute moved Nuno Espirito Santo's side into the round of 16 in the FA Cup on Friday night.

Contrast that with the attacking threat from the minnows. Incredibly, John Ruddy from Wolves was the busier of the two goalkeepers facing five shots on target, including tipping over a header from Andy Halls, who is a personal trainer in his day job.

No wonder manager Jamie Vermiglio wasn't just savouring his chance to take on a Premier League side. A primary school headmaster in his day job, Vermiglio felt far from outclassed by his Wolves counterpart.

"I thought were were fantastic I feel really proud, of course I do," Vermiglio said. "But I feel disappointed as well and I never thought I would come off the field feeling the way I feel."

"It's a strange emotion

because I feel we have just taken a Premier League team all the way. We were in a game right until the last minute."

"Credit to Chorley," Nuno said. "They are in the lower divisions but they were organized and had a good striker that fights and was strong in the duels and created problems."

"I felt the scenario was created for a surprise to happen. We spoke about that but the boys were professional and achieved what we wanted. I have been on the other side and played in the lower divisions against big teams, so I know what it meant for Chorley."

This was not a significantly weakened Wolves side, with the starting lineup featuring Fabio Silva the team's 40 million euro record-signing.

"I thought we were the better team in the second half," Chorley forward Connor Hall said.

"We had them on the ropes for 10-15 minutes so we can be proud of ourselves. They showed us respect bringing a strong side and we didn't do ourselves any harm. It is mad. In a couple of days time we will look back with pride."

Being live on television across Britain and around the world could certainly help some of the players.

Mumbai City FC Beat East Bengal 1-0 To Extend 5-Point Lead At Top

Press Trust of India

GOA: Mumbai City FC downed SC East Bengal by a solitary goal to consolidate their position atop the standings with a five point-lead in the Indian Super League 2020-21 match in Vasco on Friday.

The Kolkata giants displayed a fine passing game, played with intent but a momentary lapse in defence in the 27th minute cost them three points at the Tilak Maidan Stadium.

A horror of defence from the Red and Gold saw Mourtada Fall give the lead from a Cy Goddard corner.

The Senegalese centre back was left unmarked inside the box as he utilised Hugo

Boumous's cross to perfection with his soaring header to give Mumbai the all-important goal.

The win opened up a five-point lead over ATK Mohun Bagan atop the 11-team standings as it also ended a seven-match unbeaten streak of SC East Bengal who slumped to 10th place with 12 points from 13 matches.

For Mumbai, they stretched their unbeaten run to 11 matches as they now have 29 points from 12 matches.

The Robbie Fowler-coached side put up a better display in the second half and ended up having a 60 per cent share of possession and a better passing accuracy but they were simply unable to find that cutting edge to convert their share of chances.

Nigerian Bright Enobakhare's deft touch in the 74th minute set up Anthony Pilkington inside the box but the Irishman's shot was wayward and sailed over the crossbar.

In the 79th minute, Narayan Das's powerful shot from the left flank had dropped straight on the roof of the net.

In the 87th minute, Harmanpreet Singh also wasted an opportunity as he failed to keep his header on target after Aaron Holloway curled in a brilliant cross.

"Obviously we had a sloppy first-half. We were solid in the second-half but could not take our chances. We probably should have won the game otherwise. We are very disappointed," Pilkington said.



Bright Enobakhare of SC East Bengal and Hugo Boumous of Mumbai City FC vie for the ball during their ISL 2020-21 match at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, Goa | PTI