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P3 NEWS

## ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY HOLDS 1ST CONVOCATION

7000 meritorious students, including 163 Gold medalists were awarded degrees as the Islamic University of Science and Technology held its 1st convocation on Monday....

P7 THINK

## NEWS SCOOP FROM SOCIAL MEDIA?

Digital platforms like Facebook and Google give us easy access to media and information. But our collective dependence on these tech giants could in the long run reduce the quality of journalism, making...



P11 SPORTS

## RISING ABOVE MARKS, THIS KASHMIRI ROLLER-SKATER IS CREATING HIS OWN MILESTONES

On a cold February day, a boy in the Parimpora locality of Srinagar is shining his boots for a life-changing...



## Widom Quote!

We meet no ordinary people in our lives  
— C.S. Lewis

## NEWS DIGEST

### SSB Man Attempts 'Suicide'

SRINAGAR: A Sashastha Seema Bal (SSB) personal on Monday allegedly tried to commit suicide by shooting himself with his service rifle in Bemina area of this capital city. Gagan Jha, posted at the State Motor Garage in Bemina area, shot himself with his service rifle early Monday morning, officials said. Jha, was found in a pool of blood by his colleagues who heard the gunshot and rushed to the spot. [More On P10](#)

### Tourist Dies Of Heart Attack

SRINAGAR: A tourist from Madhya Pradesh state died after suffering a massive heart attack in Srinagar on Monday. Pankaj Gupta, a resident of Madhya Pradesh was found lying unconscious at Hotel Ilni Gani in Munawarabad locality of Srinagar on Monday morning, reported news agency KNO. The tourist, the report said, was rushed to Khyber Hospital for treatment, where he died due to a massive heart attack. [More On P10](#)

### Militant Associate Held In Tral: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested a militant associate in Tral area of south Kashmir's Awantipora. Muzamil Qadir Bhat was arrested along with incriminating material of the Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit by a joint team of police, army and CRPF 180 Battalion during a search operation in village Larow Jagir of Tral, a police spokesperson said Monday. He said that [More On P10](#)

### Pandey Takes Charge As Director Info

JAMMU: Two days after the government reshuffled administration replacing several officers, Rahul Pandey on Monday assumed the charge of Director, Information & Public Relations here today. Immediately after assuming the charge, he convened a meeting of officers in which he highlighted the need for further strengthening the activities and core competence of the Department, an official spokesperson said. [More On P10](#)

### Timber 'Smuggler' Slapped With PSA

SRINAGAR: An alleged habitual timber smuggler has been detained under stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) in north-Kashmir's Kupwara district. Aijaz Ahmad Khan of Hailhama, Gultipora was booked under the PSA on the directions issued by the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara on February 25, officials said. Khan, who officials said is a habitual timber smuggler, has four FIRs besides nine different Forest [More On P10](#)



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

# Kashmir Schools Reopen After 1 Year

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Thousands of students returned to classrooms on Monday as schools in Kashmir reopened for

classes 9 to 12 after re-maintaining closed for almost a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The students attended school for the first time since

March 9 last year. Over 60 per cent attendance was recorded in most government schools but the exact figures would be known after all the records have [More On P10](#)

## Class XII Results To Take 5 More Days: BOSE

Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education on Monday said that the results of 12th annual examination will take "at least five days," setting to rest rumours in this regard on social media platforms. 73569 students including 58514 from Valley and 15055 from winter zones of Jammu had registered for class 12th exams this year. "The results will take at least five days," Chairperson JKBOSE Veena Pandita said. She advised the parents and students not to believe in rumours and fake news [More On P10](#)

## Gulmarg Shivers At Minus 6.2 Degree Celsius

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The minimum temperature dropped to minus 6.2 degree Celsius in Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir, even as the mercury increased in most parts of the valley, weatherman said on Monday.

A meteorological department official said that Gulmarg, the venue for the ongoing second Khelo India Winter Games,

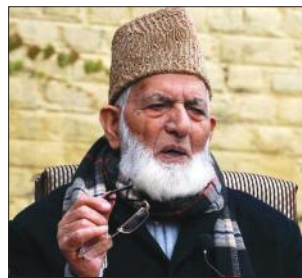
registered a drop of two notches from previous night and the minimum temperature was almost minus 0.4 degree Celsius below the normal for this time of the year.

Srinagar recorded a low of 1.4 degree Celsius against 2.1 degree Celsius on the previous night. The temperature was minus 0.1 degree Celsius below the normal for this time of the year in this summer capital, the official said. Qazigund recorded a low [More On P10](#)

## Geelani Invites Pak Snub For Questioning Truce

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Hours after senior separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani hit out at Pakistan for its contradiction between the stated policy and action over Kashmir issue following the ceasefire announcement, the Pakistan's Special Committee of the Parliament slammed the former Hurriyat Conference (G) chairman saying that anyone dubbing truce pact as a "sell-out would only serve the



cause of Hindutva regime"

The statement by Pak committee led by Shehriyar Afridi came barely hours after Geelani

through his special representative Saiyyed Abdullah Gilani released a hard hitting letter questioning Pakistan for carrying out back channel talks with India despite assurances that no engagement will be held with India until August 5 move is rolled back.

"No one can ever betray Kashmir cause. The ceasefire agreement is a bid to help save Kashmiris living on both sides of the LoC. Anyone dubbing it a sellout would [More On P10](#)

## J&K Reports 63 Corona Cases, 1 Death

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: An elderly woman died of coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday while 63 fresh cases of infection were detected across the Union Territory in the last 24 hours.

An 80-year-old woman from Kokernag Anantnag succumbed to coronavirus infection on Monday, officials said.

The Union Territory, they said, also reported 63 new cases of Covid-19, [More On P10](#)

## NIA Arrests Four In Narco-Militancy Case

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The NIA on Monday arrested four 'drug traffickers' in Kashmir for their alleged involvement in smuggling heroin in huge quantities from Pakistan and supplying it in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country, an official said.

Altaf Ahmed Shah of Ganderbal, Showkat Ahmad

Parray of Bandipora, Mudasar Ahmad Dar of Shopian and Amin Allaie of Anantnag have been arrested from Srinagar, he said. They have been arrested in connection with the case pertaining to the seizure of 21 kg heroin and Rs 1,35,89,850 cash from the members of a drug syndicate operating in Jammu and Kashmir. [More On P10](#)



## Govt To Revive State Consumer Commission

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The administration of Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory has initiated the process for revival of the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, which was abolished days before the reorganization of erstwhile state of J&K into two Union Territories.

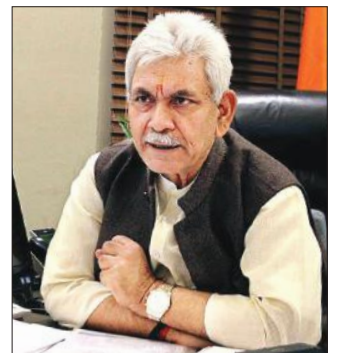
To begin with, the government has set the ball rolling

for appointment of the body's President and four members.

According to the official documents, the department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs has invited applications from suitable and interested candidates for appointment to the President and members of the Commission.

According to the department of FCS& CA, the applicant applying for [More On P10](#)

## Metro Rail In Srinagar City Soon: LG



Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government said on Monday that Metro rail service will soon come to Srinagar as the Union Territory administration has already sanctioned the proposal and sent the same for approval to the central government.

Speaking on the sidelines of an official function here on Monday, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said that twin smart cities including Jammu and Srinagar will see many projects including car parking and others.

He added that work on car parking and beautification of the smart cities are going on, adding that places [More On P10](#)

## KASHMIR In Capital: Carpet Chronicle Of 'Russian King'

Romaan Arora

Umer Hameed came to Delhi as a fledgling and fresh-faced merchant in 1993, when his hometown was caught in a searing strife. He had arrived to secure his late father's legendary legacy in Delhi.

Almost three decades later, and at the age of 52, the Lalbazar man has not only secured his father's legacy, but also rose to become a carpet czar in the capital.

"By 1989, as the situation turned explosive back home, my father became anxious about me and our family business," said Umar while recollecting an era when aged fathers in Kashmir had started shouldering their young sons' dead bodies.

"Being the lone son, I was supposed to address my father's growing concerns

about me and our nosedived business."

But it wasn't a walkover for him. Kashmir was changing, so was the idea of normalcy when the young and restless started campaigning for the armed resolution. Social hangouts and public places soon came under a lock and key. Migrations and massacres only escalated the crisis. The surplus sorties flown on a war-footing and reinforcement in every nook and cranny of the valley rang war alarms. And in an ensured militant-military combat, big businesses became shut shops.

But before the situation turned tense in Kashmir, Umer's date of destiny had come in that momentous year—1989—of the massive upheaval itself. Then appearing in his MBBS entrance exam, he came out dejected.

"The moment I saw everyone cheating inside the examination hall, I tore my

question paper and made my decision to move out," he recalled.

Such curt decisions based on merit would later give him an edge over his contemporaries and competitors in the capital.

"Being ethical and upright was my father's way of doing things," he said. "And as his heir-apparent, I had to demonstrate his DNA in my demeanour."

His father, who had already worked with East India Carpet Company, had attached a great value to his name because of his enterprising and welfare work in Kashmir.

"Even today, whenever I visit the valley, carpet weavers and sellers often tell me: 'While the floor is ours, the roof over it is all because of your father!' The great man touched many lives during his lifetime with his principled professional conduct."

Umer's father worked for around 50

years and played a crucial role in establishing the carpet industry in Kashmir.

"Even CIE [Cottage Industries Exposition, one of the biggest Kashmiri Carpet brands] used to consult my late father regularly for his expert take and trade tips," the son said.

But unlike his father, the journey to Everest wasn't a fairy-tale for Umer.

The rug stalwart started his business initially from a rented apartment in Jungpura, before moving to Lajpat Nagar, the place where he now sits comfortably.

"It was harsh winters back then. I came here by road and started selling carpets from my rented [More On P10](#)









(Kashmir Observer, 02 March, 2001)



## Khashoggi Fiancee Says Saudi Crown Prince Should Be Punished

Press Trust of India

**RIYADH:** The fiancée of slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi is calling for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to be punished after a US intelligence report found that the kingdom's de facto ruler played a role in the murder of the journalist in 2018.

Khashoggi, a columnist for the Washington Post newspaper who was critical of Saudi policies under bin Salman, was killed and dismembered by a hit squad in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

"It is essential that the crown prince... should be punished without delay," Hatice Cengiz said on Twitter.

"If the crown prince is not punished, it will forever signal that the main culprit can get away with murder which will endanger us all and be a stain on our humanity."

The US intelligence report on Friday found that the prince, popularly known as MBS, had approved the operation that led to the killing of Khashoggi. Former US President Donald Trump's administration had held back the long-awaited report.

The report also cited MBS's "support for violent measures to silence dissidents abroad, including Khashoggi" among the factors the assessment was based on.

"Since 2017, the Crown Prince has had absolute control of the Kingdom's security and intelligence organizations, making it highly unlikely that Saudi officials would have carried out an operation of this nature without the Crown Prince's authorization," the report said.

The four-page report names 21 individuals who participated in or were otherwise complicit in Khashoggi's murder.

Washington has imposed sanctions on some of those involved, but not Prince Mohammed himself.

The Saudi government, which has denied any involvement by

the crown prince, rejected the report's findings.

US President Joe Biden's administration on Friday imposed a visa ban on some Saudi officials believed to be involved in Khashoggi's killing and placed sanctions on others that would freeze their US assets and generally bar Americans from dealing with them.

Asked about criticism of Washington for not sanctioning MBS directly, Biden said an announcement would be made on Monday but did not provide details, while a White House official suggested no new steps were expected.

Last month, the US ended its support to Saudi's devastating war in Yemen as part of new Biden administration's efforts to hold Saudi Arabia accountable for its human rights violations.

In his first call since becoming president, Biden spoke to Saudi King Salman last week during which he "affirmed the importance the United States places on universal human rights and the rule of law".

"Starting with the Biden administration, it is vital for all world leaders to ask themselves if they are prepared to shake hands with a person whose culpability as a murderer has been proven," said Cengiz, who has been campaigning to get justice for her slain fiancé.

The Saudi government, which initially said it had no information on Khashoggi, later accepted responsibility for the killing but said it was a rogue operation that did not involve the prince.

Cengiz said that "following this report, there is no longer any political legitimacy for the crown prince".

"The truth – that was already known – has been revealed one more time, and it is now confirmed."

But she said the US report did not go far enough.

"Yet this is not enough," she warned, "since the truth can only be meaningful when it serves justice being achieved."

## Not A Good Idea: Experts Concerned About Pope Trip To Iraq

Agenceis

**VATICAN CITY:** Infectious disease experts are expressing concern about Pope Francis' upcoming trip to Iraq, given a sharp rise in coronavirus infections there, a fragile health care system and the unavoidable likelihood that Iraqis will crowd to see him.

No one wants to tell Francis to call it off, and the Iraqi government has every interest in showing off its relative stability by welcoming the first pope to the birthplace of Abraham. The March 5-8 trip will provide a sorely-needed spiritual boost to Iraq's beleaguered Christians while furthering the Vatican's bridge-building efforts with the Muslim world.

But from a purely epidemiological standpoint, as well as the public health message it sends, a papal trip to Iraq amid a global pandemic is not advisable, health experts say.

They note that wars, economic crises and an exodus of Iraqi professionals have devastated the country's hospital system, while studies show most of Iraq's new COVID-19 infections are the highly-contagious

variant first identified in Britain.

"I just don't think it's a good idea," said Dr. Navid Madani, virologist and founding director of the Center for Science Health Education in the Middle East and North Africa at Harvard Medical School's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The Iranian-born Madani co-authored an article in The Lancet last year on the region's uneven response to COVID-19, noting that Iraq, Syria and Yemen were poorly placed to cope given they are still struggling with extremist insurgencies and have 40 million people who need humanitarian aid.

In a telephone interview, Madani said Middle Easterners are known for their hospitality, and cautioned that the enthusiasm among Iraqis of welcoming a peace-maker like Francis to a neglected, war-torn part of the world might lead to inadvertent violations of virus control measures.

"This could potentially lead to unsafe or superspreading risks," she said.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, an infectious disease control expert at the University of Exeter College of Medicine, concurred.

## Amid Border Standoff, Chinese Hackers Targeted India's Power: US Firm Report

Press Trust of India

**WASHINGTON:** Amidst the tense border tension between India and China, a Chinese government-linked group of hackers targeted India's critical power grid system through malware, a US company has said in its latest study, raising suspicion whether last year's massive power outage in Mumbai as a result of the online intrusion.

Recorded Future, a Massachusetts-based company that studies the use of the internet by state actors, in its recent report details the campaign conducted by a China-linked threat activity group RedEcho targeting the Indian power sector.

The activity was identified through a combination of large-scale automated network traffic analytics and expert analysis.

Data sources include the Recorded Future Platform, Security-Trails, Spur, Farsight and common open-source tools and techniques, the report said.

On October 12, a grid failure in Mumbai resulted in massive power outages, stopping trains on tracks, hampering those working from home amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and hitting the stuttering economic activity hard.

It took two hours for the power supply to resume for essential services, prompting Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to order an enquiry into the incident.

In its report, Recorded Future notified the appropriate Indian government departments prior to publication of the suspected intrusions to support incident response and remediation investigations within the impacted organisations.

There was no immediate response from the Indian government on the study by the US company.

Since early 2020, Recorded Future's Insikt Group observed a large increase in suspected targeted intrusion activity against Indian organisations from the Chinese state-sponsored group.

The New York Times, in a report, said that the discovery raises the question about whether the Mumbai outage was meant as a message from Beijing about what might happen if India pushed its border claims too vigorously.

In response to the allegation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Monday re-



jected the criticism about China's involvement in the hacking of India's power grid, saying it is "irresponsible and ill-intentioned" to make allegations without proof.

"China is a staunch upholder of cybersecurity. We firmly oppose and fight any kind of cyber-attacks," he said, replying to a question on the report of the cyber-attack on the Indian power grid.

"It is hard to track the origin of the cyber-attacks. You cannot make wanton guesses or smear a specific country without any proof. This is irresponsible and ill-intentioned. China firmly opposes such behaviour," he said in Beijing.

According to the Recorded Future report, from mid-2020 onwards, Recorded Future's midpoint collection revealed a steep rise in the use of infrastructure tracked as AXIOMATICSASYMPTOTE, which encompasses ShadowPad command and control (C2) servers, to target a large swathe of India's power sector.

Ten distinct Indian power sector organisations, including four of the five Regional Load Despatch Centres responsible for operation of the power grid through balancing electricity supply and demand, have been identified as targets in a concerted campaign against India's critical infrastructure.

Other targets identified included two Indian seaports, it said, adding the targeting of Indian critical infrastructure offers limited economic espionage opportunities.

However, we assess they pose significant concerns over potential pre-positioning of network access to support Chinese strategic objectives.

"Pre-positioning on energy assets may support several potential outcomes, including geostrategic signalling during heightened bilateral tensions, supporting influence operations, or as a precursor to kinetic escalation," it said.

RedEcho has strong infrastruc-

ture and victimology overlaps with Chinese groups APT41/Barium and Tonto Team, while ShadowPad is used by at least five distinct Chinese groups, it said.

"The high concentration of IPs resolving to Indian critical infrastructure entities communicating over several months with a distinct subset of AXIOMATICSASYMPTOTE servers used by RedEcho indicate a targeted campaign, with little evidence of wider targeting in Recorded Future's network telemetry," it said.

Recorded Future said in the lead-up to the May 2020 border skirmishes, it observed a noticeable increase in the provisioning of PlugX malware C2 infrastructure, much of which was subsequently used in intrusion activity targeting Indian organisations.

"The PlugX activity included the targeting of multiple Indian government, public sector and defence organisations from at least May 2020," it said.

While not unique to Chinese cyber espionage activity, PlugX has been heavily used by China-nexus groups for many years.

"Throughout the remainder of 2020, we identified a heavy focus on the targeting of Indian government and private sector organisations by multiple Chinese state-sponsored threat activity groups," it said.

Recorder Future alleged that it also observed the suspected Indian state-sponsored group Sidewinder target Chinese military and government entities in 2020, in activity overlapping with recent Trend Micro research.

The Massachusetts-based company's report came as the armies of the two countries began disengagement of troops locked in over eight-month-long standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Both countries reached a mutual agreement last month for the disengagement of troops from the most contentious area of North and South banks of the Pangong Lake.

## US Still Open To Nuclear Talks After Iran's Rejection: Biden Administration

Press Trust of India

**Washington:** The Biden administration said Sunday it remains open to talks with Iran over the 2015 nuclear deal despite Tehran's rejection of an EU invitation to join a meeting with the US and the other original participants in the agreement.

A senior administration official said the US was "disappointed" in the rejection but was flexible as to the timing and format of the talks and saw Iran's decision to snub the European invitation as part of the diplomatic process. The official said the US would be consulting with the other participants – Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the European Union – on the way forward.

The official was not authorised to discuss the matter by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Earlier Sunday, Iran turned down the offer for talks saying the "time isn't ripe" for the meeting, at which the US would have participated as an observer. Iran had been insisting that the US lift or ease sanctions imposed on it by the Trump administration under its "maximum pressure campaign" before sitting down with the United States.

President Joe Biden has repeatedly said that the US would return to the deal that his predecessor, Donald Trump, withdrew from in 2018 only after Iran restores its full compliance with the accord.

"Considering US/E3 positions & actions, time isn't ripe for the proposed informal meeting," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Twitter. He referred to the so-called E3, which comprises Britain, France and Germany.

"Remember: Trump failed to meet because of his ill-advised Max Failure," he said. "With sanctions in place, same still applies. Censuring is NOT diplomacy. It doesn't work with Iran." The Biden administration announced earlier this month that it would accept an EU invitation to participate in a meeting of deal participants and at the same time rescinded a Trump determination from the UN Security Council that Iran was in significant breach of the agreement that all UN sanctions had been restored.

The UN move had little practical effect as nearly all members of the world body had rejected Trump's determination because the US was no longer a participant in the nuclear deal.

Biden administration officials said the withdrawal of the determination was intended to show goodwill toward its partners and at the same time had eased severe restrictions on the movement of Iranian diplomats posted to the UN.

Separately on Sunday, the State Department condemned a weekend attack by Iran-backed Yemeni rebels



on Saudi Arabia, saying it damaged prospects for peace. Along with the overtures to Iran on the nuclear front, the Biden administration also reversed several late Trump administration moves against Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken rescinded his predecessor's designation that the Houthi rebels were a "foreign terrorist organisation," a move that the UN and relief groups had said would make the already disastrous humanitarian situation in Yemen even worse. In addition, the Biden administration decided to halt all offensive assistance to Saudi Arabia for its military campaign against the Houthis in Yemen.

The Houthis, however, have stepped up their operations in the country, pressing ahead with an offensive in Marib province and launching attacks on Saudi Arabia.

On Saturday, Saudi authorities said they had intercepted a missile attack over their capital and reported that bomb-laden drones had targeted a southern province, the latest in a series of airborne assaults they have blamed on the Houthis.

State Department spokesman Ned Price on Sunday said the US "strongly condemns the Houthis' attacks on population centers in Saudi Arabia." He said they "threaten not only innocent civilians but also prospects for peace and stability in Yemen" and called on the Houthis "to end these egregious attacks."

"The United States remains committed to its longstanding partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to helping Saudi Arabia defend its territory as it faces attacks from Iranian-aligned groups," Price said.

On Friday, the Biden administration further strained ties with the Saudis when it published a declassified intelligence report finding that Saudi Arabia's crown prince had ordered an operation to capture or kill Jamal Khashoggi, a Washington Post journalist and US resident who was brutally slain at the Saudi consulate in Turkey. Saudi Arabia has forcefully rejected the report's conclusions. – AP

## US Children Could Receive Covid Vaccine By Year-End: Top Expert

Press Trust of India

**WASHINGTON:** The United States could start vaccinating older children against Covid-19 by the fall and younger ones by year-end or early 2022, the White House's top pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci said Sunday.

The mass vaccination of school-age children will allow millions of children to return sooner to in-person learning and ease the burden on millions of parents now caring for their offspring at home.

School reopenings, an intensely debated matter, have varied sharply across the country, with some private and religious schools opening before public schools and teachers in some areas protesting any early return.

But the decision Saturday by the US Food and Drug Administration to grant emergency use authorization to a new single-dose vaccine from Johnson & Johnson has boosted the prospects for earlier reopenings.

"We now have three really efficacious vaccines," Fauci said on ABC's "This Week."

For now, none of the three authorized vaccines in the US (also including Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna) has been cleared for children under 16, but trials on children are under way.

Children in high school -- roughly ages 14-18 in the United States -- should be able to get the vaccine "sometime this fall," Fauci told NBC's "Meet the Press."

"I'm not sure it'll exactly be on the first day that school opens, but pretty close to that," he added.

Data are still being compiled on the vaccines' safety and ef-

ficacy for children in elementary or middle school -- usually aged between five and 13 years old in the United States -- so "realistically" they may not be able to receive the vaccine until late 2021 or early 2022, Fauci said.

Speaking Sunday evening at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando, Florida, former president Donald Trump urged the new administration to reopen schools.

"On behalf of the moms, dads and children of America, I call on Joe Biden to get the schools open and get them open now," said Trump.

Although the federal government issues guidelines on public health, it largely up to locally elected school boards when to reopen classrooms, not the president.

Children and adolescents are less commonly infected with the virus than adults, and in-person learning in schools has not been associated with substantial community transmission.

With Covid-19 still ravaging the US, the worst-hit country in the world, roughly half of students are currently attending school in person, the New York Times reported recently.

Earlier this month the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new guidelines urging schools to reopen safely and as soon as possible.

The strategy emphasizes universal masking, hand-washing and disinfection, as well as contact tracing.

The CDC recommends vaccination for teachers and staff as soon as supply is available, and calls for different approaches depending on the level of community transmission in a given area.

### NEWS MAKERS

## UK Hunts Nationwide For Missing Person With Brazil Covid-19 Strain

Agenceis

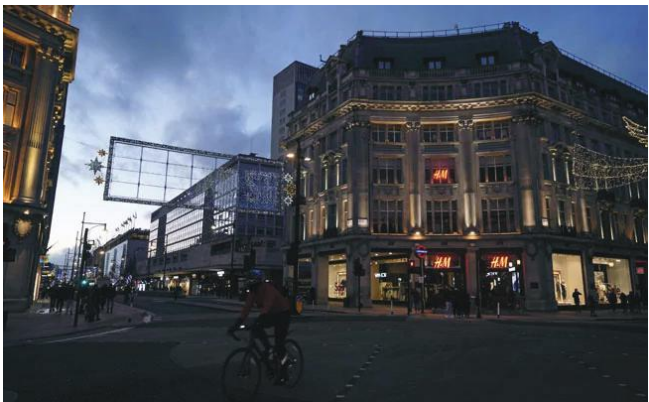
**LONDON:** Britain on Monday appealed for a person infected with a powerful Covid-19 strain from Brazil to come forward as experts fretted about its impact on new vaccines.

The public appeal came a week before England is due to start unwinding its third Covid lockdown, with progress hinging on the vaccines' ability to curtail the pandemic.

The variant that emerged in Manaus, northern Brazil, has been detected in six people in the UK, one of whom cannot be located after they failed to fill in their contact details on a form after taking their coronavirus test.

"We are working with several data points to try and locate them, not least, of course, to try and highlight anyone who has had a test on (February) 12 to come forward if they haven't had a result," vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi told BBC television.

He said community-wide "surge testing" was starting in South Gloucestershire, western England, after two of the Manaus cases were



confirmed there.

Experts warned that based on data from Brazil, the variant was both more transmissible and better at evading antibodies than the UK's predominant strain which emerged in the southeastern county of Kent last September. Danny Altmann, professor of immunology at Imperial College in London, said the public should feel "somewhat worried but not total panic" about the emergence in Britain of the Manaus variant.

"It's not that all immunity is gone,

it's that the vaccines look so much less potent, so there'll be more people who have low antibody responses where it can break through and get affected," he told Times Radio.

"It all comes back much harder."

In mid-January, Britain banned flights from South America including Brazil.

But the new cases arrived on a flight from Sao Paulo via Zurich around February 10, triggering complaints from opposition parties about gaps in the border protection regime.

## Japanese Companies Go High-Tech In Battle Against Food Waste

Agenceis

**TOKYO:** Japanese companies are ramping up the use of artificial intelligence and other advanced technology to reduce waste and cut costs in the pandemic, and looking to score some sustainability points along the way.

Disposing of Japan's more than 6 million tonnes in food waste costs the world's No.3 economy some 2 trillion yen (\$19 billion) a year, government data shows. With the highest food waste per capita in Asia, the Japanese government has enacted a new law to halve such costs from 2000 levels by 2030, pushing companies to find solutions.

Convenience store chain Lawson Inc has started using AI from U.S. firm DataRobot, which estimates how much product on shelves, from onigiri rice balls to egg and tuna sandwiches, may go unsold or fall short of demand.

Lawson aims to bring down overstock by 30% in places where it has been rolled out, and wants to halve food waste at all of its stores in 2030 compared with 2018. Disposal of food waste is the biggest cost for Lawson's franchise owners after labour costs.

Drinks maker Suntory Beverage

& Food Ltd is experimenting with another AI product from Fujitsu Ltd to try to determine if goods such as bottles of oolong tea and mineral water have been damaged in shipping. Until now, that's been a time-consuming human endeavour. With the new AI, Suntory hopes to gauge when a damaged box is just that, or when the contents themselves have been damaged and need to be returned. Suntory aims to reduce the return of goods by 30-50% and cut the cost of food waste and develop a common standard system that can be shared by other food makers and shipping firms.

Japan's notoriously fussy shoppers are showing signs of getting on board, especially as the coronavirus pandemic hits incomes.

Tatsuya Sekito launched Kuradashi, an e-commerce firm dealing in unsold foods at a discount, in 2014 after seeing massive amounts of waste from food processors while working for a Japanese trading firm in China.

The online business is now thriving due partly to a jump in demand for low-priced unsold foods as consumers became more cost conscious amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Govt Redoubling Efforts To Replenish Groundwater

KULGAM: To replenish groundwater, 1300 water recharge pits, 556 water harvesting tanks and 163 irrigation canals were constructed under Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) at Kulgam.

This was revealed by Project Manager IWMP Kulgam, Mohammad Imran Khan.

He said that under the conservation programme of natural water bodies various springs, gabion structures, check dams, percolation tanks were also covered under the programme.

Highlighting the importance of conservation of water bodies and harvesting of rainwater, the Project Manager

said that the role of IWMP is of vital importance and they are redoubling their efforts in achieving desirable results.

He also stressed upon all the stakeholders to play a proactive role to conserve water and water resources besides making judicious use of water.

With regard to the expenses incurred so far under the programme, Khan said that an expenditure of Rs. 4.60 crore have been made in district under this centrally sponsored programme.

Thousands of unemployed youth were benefited and got a chance to earn by involving in different work projects under the programme in the district, he informed.

## CUK Marching Ahead On Academics, Research Front: UGC Chairman

### University Adhered To Academic Calendar Despite Turmoil: VC

Ganderbal, Mar 1: Prof. D. P Singh, Chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC), the umbrella body of higher educational institutions, Monday laid foundation stones for Watlar township at Watlar, Lar, and construction of G+1 academic block at the designated Tulmulla Campus here in the presence of Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir, Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zargar and senior varsity functionaries, both from the academics and faculty.

The Watlar township comprising hostels for boys and girls, Vice-Chancellor's lodge, residential accommodation for teaching and administrative staff, health center, guest house, indoor stadium, community center, chowkidar/security quarters, is being constructed on the additional 95 Kanals of land, allotted by the Jammu and Kashmir Government, in addition to the already existing 5000 Kanals of land, given for the establishment of the university. The construction of G+1 academic block is being carried by the National Projects Construction Corporation. Prof. D. P Singh went to the Nunar, Tulmulla and Green Campuses of the university and visited the newly established Science and IT laboratories, classrooms and other facilities offered by the university to the students. He also held a detailed in-

teraction with the students, faculty members and senior administrative staff of the Central University.

University of Kashmir, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Talat Ahmad, Registrar, Dr. Nisar Ahmad Mir, Deans of Schools, Heads and Coordinators of Departments, were also present.

Addressing the gathering, Prof. D P Singh said that despite several odds and functioning from scattered campuses across the Ganderbal district, the university is marching ahead on the academics and research front. "The university has to give impetus to the infrastructure development and establish a full-fledged campus at the designated site," Prof. D. P Singh said, adding the agencies executing agencies, undertaking different construction works should be held accountable for any inordinate delays in completion of the projects. He also called for construction of eco-friendly and student friendly campuses. Commenting on the New Education Policy-2020, Prof. D P Singh asked the university to constitute a task force of faculty members for its implementation in letter and spirit, adding that there were certain components in the NEP which the university could implement immediately. Prof. Singh laid emphasis on the research about the issues and matters confronted by the people, both locally and globally.

## Low Performing Officials To Face Action

SHOPIAN: The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Shopian, Sachin Kumar Vaishya Monday emphasised the need to work with great dedication and leave no stone unturned to resolve public issues and grievances in a time bound manner.

During a meeting of district and sectoral officers, he said that the performance of each department shall be monitored regularly and low performing officials shall have to face action.

The DDC said that the purpose of convening the meeting was to further streamline the punctuality in Government offices so that the grievances of the people visiting there are redressed in time. He exhorted upon the officers to be proactive as well as responsive, work with utmost dedication and seriousness so that the people in general get benefited.

He impressed upon the officers and other executing agencies to complete all ongoing developmental works within stipulated time so that people who have great expectations with the Government may not have to suffer.

The DDC fixed the deadline of March 3 to resolve all pending grievances registered on Lieutenant Governor Grievance Redressal Portal and upload action taken report on the portal. He said the LG's administration is committed to bring transparency in functioning of various departments and hence any delay in resolving grievances registered shall not be tolerated.

He said people have to come to district administration for petty grievances only because field officials of various departments either do not respond to their genuine demands or misguide/mis-

inform them. This callous attitude shall not be tolerated anymore and action shall be initiated against such officials, the DDC added.

He impressed upon officers to regularly monitor social media and timely respond to grievances raised on these platforms.

He directed SDM Zainapora to undertake extensive field visits, ensure employees attendance in the offices, listen to public grievances, hold awareness camps about various centrally sponsored schemes and inspect all ongoing developmental works for their timely completion.

Among others ADC Sheikh Abdul Aziz, CPO Khurshid Khatana, ACD Zubair Hussain Shah, SDM Zainapora Mushtaq Ahmad, Executive Engineers of various Engineering Departments, all district and sectoral officers attended the meeting.

## CH Workers Demand Implementation Of Minimum Wages Act

Srinagar: Consolidated Health Workers Union J&K in collaboration with Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement Monday held a protest demonstration outside the office of Directorate of Health Kashmir. The health workers included consolidated and part time sweepers, helpers, drivers who raised slogans for the implementation of Minimum Wages

Act in the health department.

Chairman RTI Movement, Dr Raja Muzaffar who led the protest said that the Government enacts laws like Minimum Wages Act and violates the same. He said that consolidated workers in the health department like sweepers, helpers and drivers who risked their lives were being paid as less as Rs 100 or Rs 500 per month which is an act of

Bonded Labour.

"If some private institution would be involved in violating the minimum wages act, the institution would be exposed and raised by Govt but who will make Govt accountable when they are paying mere Rs 100 or Rs 500 to its workers some of whom are working in the department for last 20 to 30 years," said Dr Muzaffar

## Illegal Excavation Of Minerals Banned

SHOPIAN: The District Administration Shopian Monday banned illegal extraction and unlawful mining from riverbeds, nallahs, water-bodies in any form and by any method.

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, S K Vaishya Monday impressed upon the concerned officers to strengthen the mechanism of checking illegal excavation of minor minerals.

He directed District Mineral Officer to gear up activities and also take help of all the line departments, Tehsildars and police to tackle with the

situation and take serious action against the violators who are found illegally excavating the minerals. He also directed for establishing Nakas at various sites from today positively to stop illegal extraction of minerals in the district.

Earlier, the District Mineral Officer briefed the DC about the present status of the mining blocks in the district.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, SDM Zainapora, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, District Mineral Officer, Tehsildars and other officers attended the meeting.

## Four Pesticide Outlets Sealed

SHOPIAN: In view of complaints received from various quarters of the district, the District Administration Shopian Monday launched a major crackdown against sale of spurious pesticides in the district.

The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Shopian, S K Vaishya constituted multiple teams of officials from Agriculture, Horticulture and Revenue Departments and directed for surprise inspection of all retail outlets/ warehouses of pesticides.

A total of 31 pesticides sale outlets and 3 warehouses were inspected in Shopian, Hermain and Zainapora, registration documents were checked and 5 samples were lifted for laboratory testing. Out of

these, 4 outlets including Shahid Agro Chemicals, Malik Agro Chemicals, Goodluck Agro Chemicals and Australian Pesticides were sealed for non-adherence to guidelines envisaged under Insecticide Act (1968) and Rules (1971) thereof.

The teams instructed the dealers to strictly comply with guidelines in vogue.

Regarding the surprise inspections, the DC said that every single pesticide outlet/warehouse in the district shall be inspected for quality check of pesticides and punitive action under law shall be ensured against unregistered/illegal operating units or those compromising with quality of the pesticides.

## Third Phase Of Covid-19 Vaccination Begins

JAMMU: The Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam Monday chaired a meeting of the UT Steering Committee on COVID-19 to review the progress of vaccination drives that were rolled out in January 2021.

Administrative Secretaries of departments of Health & Medical Education, Revenue, Housing & Urban Development, Information, Transport, Mission Director, Na-

tional Health Mission (NHM) and Deputy Commissioners of all districts were present at the meeting.

The Chief Secretary asked all the DCs to closely monitor the trajectory of COVID infections to prevent a surge in cases and assiduously expedite vaccination of priority groups in accordance with the schedule of vaccination drives.

It was informed that in the initial phases of COVID-19 vaccina-

tion, 70% of health workers and 57% of front line workers totalling 3,81,200 people have been vaccinated in Jammu and Kashmir with no reported case of any serious adversity. The next phase of vaccination for the 3rd prioritized group began today to cover approximately 15 lakh people above the age of 60 years, and persons with co-morbidities in the age group of 45-59 years.

### Pattan Village Reels Under Darkness, Residents Protest

Pattan: Angry locals of Singpora in Pattan area of Baramulla District Monday morning protested and blocked Highway at Singpora and raised slogans against PDD department.

Witnesses said that the residents of Bhagwanpora village blocked the highway at Singpora early morning and chanted slogans against the Power Development Department. The locals alleged that the electricity transformer was sent for repairing months ago but was not returned so far. They added that due to carelessness of administration the said area is reeling under darkness since months.

Hundreds of vehicles were stranded on the highway and the vehicular movement came to a halt as it was stopped.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Executive Engineer Mechanical Division Srinagar

Mechanical Engineering Department, Kashmir

Fax No: 0194-2497093 email: xenmds@gmail.com website: www.medkashmir.org

GIST of e-Tender

NIT No:	MDS/TS /2020-21/ 224/e-tendering
Date	26 .02.2021

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from Registered and Reputed firms/Suppliers for the below mentioned supply:-

Name of the Work	Cost of Tender Doc. (In rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rs)	Estimated Cost (In Lakhs)	Time of completion (in days)	Position of Funds
1	2	3	4	5	6
Fabrication of fixed wedge ploughs for 08 no 200/-tractors at Workshop sub Division Pampore.		Bid Security Declaration	2.4	07 Days	Available

1. Downloading of Bids: The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Govt. website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) from 01 -02-2021 (09.00 AM)

2. Submission of Bids: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above website from 01 -02-2021 (09.00 AM) to 08 -03-2021 (11.00 AM) in two covers.

3. Opening of Bids: The bid uploaded on the Web Site up to due date and time will be opened on 08-03-2021 (13:00 hrs) in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical division Srinagar

Sd/-  
(Er. Rajesh Sharma)  
Executive Engineer,  
Mechanical Division, Srinagar

DIPK-14135/20

No: MDS/ TS - /8977-81

Dated: 26.02.2021

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR ESTATES KASHMIR

E-mail:- ddestsgr@gmail.com - f - Tel / Fax:- 0194-2452435

Notice for Attendance Statement of Non-Move Employees

Sub:- Attendance statement of Non-Move employees lodged in Pvt. Hotels / Guest Houses and JKTDC hotels for the session 2020-21 - required in connection with payment of catering charges to Hoteliers.

In view of prevailing circumstances, reportedly some employees have remained out of their headquarters whether on leave or otherwise and in this regard, all the Drawing and Disbursing officers are requested to furnish Leave Statement / Tour Diary of all their employees who are / were availing mess facilities in the hotels hired by the Estates Department and have remained out of their Head Quarters, whether on leave or otherwise enabling this office to make payment to the hoteliers in accordance with actual attendance of the inmates in their respective hotels after deducting leave period. The requisite information for the month of February, 2021 is required to reach the office of the undersigned by or before 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021.

In case no information is received by or before 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, it will be presumed that no officer / official under your administrative control and availing Hotel / Mess facility has proceeded on leave and payment shall be released in favour of the hoteliers on your risk and responsibility. The information may please be ensured to be sent to this office through a special messenger under proper acknowledgement.

The matter may kindly be treated as most urgent.

Sd/-  
Deputy Director Estates  
Srinagar, Kashmir

DIPK-14171/20

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Services Selection Board,

Hema Complex, Sector-3, Channi Himmat, Jammu.

NOTICE

Subject:Edit option for candidates who have already applied online for various posts in pursuance of Advertisement No. 04 of 2020 dated 16-12-2020, Adv. No. 05 of 2020 dated 24-12-2020, Adv. No. 06 of 2020 dated 29-12-2020 and Adv. No. 07 of 2020 dated 31-12-2020.

In view of the persistent requests made by candidates, it is hereby notified for information of all such candidates who have applied through the J&K Services Selection Board's online application portal [www.ssbjk.org.in](http://www.ssbjk.org.in) for various posts in pursuance of Advertisement Notification No. 04 of 2020 dated:16-12-2020, Adv. No. 05 of 2020 dated 24-12-2020, Adv. No. 06 of 2020 dated 29-12-2020 and Adv. No. 07 of 2020, dated 31-12-2020 that EDIT option shall remain operational for those candidates w.e.f 01-03-2021 up to 07-03-2021.

The cutoff date for determination of eligibility/possession of documents shall be the last date of accepting online application forms for respective Advertisement Notices which are reproduced as under:

Advertisement No 04 of 2020	Last Date	31-01-2021
Advertisement No 05 of 2020	Last Date	27-02-2021
Advertisement No 06 of 2020	Last Date	27-02-2021
Advertisement No 07 of 2020	Last Date	27-02-2021

Sd/-  
Controller of Examinations  
J&K Services Selection Board  
Jammu

No. SSB/Secy/Adm/2500-2510

Dated: 28-02-2021



K O V I E W

## Azad bats for statehood

Visiting J&K first time after his Rajya Sabha term, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad called for restoration of statehood for J&K, lamenting that once India's only globally known state had been reduced to the level of a district. He said all J&K parties including the RSS wanted it. Significantly, Azad was accompanied by other national level Congress leaders like Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Kapil Sibal, Raj Babbar, Anand Sharma, Vivek Tankha and Manish Tewari, who all form part of the G-23, a group of Congress dissenters seeking organisational reforms in the party. Azad also pointed out how in Ladakh only Leh demanded union territory status and Kargil opposed it.

Azad, who has been the former J&K Chief Minister also attacked the J&K administration saying that they had taxed everything other than the clothes worn by the people. He also called for the land and jobs to be protected for the locals only underlining how Jammu and Leh would suffer more than Kashmir and Ladakh in the absence of such a protection.

These are the issues which resonate not only in Jammu but also in Kashmir Valley. And by playing to these Azad has struck a chord in the former state. He is a leader who has always enjoyed a reasonable public support in Kashmir and Jammu. He has also built a degree of acceptability across the parties, something that was exemplified recently when Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke down while praising the Congress leader in parliament.

So, it was significant when Azad didn't seek the restoration of Article 370 in his Jammu speech. When the article was revoked on August 5, 2019, it was Azad who had stoutly defended J&K's special status in parliament.

The Congress leader's visit to Jammu had another political sub-text: he was accompanied by members of G-23 who are currently at loggerheads with Congress high command and want the party to re-invent itself as an effective opposition to the BJP. So, J&K Congress president G A Mir was conspicuous by his absence.

That said, Azad's demand for restoration of statehood needs to be heeded by the union government. Here's hoping that the union government does take steps to restore J&K's statehood at the earliest. On February 5 the government restored the high speed mobile internet in the union territory after eighteen months. Home minister Amit Shah recently gave an assurance in parliament that the Centre will grant full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir at "an appropriate time". And this appropriate time is now. Over the last 18 months Kashmir has largely been peaceful and, if anything, this should be the overriding criteria in deciding in favour of a statehood for J&K.

O T H E R O P I N I O N

## Turning the corner

The Indian economy appears to have turned the corner. After two consecutive quarters of contraction, it grew by 0.4 per cent in the third quarter of the current financial year, according to the second advance estimates released by the National Statistical Office. While these estimates do indicate a marginal contraction in the fourth quarter, it is likely to be statistical aberration, driven perhaps by the back-ended release of the Centre's subsidy expenditure as detailed in the Union budget. Gross value added by the economy, which excludes these payouts, is expected to grow by 2.5 per cent in the January-March quarter, up from 1 per cent in the October-December quarter, signalling a return to pre-pandemic levels in the second half of the financial year, after an almost 15 per cent contraction in the first half.

The sector wise disaggregated data shows that the agricultural sector continues to exhibit healthy growth. It grew by 3.9 per cent in the fourth quarter, and growth for the full year is expected to touch 3 per cent — it's the only sector, barring electricity, gas and water supply, to register positive growth for the full year. Within the industrial sector, both manufacturing and construction have witnessed an uptick, the latter rebounding stronger. But this is likely to have been driven by the larger firms, with the smaller ones continuing to struggle — indicative of the heavily lopsided nature of the recovery. Moreover, as the index of industrial production suggests, volume growth continues to remain muted. Within the services sector too, the pace of recovery remains uneven. While the financial, real estate and professional services segment has rebounded strongly, the labour intensive trade, hotels, transport and communication parts of the economy continue to contract. Though the pace of contraction has moderated, it is indicative of continuing challenges faced by contact intensive segments. Household spending remained constrained, notwithstanding the pick up during the festive season, reflective of job and income losses. Investment activity, though, appears to have fared better, despite subdued private activity. After contracting by 27.5 per cent in the first half of the year, investment activity is expected to rebound in the second half, growing by 2.7 per cent. The uptick appears to be driven by government spending — capital expenditure by the Centre more than doubled in the third quarter.

But there are several areas of concern. For one, as these numbers do not adequately reflect the stress in the informal economy — it is likely to have fared worse than the formal sector — it is difficult to know the extent of recovery in that part of the economy. Two, an uptick in COVID-19 cases in the past few weeks in some parts of the country has raised fears of localised lockdowns impacting economic activity. Much will depend on how quickly the vaccination programme is rolled out. Three, one must also be cautious in interpreting the growth numbers in the coming quarters, especially the first half of next year, as they are likely to be distorted due to the base-effect. Beyond that, uncertainty persists over the medium term economic outlook.

*The Indian Express*



RIYAZ WANI

Today old equations between New Delhi and Islamabad and also between Kashmiri separatists and New Delhi no longer apply. Following withdrawal of Article 370, Hurriyat has been obliterated from the scene. Pakistan is no longer bolstered by the strategic depth of Afghanistan or leveraged by an all-encompassing militant struggle in Kashmir

## India-Pakistan Ceasefire

# Back to Dialogue?

By re-affirming LoC ceasefire, New Delhi has agreed to respect the sanctity of the LoC,



The reaffirmation of the 2003 LoC agreement between India and Pakistan has taken everyone by surprise. This has happened at a time when the relations between the two countries have plunged to their lowest low following the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019. Also, there was nothing in the recent political discourse in India and Pakistan that seemed to suggest that India and Pakistan were working towards normalization of their ties. True, some statements did emerge from Pakistan in recent past that were conciliatory towards India. First of them came from Pakistan Army Chief General Bajwa in February.

A day ahead of the LoC agreement, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan during his visit to Sri Lanka said India and Pakistan can resolve Kashmir through dialogue. His foreign minister Mahmood Qureshi said that Pakistan's strategic priorities have "shifted from geo-political to geo-economic," a statement that is of profound import as far as Pakistan's policy with regard to the ongoing situation in Kashmir. It means that Islamabad's policies would now largely be geared towards promoting economic development at home and bolstering trade relations with its neighbours.

But this still doesn't explain the change of heart in India towards Pakistan. By agreeing to LoC ceasefire, New Delhi has agreed to respect the sanctity of the LoC, which until last year it threatened to breach to take back Pakistan Administered Kashmir.

There are several factors at play in the renewed attempt at fresh engagement. One is the unfolding geo-politics of the region. Over the past ten months, India has been engaged in a tense stand-off with China along the Line of Actual Control. In April last year, China staged incursions at four points - forcing India to mass its troops along the border to deter further ingress by the PLA.

Similarly, India has also been at daggers drawn with Pakistan. According to the information revealed to the parliament by the

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, there were a total of 4,649 ceasefire violations on the LoC in 2020. This has resulted in loss of lives on both sides besides causing untold misery to the people living alongside the border. But this perennial state of conflict along the LAC and LoC has stretched New Delhi and this state of affairs is unsustainable in the long term.

Then there is war in Afghanistan. The unfolding situation in Kabul, where the Taliban are now being considered as a part of the political solution, has suddenly reduced India's capacity to influence the outcome in the war-torn country. Accordingly, Pakistan is suddenly in a greater position of leverage. On the other hand, Pakistan would benefit from a friendly India to ensure continued stability on its eastern flank.

The LoC agreement is also traced to the US nudging the two countries from behind the scenes. The US involvement in the relationship between India and Pakistan is a fairly complex affair. New Delhi wants the US to intervene to sort out the terror problem in Pakistan but it brooks no meddling in Kashmir.

Similarly, Islamabad wants US intervention on Kashmir but wouldn't like Washington to speak on behalf of India on terror. More so, at a time when the US is seen as partial towards India. This contradiction hardly makes the US an ideal mediator between the two countries. The starkness of this reality leaves India and Pakistan no choice but to engage and confront their problems themselves. And confront, they must.

But here again the two countries have exhibited a singular inability to talk sustainably. The suspension of the dialogue over the last decade is enlightening on this score. This makes it incumbent for the two countries to first make serious efforts, preferably through back channels, to accommodate each other's positions and thereby reduce some trust deficit.

Today old equations between New Delhi and Islamabad and also between Kashmiri separatists and New Delhi no longer apply. Fol-

lowing withdrawal of Article 370, Hurriyat has been obliterated from the scene. Pakistan is no longer bolstered by the strategic depth of Afghanistan or leveraged by an all-encompassing militant struggle in Kashmir. This has brought in a considerable inequality between the parties which no amount of rhetoric in Kashmir and Islamabad can hide. And this inequality — accentuated further by a stronger India — is likely to leave a deep imprint on the content of a future dialogue. And of course, on the outcome of it too, if the dialogue is sustainably held. It will be an outcome that will not be completely satisfying of the expectations of the weaker parties. Or else, the logjam that has persisted for the past seven decades will linger on.

Former Pakistan president Musharraf was the first to recognize new realities. His four point proposals on Kashmir envisaged a solution that would be a drastic climb down from Islamabad's traditional stand on J&K. This solution was about some minor political and administrative adjustments, more phraseological than substantive in their nature. With moderate Hurriyat playing along, these proposals almost got the two countries to agree to a radical new solution for Kashmir, if the lawyers' agitation in Pakistan hadn't forced the sudden exit of Musharraf, this solution would potentially have resolved Kashmir.

There's a possibility that the two countries could return to the formula. And the fresh effort has to be guided by the realization that ultimately India and Pakistan will have to solve their problems themselves for a peaceful sub-continent. Only such a dialogue can be hoped to lead us towards a positive outcome. The sub-continent needs the two countries to resolve their issues to usher in a true era of peace.

*Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer*

*The author is the Political Editor at Kashmir Observer*



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## Mitigate sufferings of REK Physical Education Teachers

This is to convey our grave concerns with regard to the problems being countenanced by Rehbar e Khel Physical Education Teachers appointed in January 2019 through concerned District wise selection committees designated by the Government in this behalf. The appointment was made by the committees after fulfilling all the codal formalities and after observing Recruitment Rules. It may not be out of place to mention here that almost 2750 number of Rehbar e Khel Teachers are highly qualified having passed PG, M.Phil. and Ph.D. Degrees

who were employed under Rehbar E Khel scheme and are facing tremendous problems on account of paltry monthly remuneration. The Government is aware from top to bottom that we are being paid Rs.100 only per day on account of salary which does not suffice our needs and requirements in view of exorbitant expenditures of our age old parents, families and kids especially in these hard and crucial days.

In this regard a delegation of the United Front of Rehbar E Khel Teachers headed by President Mr Sabzar, Gen. Secretary Javid Iqbal and Mudasar

Muzzafer met various Union Ministers including Hon'ble Minister PMO Jenab Dr. Jatinder Singh Ji, who were apprised about the miseries being faced by Rehbar E Khel Teachers in Jammu and Kashmir (UT). All the Hon'ble Ministers have given a patient hearing and have assured the delegation that all the issues shall be resolved at an earliest.

The erstwhile Lt. Governor Jenab Marmu had also constituted a committee at Government level in order to revise the policy in February 2020 but nothing has been heard till date in this regard which too has been a cause of

immense difficulties to the highly qualified Rehbar e Khel teachers.

I on behalf of United Front of Rehbar e Khel Teachers request to the concerned authorities through this medium to kindly take immediate steps/ measures with regard to regularisation of services of Rehbar e Khel teachers so that our worries and anxieties are set at rest and also oblige most highly qualified Rehbar e Khel Physical Education Teachers.

*Syed Aijaz Ul Haq  
syedaajazshah601@gmail.com*



# News Scoop from Social Media?



EMIL TEMNYALOV

**When we choose to get news and information on these platforms, we individually value the convenience, but not the effect on news quality in the long run. Google and Facebook dominate the news ecosystem without creating content themselves**

Digital platforms like Facebook and Google give us easy access to media and information. But our collective dependence on these tech giants could in the long run reduce the quality of journalism, making us all worse off.

The tension between convenience for readers and funding for journalism has been highlighted by Facebook's recent move to block news in Australia rather than pay media companies under new regulations.

Situations like this, where each individual acts in their own best interest but everybody still somehow loses, are surprisingly common in life. Economists see them through the lens of the "prisoner's dilemma", a famous fable from game theory that might well illustrate our digital platforms ecosystem.

## What is the prisoner's dilemma?

Imagine two prisoners being interrogated in separate rooms about a crime they've committed. Each is offered a reduced sentence if they provide evidence of the crime.

Hear directly from the scientists on the latest research.

If both prisoners provide evidence, they are both convicted of the crime. If only one does, he or she gets a reduced sentence, while the other gets the harshest of sentences. If neither supplies evidence, the investigator can only convict them of a minor crime.

Now put yourself in either criminal's shoes: whatever your co-conspirator does, it is always in your own self-interest to provide evidence. If your co-conspirator doesn't, you get off with a light sentence. If your co-conspirator does too, you are both convicted, but you would have received an even harsher sentence if you didn't provide evidence yourself.

By this logic, both prisoners would give evidence (it is a "dominant strategy" for each of them) — but both would end up worse off than if they had both stayed silent.

This fable is one of the most famous and successful models of game theory — it has been widely used to study nuclear arms races, climate change, the evolution of cooperation, doping in sports, and many other phenomena.

## Do digital platforms present a prisoner's dilemma?

Digital platforms make it easy for users to access news and information by integrating them into the rest of their services. Seeking out news directly from providers would be less convenient.

When we choose to get news and information on these platforms, we individually value the convenience, but not the effect on news quality in the long run.

Google and Facebook dominate the news ecosystem without creating content themselves. We generate value when we use the platforms — but the quality of the news and information we get will depend on how much of that value ultimately goes to the journalists and newsrooms who produce the content in the first place.

If very little value goes to content providers, they may have little incentive to develop high-



quality content. This is the classical prisoners' dilemma outcome, where we are all worse off.

Alternatively, if digital platforms pass a lot of the value to content providers, we might all benefit from both high-quality content and ease of access.

## Who captures the value of news and information?

Digital platforms capture enormous value by monetising the time and attention we spend on them, and the data we generate.

There are good reasons to think digital platforms bring significant value for news and content providers, but it's hard to determine how much.

If easy access to news means people read more news than they would otherwise, then the digital platforms are creating value overall, and some of that would benefit the content providers.

On the other hand, there are also good reasons to think very little of that value ultimately goes to news and content production.

Platforms have a very strong bargaining position in negotiations with providers over how much to pay for news. In part this is because platforms can easily substitute one news provider for another. An article from the Sydney Morning Herald and one from the Australian Financial Review on the same topic are likely to be very similar, apart from some nuance.

But a news provider can't easily substitute Facebook for Twitter or Google for Bing, because the alternatives have much smaller audiences. So the news providers have a lot less power to negotiate, because they are more replaceable than the platform itself.

## What makes digital platforms so irreplaceable?

Facebook and Google are as big as they are today thanks to network effects. When many people use a digital platform, the platform can attract even more users and create economies of scale. It can collect more and better data, and target advertising more effectively.

Markets with such network effects tend to be dominated by a few very large firms in the long run.

Digital platforms monetise their dominance of social media and search by selling advertising throughout their entire range of products and indirectly selling data about their users. The time and attention that we spend on digital platforms has enormous value, contrary to what Google Australia might want to claim.

## What comes next?

Facebook turned off news content on its social media platform, in response to the Australian government's proposed media bargaining code. Google has taken a more conciliatory approach, striking multimillion-dollar deals with several media companies.

Might we be better off this way in the long run? What if we did not consume our news and information on Facebook?

If platforms like Facebook do leave the news and information "market" in Australia, something else will fill the vacuum. People will not simply stop reading news. Rather, they would find alternative channels, or other platforms would step in to aggregate news.

The cooperative solution to the prisoner's dilemma of news and information requires that we as a society consume news in a way that incentivises journalists to produce high-quality content. This could come about if we all individually choose to get our news content directly from those who produce it, or from platforms that pass more value to producers.

Ideally one might imagine a world with multiple platforms that aggregate news and provide convenient access to journalism. Because news and information are public goods, we might even imagine a non-profit platform which seeks to maximise informed-ness and digital well-being, rather than maximising the profit from eyeballs and user engagement.

*By arrangements with the Conversation*

# Being Human During Unprecedented Times

There have been innumerable acts of kindness that have surprised us with our own humanity

PRANITHA MENON

We humans are a queer lot. During normal times — when masked humans at a bank was called a heist and standing six feet apart from friends was rude — we went about our everyday like tomorrow and the forever after that, was ours.

We refused to be locked in for the outside world was a dazzle of opportunities and the simplicity of being human had to wait. It took an unexpected twist to normality to bring out our resilience to light and the best out of us. I was in that crowd too.

Three days a week, the children ditched after school naps and play and we made long commutes to a sports academy that promised to make champions of them.

On the day Little Princess managed to hold the racket without dropping it, I had a mental draft of the champion's-mother's speech ready. The following week, we were in lockdown.

We humans are a resilient lot. If the pandemic threw glitches into our lives — some life-altering ones that caused losses, unimaginable heartache and pain, while others were those that involved children walking into meetings or disrupted networks — we supported one another to help move on.

The parents in my son's school WhatsApp group, that usually springs to life during examinations, have shared so much more than just academic support.

During the summer, when Twitter was abuzz with #inthistgether and homebound parents had to juggle pay cuts, the anxiety of job losses and children, who for the very first time had little to do during the day, they decided to use the online platform to share their skills with groups of children expecting nothing but an active audience in return.

One parent put a start by volunteering to



single-handedly teach the effective use of Microsoft Applications in batches through the summer vacations; a mother of two engaged tweens with life stories of influential personalities who live among us.

Most of us have not seen one another in person, but we have shared prayers, condolences, a helping hand and a virtual shoulder for those who needed it most, links for job vacancies, activities to keep bored tweens engaged and information to keep the vaccination drive going.

## Surprised with our own humanity

Across the world, there have been innumerable

acts of kindness that have surprised us with our own humanity.

Being human is a given, while keeping our humanity is a choice. I first got to know Dr. Ruchi because we shared a common love for the written word. When she was willing to use her experience in publication to help us wade through the technicalities of self-publishing, I was sure she was in the publishing business.

It took me a few calls to get to know that this doctor could wield the pen as deftly as she used her skill to help those in need by taking calls of help in the midst of a working day or clearing the fog of confusion in these rather dif-

ferent times.

When she was thanked for her efforts, all this humble doctor requested was that we treat doctors and nurses, who have been risking lives and livelihoods putting in long hours, with the respect they deserve.

We humans are a queer lot. Some things don't change even during a Pandemic. When Little Princess was seen playing with her racket, that hasn't seen the light of day for a while, I assumed she missed the sport.

A short while later, she emptied a bottle of the 'forbidden' glitter mostly on to every inch of the racket and the rest onto her and everything around her.

As I took into the shiny mess, her face shone with happy glitter as she displayed her handiwork, I wondered how I had missed seeing the great artist that resided inside of her. I was sure that this was how Picasso's mom felt when she must have seen his first handiwork.

*Gul News*

**We humans are a resilient lot. If the pandemic threw glitches into our lives — some life-altering ones that caused losses, unimaginable heartache and pain, while others were those that involved children walking into meetings or disrupted networks — we supported one another to help move on**



Health App Usage By Diabetes Patients May Improve Health, Lower Medical Costs

Agencies

Health apps have become a popular tool among teens and adults to track fitness, weight loss, sleep, and even menstrual cycles. But did you know mobile health applications could also benefit diabetes patients?

A new study has found out that the use of health apps by diabetes patients could improve health outcomes and lower medical costs. The findings of the study will be published in the journal 'MIS Quarterly', a publication of the Management Information Systems Research Center.

Emerging smart mobile health or mHealth technologies are changing the way patients track information related to diagnosed conditions. This study examined the health and economic impacts of mHealth technologies on the outcomes of diabetes patients in Asia.

The study concluded that compared to patients who did not use mHealth applications, patients who used the apps had better health outcomes and were able to regulate their health behaviour more effectively. They also had fewer hospital visits and lower medical costs.

The study was conducted by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and New York University (NYU). "Given the importance of health behaviors to well-being, health outcomes, and disease processes, mHealth technologies offer significant potential to facilitate patients' lifestyle and behavior modification through patient education, improved autonomous self-regulation, and perceived competence," explained Beibei Li, professor of information systems and management at CMU's Heinz College, who co-authored the study.

The relatively new area of mHealth includes mobile computing, medical sensor, and communications technologies used for health care services (for example managing chronic diseases).

Mobile health applications can operate on smartphones, tablets, sensors, and cloud-based computing systems, all of which collect health data on individuals. The global mHealth market was estimated to have reached USD 49 billion by the end of 2020. Yet few studies have assessed the technology's effectiveness in changing patients' behaviors and outcomes.

In this study, researchers sought to determine how mHealth applications persuade individuals to modify their behavior to comply with recommended approaches to obtain certain health goals.

The researchers measured compliance by looking at detailed patient activities (for example daily walking steps, exercise time, sleeping pattern, food intake) as measured by the app, as well as general health outcomes, hospital visits, and medical expenses.

The researchers partnered with a top mHealth firm that provides one of the largest mobile health platforms in Asia specializing in diabetes care. The study randomly assigned 1,070 adult patients to different groups for three months: Some patients used the mHealth app, some did not, and some used a web-based version of the app. Among the patients in the group that used the mHealth app, some received personalized text message reminders, while others received

non-personalized text messages.

Researchers interviewed all participants before the study began and five months after it ended. Among the questions asked were those about demographics, medication and medical history, blood glucose and hemoglobin levels, frequency of hospital visits, and medical costs.

The study found that patients who used the mHealth app reduced their blood glucose and hemoglobin levels, even after controlling for individual-level fixed effects. Patients who used the app also exercised more, slept more, and ate healthier food. And they had fewer hospital visits and lower medical expenses.

The authors suggested that patients' adoption of and use of the mHealth app was associated with significant behavioral modifications toward a healthier diet and lifestyle. In this way, users became more autonomously self-regulated with their health behavior, and this increasing intrinsic motivation helped them become more engaged, persistent, and stable in their behavior, which led to improved health outcomes. The mHealth platform also facilitated an increased usage of telemedicine, which in turn led to reduced hospital visits and medical expenses for the patients.

The study also found that the



mHealth platform was more effective in improving patients' health outcomes than a web-based (PC) version of the same app. And non-personalized text messages tended to be more effective in changing patients' behavior than personalized messages, possibly because personalized messages can be viewed as intrusive, coercive, and annoying.

Among the study's limitations, the authors note that this study focused mainly on participants with Type II diabetes which, different from Type I diabetes or Gestational diabetes, is directly tied to dietary or lifestyle self-management. Hence, the research is not necessarily applicable to patients with other types of diabetes.

"Our findings provide important insights on the design of mHealth apps through a better understanding of patients' health behavior and interactions with the platform," suggested Anindya Ghose, professor of business at NYU's Stern School of Business, who co-authored the study.

Ghose added, "Such knowledge can be very valuable for health care mobile platform designers as well as policymakers to improve the design of smart and connected health infrastructures through sustained usage of the emerging technologies."



Hesitation While Replying Leads To Decreased Perceived Sincerity

Agencies

The findings of a recent study conducted by the American Psychological Association suggested that while communicating, the longer the hesitation, the less sincere the response appears.

The study claimed that when people pause before replying to a question, even for just a few seconds, their answers are perceived to be less sincere and credible than if they had replied immediately.

The research was published in 'Journal of Personality and Social Psychology'.

"Evaluating other people's sincerity is a ubiquitous and important part of social interactions," said lead author Ignazio Ziano, PhD, of Grenoble Ecole de Management.

"Our research shows that response speed is an important cue on which people base their sincerity inferences," added Dr Ziano.

Researchers conducted a series of experiments involving more

than 7,500 individuals from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Participants either listened to an audio snippet, viewed a video, or read an account of a person responding to a simple question (example: did they like a cake a friend made or had they stolen money from work).

In each scenario, the response time varied from immediate to a 10-second delay. Participants then rated the sincerity of the response on a sliding scale.

Across all 14 experiments, participants consistently rated delayed responses as less sincere regardless of the question, whether it was a harmless one about cake or a more serious one about committing a crime.

A few conditions reduced this effect, the researchers found. For example, if the answer was considered socially undesirable, such as saying, "No, I don't like it" when a friend asks if you like their cake, response speed did not

seem to matter much; the answer was considered sincere whether it was fast or slow.

The researchers also found that if people thought a slower response was due to mental effort (for instance, having to think back if you had stolen candy 10 years ago), response speed had a smaller effect.

The findings have wide implications, according to Dr Ziano. "Whenever people are interacting, they are judging each other's sincerity. These results can be applied to a wide range of interactions, going from workplace chit-chat to couples and friends bickering," he said.

"Further, in job interviews and in court hearings and trials, people are often tasked with judgments of sincerity. Here, too, response speed could play a part."

For example, he said, imagine a hiring manager asking two job candidates, named Ann and Barb, whether they really know the programming language JavaScript, as they claim.

Study Discusses Correlation Between Allergy Seasons, Pollens

Agencies

Researchers in Munich during a recent study discovered how the length of allergy seasons in Germany are affected by pollen travelling far distances.

Allergy sufferers are no strangers to problems with pollen. But now - due to climate change - the pollen season is lasting longer and starting earlier than ever before, meaning more days of itchy eyes and runny noses. Warmer temperatures cause flowers to bloom earlier, while higher CO2 levels cause more pollen to be produced.

The effects of climate change on the pollen season have been studied at length, and according to some scientists, has grown by as much as 20 days in the past 30 years, at least in the US and Canada. But one important element is often overlooked - "Pollen is meant to fly," said Dr Annette Menzel, Professor of ecoclimatology at the Technical University of Munich. "Transport phenomena have to be taken into account."

Along with her colleagues, she studied the transport of pollen in Bavaria, Germany, in order to better understand how the pollen season has changed over time. "The transport of pollen has important implications for the length, timing, and severity of the allergenic pollen season," said Dr Ye Yuan, a coauthor on the study.

Menzel and her team focused on Bavaria - a state in southeast Germany - and used six pollen monitoring stations scattered around the region to analyse data. Their results were recently published in Frontiers in Allergy. They found that certain species of pollen, such as hazel shrubs and alder trees, advanced the start of their seasons by up to 2 days per year, over a period of 30 years (between 1987 and 2017). Other species, which tend to bloom later in the year, such as birch and ash trees, moved their seasons 0.5 days earlier on average each year, across

that same time period.

Pollen can travel hundreds of kilometres and, with changing weather patterns and altered species distributions, it's possible that people are becoming exposed to "new" pollen species - meaning pollen that our bodies are unaccustomed to encountering each year.

While it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between local and transported pollen, the researchers focused on pre-season transports. So, for example, if pollen from birch trees was present at the monitoring station, but local birch trees would not flower for at least another 10 days, that pollen was considered to be transported from far away.

"We were surprised that pre-season pollen transport is a quite common phenomenon being observed in two-thirds of the cases," said Menzel. As for why it's important to understand how much pollen is from far away, Yuan said that: "Especially for light-weight allergenic [pollen], long-distance transport could seriously influence local human health."

By examining another element besides simple pollen concentration, scientists can delve deeper into how exactly the pollen season is being affected by climate change. For example, Menzel said that the pollen season maybe even longer than estimated based on flowering observations by "taking into account pollen transport, as it has been done in our current study."

While the Munich study did not track how far pollen was transported, and only differentiated between local and long-range transport (meaning pollen coming from outside Bavaria), it provides a crucial key in our understanding of annual pollen patterns. Yuan said that future studies should account for "climate change scenarios [and] land use/land cover changes." He also added that citizen scientists may be able to contribute to pollen studies, who can help collect local observations and contribute to data collection.

New Twitter Tool To Let Users Block, Mute Abusive Accounts

Agencies

Twitter is planning a new tool to let users automatically block and mute abusive accounts. With the new safety mode, the micro-blogging platform will automatically detect accounts that "might be acting abusive or spammy." The company will limit how those accounts can engage with your content for seven days. During its virtual Analyst Day on Thursday, the company showed a presentation where a slide revealed that the feature will be a toggle in the new safety mode.

"Automatically block accounts that appear to break the Twitter Rules, and mute accounts that might be using insults, name-calling, strong language, or hateful remarks," the description read. Currently, not many Twitter users in India are aware of how to report abuse or harassment they face on the open communication platform, opting for the wrong way of posting an abusive photo or tweet and then requesting us to take action. At the moment, users can report abusive behaviour directly from a Tweet, profile or Direct Message. Multiple Tweets can be included in the same report to help Twitter gain better context while investigating the issues to get those resolved faster.

"We have given additional tools to users to help them navigate through the service and keep themselves secure.

"There are additional ways to navigate to see tools and settings around notifications before you can mute a keyword or a conversation. You can report fake accounts or impersonation to us," Twitter said recently.

Smartphones May Help Keep Glaucoma Blindness At Bay

Agencies

Smartphones, often blamed for eye strains and other problems, can also come to your aid as researchers have found that these devices could be used to scan people's eyes for early-warning signs of glaucoma, helping to prevent severe ocular diseases and blindness.

Glaucoma is a disease of the optic nerve which is estimated to affect 79.6 million people worldwide and, if left untreated, causes irreversible damage.

In most cases, blindness can be prevented with appropriate control and treatment.

Glaucoma is associated with elevated levels of intraocular pressure (IOP) and an accurate, non-invasive way of monitoring an individual's IOP over an extended period



would help to significantly increase their chances of maintaining their vision.

Soundwaves used as a mobile measurement method would detect increasing values of IOP, prompting early diagnosis and treatment.

The study published in the journal Engineering Reports showed that scientists at University of Birmingham in Britain have successfully carried out experiments using soundwaves and an eye model.

"We discovered a relationship between the internal pressure of an object and its acoustic reflection coefficient," said Khamis Essa, Director of the Advanced Manufacturing Group at the University of Birmingham.

"With further investigation into eye geometry and how this affects the interaction with soundwaves, it is possible to use a smartphone to accurately measure IOP from the comfort of the user's home." Risk factors for other eye diseases are easier to assess -- for example, in the case of diabetic retinopathy, individuals with diabetes are specifically at risk and are constantly monitored for tiny bulges that develop in the blood vessels of the eye. Intraocular pressure is a vital measurement of healthy vision, defined as pressure created by continued renewal of eye fluids.

Ocular hypertension is caused by an imbalance in production and drainage of aqueous fluid -- most common in older adults. Risk increases with age, in turn increasing the likelihood of an individual developing glaucoma.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, TLMD-VI (6),BEMINA, SRINAGAR

Tele No: 0194-2492429 Fax: 0194-2492429. Email: tlcdistpdd@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER e-NIT No: TLMD-VI/16 of 2020-21 Dated: 27/ 02 / 2021

Executive Engineer, TLMD-VI, Bemina Srinagar on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir UT invites e-tenders (In Two Cover System) valid for 180 days from reputed, experienced and financially sound Contractors and Executors fulfilling the eligibility criteria specified in the standard bidding documents for the work detailed below. As per Govt Circular No: A/Misc (2018)-III-895/ Dt:22.12.2020. Bids need not to be accompanied by EMD however the bidder has to submit declaration as per format given in standard bidding document. The complete bidding process is online. However, hardcopies are to be submitted only by the Lowest Bidder in the office of Executive Engineer, TLMD-VI Bemina Srinagar, on the day which will be communicated to lowest bidder. Financial bids must be submitted online only as per prescribed format.

The Standard Bidding Document is available at website <http://jktenders.gov.in>.

S.No	Scope of work	Qty	Estimated Cost in Lacs	Time of Completion
1	Providing of protection wall to Tower Location 38 (D+3) of 132kv Mirbazar Kulgam Transmission Line. details	Refer BOQ for	8.53 Lacs	13 days

The information regarding schedule of downloading of the tender document and submission dates thereof is as per the table below: CRITICAL DATES :-

1.	Issue of NIT.	27-02-2021
2.	Downloading of bidding documents (Start).	02-03-2021 ( 10 am)
3.	Downloading of bidding documents (End).	06-03-2021 ( 4pm)
4.	e-Bid submission (start) date & time (Submission).	02-03-2021 (10am)
5.	e-Bid submission (end) date & time (Submission supporting documents in PDF formats).	06-03-2021 ( 6pm)
6.	Online Techno-Commercial e-Bid opening date and time.	08-03-2021 (2pm)
7.	Venue of opening of Techno-Commercial-Bids.	Office of the Executive Engineer. TLMD-VI, Bemina, Srinagar
8.	Cost of e-Bid document (to be submitted in the form of DD Pledged to executive engineer TLMD-VI,JKTPL Srinagar).	Rs 500/-

- Only the bidders possessing the qualifying criteria as mentioned in the SBD should participate in the bidding process.
- Clarifications can also be sought from the office of the under signed on E-mail [tlcdistpdd@gmail.com](mailto:tlcdistpdd@gmail.com) or fax 0194 – 2492429.
- Before participating in the bids, the bidder shall acquaint himself with the site of work and local conditions.
- The department reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof.

No: TLMD-VI/2990-92 Dated: 27-02-2021

Executive Engineer TLMD-VI, Bemina Sgr.

DIPK-NB-6048/20

J&K Small Scale Industries Development Corporation Limited (SICOP)

(A J&K Government Undertaking)

Office of the General Manager (Marketing) SICOP, Srinagar.

E-TENDER NOTICE NO: 49-PES of 2020-21

DATED: 27.02.2021

For and on behalf of the Managing Director of J&K SICOP, Online e-tenders are invited from reputed companies/OEMs for supply, Installation and Maintenance of Material Testing Equipments at SICOP Testing Centre Zainakote, Srinagar.

Name Of the Work	Cost Of Tender(in Rs)	EMD (in Rs)	Date of Opening Of Pre-qualification Bid	Delivery Schedule
Supply of Material Testing Equipments at SICOP Testing Centre Zainakote, Srinagar.	3000/-	400000/-	19.03.2021(12.30 Hrs)	45 Days

1. The tender documents for the above job can be seen on the website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) From 27-02-2021 (1200 Hrs).

2. The tender documents can be downloaded from the above website from 27-02-2021 (1200Hrs) onwards.

3. The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) from 27-02-2021 (1200 Hrs) up to 18-03-2021(1700 Hrs) only.

4. The uploaded pre-qualification bids in the first instance on the website will be opened on 19- 03 - 2021 (1230 Hrs ) in the office of General Manager (MKT), SICOP, Srinagar in Presence of bidders who wish to attend. In case of holiday on the date of opening of bid, will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. The financial bids of only those firms shall be opened who qualify in technical bid. Intimation in respect of opening of financial bids shall be notified separately.

5. Tender documents fee shall be deposited in Account No.0148020100000200, IFSC Code-JAKA0KARRAN, Branch J&K Bank Karan Nagar, Srinagar. The Earnest Money Deposit (In shape of CDR/FDR/TDR) in original, favoring General Manager (M), SICOP, Srinagar Kashmir shall be uploaded online.

6. All documents as required as per SBD should be uploaded with the technical bid.

7. Complete bidding process will be online (Price Bid not to be submitted in physical form).

8. This tender is floated only for fixation of rate contract. The supply order shall be placed with the SSI units on the rates as shall be received in the tender (lowest), duly approved by the Competent Authority of SICOP.

9. All terms and conditions, governing the Marketing Assistance Scheme shall apply.

Sd/- Project Engineer SICOP Kashmir

DIPK-NB-6029/20



## 'US Owes India \$216 Billion As American Debt Soars To \$29 Trillion'

### Agenceis

WASHINGTON: The US, the world's largest economy, owes India \$216 billion in loan as the country's debt grows to a record \$29 trillion, an American lawmaker has said, cautioning the leadership against galloping foreign debt, the largest of which comes from China and Japan.

In 2020, the US national debt was \$23.4 trillion, that was \$72,309 in debt per person.

"We are going to grow our debt to \$29 trillion. That is even more debt owed per citizen. There is a lot of misinformation about where the debt is going. The top two countries we owe the debt to are China and Japan, not actually our friends," Congressman Alex Mooney said.

"We are at global competition with China all the time. They are holding a lot of the debt. We owe China over \$1 trillion and we owe Japan over \$1 trillion," the Republican Senator from West Virginia said on the floor of the US House of Representatives as he and others opposed the latest stimulus package of \$2 trillion.

In January, US President Joe Biden announced a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package to tackle the economic fallout from the pandemic, including direct financial aid to average Americans, support to businesses and to provide a boost to the national vaccination programme.

"The people who are loaning us the money we have to pay back are not necessarily people who

have our best interest at heart. Brazil, we owe \$258 billion. India, we owe \$216 billion. And the list goes on the debt that is owed to foreign countries," Congressman Mooney said.

America's national debt was \$5.6 trillion in 2000. During the Obama administration, it actually doubled.

"Since the eight years Obama was President, we doubled our national debt. And we are adding another—projected here—a completely out of control debt-to-GDP ratio," he said urging his Congressional colleagues to consider this national debt issue before approving the stimulus package.

"So I urge my colleagues to consider the future. Don't buy into the—the government has no money it doesn't take from you that you are going to have to pay back. We need to be judicious with these dollars, and most of this is not going to coronavirus relief anyway," he said.

Congressmen Mooney said that things have gone completely out of control. The Congressional Budget Office estimates an additional \$104 trillion will be added by 2050. The Congressional Budget Office forecasted debt would rise 200 per cent.

"Today, as I stand here right now, we have \$27.9 trillion in national debt...That is actually a little more than \$84,000 of debt to every American citizen right here today," Mooney said.

"We have actually borrowed \$10,000 per person in one year. I mean, that is out of control," he said.

## Start-ups Raise More Than USD 500 Million In A Week

### Agenceis

NEW DELHI: If edtech and e-commerce had the eye of investors last year, verticals such as software-as-a-service, agri-tech, and health tech are now giving them a run for their money. This week saw start-ups raising over \$500 million funding and the birth of two new unicorns—health-tech firm Innovaccer Inc and reality technology start-up Infra market.

A recent survey by Mumbai-based Orios Ventures says that the time taken by start-ups to reach unicorn status has significantly reduced from 14 years a decade ago to just three years in 2019. According to the report, India had a total number of 44 unicorns that have created an aggregate value of \$106 billion.

The newly formed saas unicorn, Innovaccer Inc, for instance has been showing a CAGR of over 100 per cent since its birth five years ago. The company connects



healthcare data across myriad systems and settings, delivering unified patient records and actionable insights that result in better patient outcomes and lower costs. Its platform improves efficiencies and helps those in the care ecosystem to deliver whole-person care.

Infra.market, meanwhile, offers a marketplace for the acquisition of construction materials for companies in the infrastructure segment. The firm has raised over \$100 million in a Series C funding round led by US-based investment Tiger Global.

## Union Secy Tourism Reviews Functioning Of Tourism Sector In JK

### Holds Meeting With Dir Tourism Kashmir, Senior Officers

#### Agenceis

SRINAGAR: Union Secretary Tourism, Arvind Singh who is on a 2-day visit to Kashmir on Monday reviewed the overall status of the tourism sector and the various tourism promotional activities being undertaken by the J&K Tourism Department to attract travelers to the region.

During his visit, Union Secretary, Tourism, held a meeting with Director Tourism Kashmir, Dr G N Itoo, MD JKTD, Nisar A Wani, MD Golf Development Authority and SKICC, Bakshi Javid Hamayun, CEO, GDA, Inam-ul-Haq, Principal, Institute of Hotel Management, Rajbagh and other officers.

Union Secretary Tourism, was briefed about the initiatives tak-

en by the J&K Tourism Department since September, 2020, the status of tourist inflow, facilities being extended to the tourists, COVID measures in place and the upcoming festivals and road shows being organized both within and outside J&K.

Director, Tourism, Kashmir, Dr G N Itoo, informed about the various upcoming festivals including Doodpathri Festival next week, the Badamwari and Tulip Festival layer this month, which are expected to attract a huge number of travellers to the Union Territory.

The Union Secretary appreciated the efforts of the UT government for the promotion of the tourism sector and hailed the successful conduct of the

mega Khelo India Winter Games at Gulmarg. During his visit, Secretary Tourism also visited Gulmarg and inspected various facilities there.

Union Secretary Tourism also met various tourism stakeholders and service providers at Gulmarg. The stakeholders urged him to intervene in the up-gradation of the facilities at Srinagar Airport, increasing frequency of the flights night landing system at Srinagar and in starting of direct flights from major cities like Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad.

On the occasion, Union Tourism Secretary reiterated that the various issued highlighted by tourism stakeholders will be looked into.

## Chinese Hackers Target Indian Vaccine Makers SII, Bharat Biotech, Says Security Firm



### Agenceis

NEW DELHI : A Chinese state-backed hacking group has in recent weeks targeted the IT systems of two Indian vaccine makers whose coronavirus shots are being used in the country's immunisation campaign, cyber intelligence firm Cyfirma told Reuters.

Rivals China and India have both sold or gifted COVID-19 shots to many countries. India produces more than 60% of all vaccines sold in the world.

Goldman Sachs-backed Cyfirma, based in Singapore and Tokyo, said Chinese hacking group APT10, also known as Stone Panda, had identified gaps and vulnerabilities in the IT infrastructure and supply chain software of Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine maker.

"The real motivation here is actually exfiltrating intellectual property and getting competitive advantage over Indian pharmaceutical companies," said Cyfirma Chief Executive Kumar Ritesh, formerly a top cyber official with British foreign intelligence agency MI6.

He said APT10 was actively targeting SII, which is making the AstraZeneca vaccine for many countries and will soon start bulk-manufacturing Novavax shots.

"In the case of Serum Institute, they have found a number of their public servers running weak web servers, these are vulnerable web servers," Ritesh said, referring to the hackers.

"They have spoken about weak web application, they are also talking about weak content-management system. It's quite alarming."

China's foreign ministry did not reply to a request for comment. But responding to a question on whether Chinese hackers had a role in attacking India's

power grid which caused a blackout in Mumbai last year, the ministry said it was a staunch defender of cyber security.

"China firmly opposes and cracks down on all forms of cyber attacks," its embassy in New Delhi said on Twitter, quoting the foreign ministry. "Speculation and fabrication have no role to play on the issue of cyber attacks."

SII and Bharat Biotech declined to comment. The office of the director-general of the state-run Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) said the matter had been handed to its operations director, S.S. Sarma.

Sarma told Reuters CERT was a "legal agency and we can't confirm this thing to media".

Cyfirma said in a statement it had informed CERT authorities and that they had acknowledged the threat.

The U.S. Department of Justice

said here in 2018 that APT10 had

acted in association with the

Chinese Ministry of State Security.

Microsoft said here in November that it had detected cyber attacks from Russia and North Korea targeting vaccine companies in India, Canada, France, South Korea and the United States. North Korean hackers also tried to break into the systems of British drugmaker AstraZeneca, Reuters here has reported.

Ritesh, whose firm follows the activities of some 750 cyber criminals and monitors nearly 2,000 hacking campaigns using a tool called DeCYFIR, said it was not yet clear what information APT10 may have accessed from the Indian companies.

Relations between nuclear-armed neighbours China and India soured last June when 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed in a Himalayan border fight. Recent talks have eased tension.

**“ IN THE CASE OF SERUM INSTITUTE, they have found a number of their public servers running weak web servers, these are vulnerable web servers.”**

## Govt Considering Cutting Taxes On Petrol, Diesel

### Agenceis

NEW DELHI: India's finance ministry is considering cutting excise duties on petrol and diesel to cushion the impact of record high domestic prices, three government officials close to the discussions said.

A doubling in the price of crude oil over the past 10 months has contributed to record fuel prices at gas stations in India. But taxes and duties account for roughly 60% of the retail price of petrol and diesel in the country, the world's third biggest consumer of crude oil.

As the coronavirus pandemic hit economic activity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government twice raised taxes on petrol and diesel in the last 12 months to boost sagging tax revenues instead of passing on the benefits of low oil prices last year to consumers.

India's Finance Ministry has now started consultations with some states, oil companies and the oil ministry to find the most effective way to lower the tax burden on consumers without federal finances taking a big hit, the sources said.

"We are discussing ways in which prices can be kept stable. We will be able to take a view of the issue by mid-March," said one of the sources.

The sources, who asked not to be named as the deliberations are private, said the government wants oil prices to stabilise before cutting taxes, as it does not want to be forced to change the tax structure again, should crude prices rise further.

India's Finance Minister Nirmala



Sitharaman recently said: "I can't say when we will reduce taxes on fuel, but (the) centre and states have to talk to reduce fuel taxes".

India's Finance Ministry and oil ministry did not respond to an email requesting comment.

The high fuel prices have prompted some Indian states to cut state-level taxes on petrol and diesel to rein in prices.

Another one of the sources said a decision on fuel taxes may only be made following a meeting of OPEC and major oil producers, also known as OPEC+, later this week.

"There is an expectation that OPEC+ would agree to ease oil output curbs, we hope oil prices will stabilise after their decision," this source said.

India has called on OPEC+ to ease production cuts as higher crude prices are hitting fuel demand in

Asia's third largest economy and are contributing to inflation.

The high fuel prices could also affect Modi's popularity ahead of state assembly polls in four states in March and April.

Modi and India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party are already facing their biggest political challenge in years with tens of thousands of farmers protesting against three farm laws passed by his government in 2020.

The federal government and states together raised some 5.56 trillion rupees (\$75.22 billion) in revenues from the petroleum sector in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2020, based on government data.

In the nine months of this fiscal year (April-December 2020), contributions from the sector were about 4.21 trillion rupees, despite a significant decline in local fuel demand, the data showed.

## Economic Activity Gathering Steam, But Private Investment Missing: RBI

### Agenceis

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday, March 1, said India's economic activity is gaining momentum on COVID-19 vaccination roll out and decrease in infections, but private investment is missing.

The vaccination programme has released pent-up optimism and "there is little doubt today that a recovery based on a revival of consumption is underway," RBI said.

"All engines of aggregate demand are starting to fire; only private investment is missing in action and the time is apposite for it to come alive. Broader measures of liquidity reflect easing of monetary and financial conditions in the system," the central bank said in its monthly bulletin for February.

India's GDP growth returned to positive territory in October-December after contracting for two consecutive quarters due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related disruptions. As per government data, India's GDP increased 0.4 per cent during the third quarter ended December 31, 2020, as against a 24.4 per cent contraction in April-June and a 7.3 per cent de-growth in July-September.

The RBI expects the Indian economy to grow by 10.5 per cent in the financial year 2021-22.

"In terms of nominal GDP, 96 per cent of prepandemic economic activity has been restored, assuming that the National Statistical Office's first advance estimates hold," the RBI said.



On inflation, it said with production of pulses 6 per cent higher than a year ago, inflationary pressures on the food front are set to ebb, but core inflation will warrant deft and dogged attention.

"While disproportionately high excise duties on petroleum products are hostage to the state of public finances, buoyancy in other heads of revenue could loosen this stranglehold, bring down pump prices of petrol, diesel and of cooking gas to more internationally comparable levels, improve the inflation outlook and expand consumer welfare," the bulletin said.

Fiscal policy authorities have to stimulate the economy while also ensuring sustainable finances. Monetary authorities are encountering a similar dilemma of con-

flicting pulls - ensuring an orderly evolution of the interest rate structure in the face of still enlarged borrowing needs against the need to remain accommodative and support the recovery, it said.

"While policy authorities exhibit resoluteness in their commitment, markets are assailed by uncertainty and sporadic shifts between hunts for returns and flights to safety. A shared understanding and common expectations will likely be the anchor in this turbulence," RBI said, adding that markets will have to rely on the track record of authorities during the most "trying year in a century."

"A vibrant and self-sustaining economy will lift all boats and markets can do no better than support policy authorities as they struggle to regain that stride," it said.

**“ WHILE POLICY AUTHORITIES EXHIBIT RESOLUTENESS in their commitment, markets are assailed by uncertainty and sporadic shifts between hunts for returns and flights to safety. A shared understanding and common expectations will likely be the anchor in this turbulence , adding that markets will have to rely on the track record of authorities during the most "trying year in a century."**

### NEWS MAKERS



## ROYAL ENFIELD Sales Up 10 Per Cent In February At 69,659 Units

### Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Motorcycle maker Royal Enfield on Monday reported a 10 per cent increase in total sales at 69,659 units in February. The company had sold 63,536 units in the same month last year, Royal Enfield said in a statement.

Domestic sales last month were at 65,114 units as against 61,188 units in February 2020, a growth of 6 per cent, it added.

Exports witnessed a jump of 94 per cent last month at 4,545 units as compared to 2,348 units in the year-ago month, the company said.

## Indian Mobile Retailers Seek Amazon Probe, Cap On Online Smartphone Sales

### Agenceis

An Indian trade group representing 150,000 mobile phone stores on Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to investigate Amazon's business practices in the country and impose a daily cap on a single seller's online smartphone sales.

In a letter sent to Modi, the group cited a Reuters special report published last month that revealed Amazon has for years given preferential treatment to a small group of sellers on its Indian platform, using them to circumvent the country's strict foreign investment regulations.

The report was based on internal Amazon documents dated between 2012 and 2019.

"We were already aware of Amazon's thought process and strategy," the All India Mobile Retailers Association (AIMRA) wrote in the letter. The documents, the letter said, "have revealed that Amazon is doing business in India with the strategy of deftly dodging the regulators and politicians".

AIMRA urged the government to "suspend all Amazon activities in India" until there is an investigation into the company's practices.

Amazon says it doesn't give preferential treatment to any seller on its marketplace and has always complied with Indian law.

Amazon and Modi's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Monday. Indian retailers, a crucial part of Modi's support base, have long alleged that Amazon and Walmart's Flipkart flout federal regulations and that their business practices hurt small traders. The companies, which run the two biggest e-commerce platforms in India, deny the allegations.

The Amazon documents reviewed by Reuters showed the company helped a small number of sellers prosper on its website, discounted their fees and helped one cut special deals with big tech manufacturers such as Apple Inc. Some 35 of Amazon's more than 400,000 sellers in India in early 2019 accounted for around two-thirds of its online sales, the documents also showed.



## Kashmir Schools

been tallied, an official of the School Education Department said.

Private schools recorded higher attendance as classrooms were bifurcated to ensure social distancing.

“Our class has a strength of 40 but today there were only 20 students in the room in view of the social distancing necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Ahmad Khan, a Class 10 student of a private school.

Only those students were allowed to attend classes who had submitted the written consent of their parents.

Most private schools had asked parents to submit no objection certificates, absolving the management of any blame in case of any health issues arising due to physical classes.

Several schools had also asked students to bring along medical fitness certificates on the first day of school.

According to a government order, schools will reopen for classes 6 to 8 from March 18 and for the remaining classes from March 18.

## Class XII Results

spread on social media about declaration of results. “The students will be informed officially about the announcement of results,” she said.

The examination of class 12th students was held from second week of November last year in Valley as well in winter zones of Jammu division. The BOSE last week declared result of the class 10th examinations which were also held during the same time. 75% of the students passed the examinations held amid covid-19 curbs and disturbances. (GNS)

## ‘Sticky Bombs’

on high alert with an assumption that some of the IEDs could have already found their way to the Kashmir valley, the officials said.

According to the officials, the drone-dropped consignment had six pistols and 14 Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) with inbuilt magnets, which could be used as “sticky bombs” by sticking them on vehicles and controlling them using a timer and a remotely-held device.

The consignment was meant for The Resistance Force (TRF), believed to be a shadow outfit of banned Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group, they said.

This definitely was the first such recovery of “sticky bombs” which has found much use in Afghanistan and Iraq. In India, it was used by suspected Iranian militants in February 2012 by sticking a bomb on the car of an Israeli diplomat resulting in injury to his wife.

The recovery is a cause of concern in Kashmir and the standard operating procedures for the movement of security forces’ convoys need to be revised to eliminate this kind of a threat, a senior official said.

The development comes two years after a Jaish-e-Mohammed militant carried out a sensational attack when he rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a bus carrying security forces that left 40 CRPF personnel dead in 2019.

In response, India had carried out an air strike on militant camps located across the border.

Sticky bombs, which were also used by the British forces during World War II, can be put on any vehicle and detonated through a remote control or an in-built timer, the officials said.

This is yet another significant recovery after security forces had found three Point Detonating (PD) fuzes, used by the Pakistani army in their 82 mm mortar shells, from a militant in north Kashmir.

The three PDs were recovered by the Baramulla Police on the eve of New Year when the force intercepted a vehicle. Unaware of the material recovered, the police had declared it “unique grenade” which was later found to be the PD, used by the Pakistani army for the 82 MM mortar shells, they said.

The PD could be used during the fabrication (manufacture) of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) to increase its impact. It helps in super-quick detonation of explosives or at times can delay the impact mode for a bigger damage, the officials said.

The December seizure of PDs was also meant for the TRF group and one militant, identified as Asif Gul, was arrested.

## Situation Peaceful

ceasefire agreement on the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan is a conscious call by both the countries and the task at hand is to make it successful.

“The year 2020 has been one of the most peaceful times. The situation in the valley remains fairly normal. All the parameters of violence -- be it stone-pelting, agitations or bandhs -- have shown a dip,” Lt Gen Raju told reporters here.

Raju, who will take charge as the new Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), said while many people would want to believe that the situation in the valley was “quiet” due to the COVID pandemic, “it is not (the case)”.

“It is quiet because people want it to be quiet. If something good is happening, it is because the people want it to be,” he said, adding, “We have lots of hopes from the year 2021”.

Acknowledging that there have been isolated incidents, the GoC said there were elements who want to generate violence.

“They get directions from within and across (the LoC) to attack. There was this Krishna Dhaba attack recently. It was only done to convey a message to the arriving EU delegation that the situation is not peaceful and that things are not normal. It was militancy in a classic manner,” he said.

The Army officer was referring to the February 17 attack on Akash Mehra – son of the owner of “Krishna Dhaba” which is a popular eatery in the high-security

Durganag area. The attack took place on the day a 24-member delegation of envoys had arrived on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir.

Mehra succumbed to injuries at a hospital here on Sunday.

Lt Gen Raju welcomed the reiteration of the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan, terming it a positive step and a conscious call by the two nations.

“The ceasefire agreement is a positive step and a conscious call by both the countries. The task at hand is to make it successful,” he said.

He, however, said that infiltration by militants from across the LoC was still a challenge.

“Infiltration is still a challenge, but we are up to it. We will try to keep things under control and keep the population safe. We hope the situation along the borders remains calm,” he said.

The GoC of the strategically located XV Corps added that the ceasefire helps to check infiltration.

“Our ability to check and control infiltration improves when there is a ceasefire,” he said.

Asked as to how the Indian Army would respond to any ceasefire violation from the Pakistani side, the Lt Gen said the Army was not trigger happy and would raise the issue through a proper mechanism.

“We have an established mechanism both at the local level as well as in Delhi.

“Definitely, we will give it the best shot. We will not be trigger happy. In case there is some problem, in case there is an incident, we will tell the other side, we will speak to them,” he said.

He said the ceasefire would have no major implication in the hinterland other than by helping check the infiltration.

On Pakistan using new routes for infiltration of militants and arms, Lt Gen Raju said if the desire from the other side is there, it will keep pushing and finding new ways.

“But, if they have done this (ceasefire agreement), then we will slowly disincenivise them from doing other things as well,” he added.

To a question about the reports of Taliban-style “sticky bombs”, the Army officer said “inducting anything new available is an ongoing process in the valley and we will adopt a proper strategy to do our job”.

The XV Corps Commander said the Army reduced its footprints in north Kashmir last year and it is an ongoing process.

“When the violence goes down, the methodology changes,” he said.

Asked about the emergence of new militant outfits, the GoC said “a militant is a militant” and the name of the outfit does not matter.

“We are doing a lot of good work to stop recruitment even as there is continuous social media-based propaganda from the other side,” he said.

## PM Takes

“I appeal to all those who are eligible to take the vaccine. Together, let us make India COVID-19 free!” he said.

India expanded its COVID-19 vaccine coverage on Monday by including everyone over 60 and those aged between 45-59 who have co-morbidities in the net. In the first phase of the vaccination drive, health-care personnel and frontline workers were inoculated.

The prime minister also posted a picture of himself taking the first dose of the vaccine in which he is seen sporting an Assamese ‘gamocha’ and getting inoculated with a smile on his face.

Nurses Niveda and Rosmma Anil can be seen in the picture posted by Modi.

Niveda later told reporters that the prime minister, after being administered the vaccine shot, remarked “Laga bhi diya, pata bhi nahin chala (Already done? I didn’t even feel it).”

The prime minister went to AIIMS without any route restrictions and chose early morning hours to ensure there was no inconvenience to people, the sources said.

Prime Minister Modi also used humour to put at ease the medical staff during the inoculation and asked the nurses administering the COVID-19 vaccine whether they were planning to use some special thick needle as politicians are known to be “very thick-skinned”, drawing laughter from them.

“When Prime Minister Modi arrived early in the morning, it was natural that the medical staff at AIIMS was perhaps a bit overawed by the situation,” a source said.

Realising this, the prime minister instantly struck a conversation with them, asking their names and about their native places, they said.

Then to lighten up the atmosphere, he asked the nurses whether they would use a needle meant for veterinary purposes. The nurses said no but did not fully understand the question.

Politicians are known to be “very thick-skinned”, PM Modi quipped and asked if they were planning to use some special thick needle for him, according to the sources.

On hearing this, the nurses not only laughed but were also put at ease, the sources said.

AIIMS chief Dr Randeep Guleria said Prime Minister Modi’s move to take the COVID-19 vaccine on the very first day of India opening up the inoculation drive for senior citizens and those aged 45 and above with comorbidities should eliminate any hesitancy from the minds of people about the vaccine.

In one of the pictures, Niveda is seen injecting the vaccine, while the other nurse is seen helping in the process. In another, they are seen standing next to the prime minister posing for the photograph.

Niveda said she has been working with the AIIMS here for three years and is currently posted at the vaccine centre.

“We found out PM sir is coming for vaccination this morning. When I came here only then I got to know that sir is coming. It

was really nice to meet sir,” she said.

He has been administered the first dose of Bharat Biotech’s COVAXIN and now his second dose will be administered after 28 days, the nurse said.

“He talked with us, asked us from where we belong,” she said.

Rosamma Anil said it was very nice to meet the prime minister and added that he was “very comfortable”.

“Today is the happiest day of my life because our Prime Minister Modi ji came to our AIIMS hospital to get a vaccine. He greeted us with folded hands, saying ‘vanakkam’,” she said.

“He (Modi) was under observation for 30 minutes after taking the COVAXIN injection. Sir had no complications. He was very happy,” Rosamma Anil said.

“Before leaving the hospital after half an hour, sir came to us again with folded hands, saying thank you and vanakkam,” she said.

The government had announced on Wednesday that everyone above 60 years of age and those over 45 years with comorbidities will be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine from March 1 for free at government facilities and for a charge at many private hospitals.

Citizens will be able to register and book an appointment for vaccination, anytime and anywhere, using the Co-WIN 2.0 portal or through other IT applications such as Aarogya Setu.

Several other prominent leaders including Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Home Minister Amit Shah, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and NCP chief Sharad Pawar received the first dose of COVID vaccine on Monday.

## Geelani Invites

only serve the cause of Hindutva regime. Period,” Kashmir Committee posted on its official Twitter handle on Sunday.

Earlier on February 24, India and Pakistan announced that they have agreed to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir and other sectors. A joint statement issued in Islamabad and New Delhi said the Director Generals of Military Operations of the two countries held discussions over the established mechanism of hotline contact and reviewed the situation along the LoC and all other sectors in a “free, frank and cordial” atmosphere.

“In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGMOs agreed to address each other’s core issues and concerns which have propensity to disturb peace and lead to violence,” the joint statement said.

However, casting aspersions over the surprising move, Geelani in the letter writes that whether the LoC Truce will ensure peace on the CFL was something that remains to be seen.

“However, the development itself is disturbing as it is surprising,” the letter reads.

The letter also calls out Pakistan for engaging with India after making repeated announcements that no engagement will be made until the August 5 decision of revoking Kashmir’s special status and dividing the state into two Union Territories is not rolled back.

“Ever since India’s brazen aggression on August 5 2019, we have been hearing assurance after assurance that there would be no engagement with India until it rolls back everything it did on August 5. Now we know the back channel talks between the two sides have been going on for several months culminating in the latest DGMO’s pact. May one ask why this contradiction between the stated policy and action? Or may one, for that matter, ask why this secrecy on a matter of such national and international importance? Asks Geelani, through his special representative.

He also asks Pakistan leadership “where does Kashmir figure” in the ceasefire pact reached between the two countries.

Questioning the ceasefire announcement, the senior separatist leader writes that what does the joint statement mean without even mentioning about the August 5 aggression.

“Doesn’t it appear to be a process to roll the clock back to Shimla agreement times and put Kashmir again on the backburner? What this attitude practically does is, it reduces Kashmir issue to a border dispute between India and Pakistan which is on stark contrast with the standpoint of Kashmiri people. For us Kashmir is not a border dispute between two counties, it is the question of the destiny and future of 22 million people. We are principal party here and it is our say that will be final in resolving this issue

## Gulmarg Shivers

of 4.0 degree Celsius against 2.3 degree Celsius on the previous night while the mercury settled at 0.7 degree Celsius at the famous resort of Pahalgam against minus 0.6 on the earlier night.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of 2.6 degree Celsius against 0.4 degree Celsius on the previous night.

The minimum temperature settled at 0.4 degree Celsius in Kupwara against minus 0.1 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said.

The weatherman has forecast dry weather for couple of days and isolated rains on March 3 and 4 besides fairly widespread rains on March 6 and 7 respectively. (GNS)

## Metro Rail In

are being identified for the beautification and other processes.

Sinha also stated that the government has come up with a parking slot for 315 vehicles here and the space will be increased for more vehicles in coming days.

“In Smart City, there are many projects, which will come up very soon,” he said, adding that Administrative Council has sanctioned metro project for Srinagar and has sent for approval to the central

government. “I hope the cabinet in centre would approve the project at earliest,” he said.

He also stated that it was for the first that people in Kashmir witnessed electricity during snowfall—(KNO)

## J&K Reports 63

including twenty-two travellers in the last 24 hours, officials said on Monday. While 54 fresh cases were reported from Kashmir Valley, the remaining nine were confirmed by officials from Jammu division thus taking the overall case tally to 126504.

Giving district-wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 18, Baramulla 7, Budgam 4, Pulwama 6, Kupwara 3, Anantnag 11, Bandipora 1, Ganderbal 2, Kulgam 2, Jammu 7, and Udhampur and Kathua one each new case of Covid-19.

Moreover, they said, 56 more patients have recovered and were discharged from various hospitals—18 from Jammu Division and 38 from Kashmir.

## NIA Arrests Four

The case was registered in June last year in Kupwara.

During the checking of vehicles in Kupwara, accused Abdul Momin Peer’s Hyundai Creta was intercepted by the police. During a search of the vehicle, Rs 20 lakh and two kg heroin were seized.

After the NIA took over the investigation, it filed a charge sheet against the six accused in the special NIA court in Jammu in December last year.

Besides cross-border smuggling of heroin, the accused were in regular contact with operatives of proscribed militant organisations Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen through encrypted chat platforms, the NIA official said.

The proceeds of sales were being used to finance the activities of LeT in the Kashmir Valley, he said.

The arrested accused were produced before the CJM court in Srinagar and have been taken on transit remand for three days, the official said, adding that further investigation in the case is continuing.

## Govt To Revive

the post of President shall be the person who is, or has been a judge of the High Court, the persons to be appointed as members shall possess experience of at least 10 years as presiding officer of a district court or any tribunal at equivalent level or combined service as such in the district court and tribunal.

The members shall also have special knowledge and professional experience of not less than 20 years in consumer affairs, law, public affairs, administration, economics, commerce, industries, finance, management, engineering, technology, public health or medicine.

According to rules governing these appointments, the President and members of the State Commission and shall be appointed by the State Government on the recommendation of a Selection Committee comprising chief justice of the High Court or any Judge of the High Court nominated by him, secretary in charge Consumer Affairs of the State and nominee of the chief secretary of the State.

These appointments would be made under the Consumer Protection Act-2019, the law enacted by the Parliament.

It is worthwhile to mention that J&K abolished its own consumer commission days before re-organisation of the State into two UTs. The State law under which it was set-up was repealed by the Parliament in August 2019 when it approved the Jammu & Kashmir Re-organisation Act—(KNO)

## KASHMIR In

accommodation,” continued Umer, while recollecting his struggling days in Delhi.

“I didn’t have any other alternative apart from moving out. Everything was shattering in the valley back then, and no one wanted to stay there. There was no private sector and the already crumbling public sector had fallen apart.”

On the face of it, the carpet man’s chronicle of moving out may appear usual to the story of any other struggler. However, the load upon his shoulders was heavier as he had to start a completely new brand from scratch in the national capital.

“And since I was still trying to adjust myself with Delhi’s demanding life, it was impossible for me to pay 50 per cent advance to the carpet weavers, which is norm in our line,” he said.

But being a resilient rugman, Umer lived up to the expectations.

“The buyers wanted a peaceful environment to buy rich Kashmiri carpets and I provided them the same in Delhi inside this premises of Hannan’s Oriental Rugs,” he claimed with a reference to his shop.

While building his brand, he was mindful how the carpet industry of Kashmir had seen many challenges and changes over the last 50 years. The industry renowned for its woollen items started producing silk carpets in the late 1970s.

At that time, it was unrivalled across India. “The least quality of Kashmiri carpets used to have 324 knots per square inch,” he informed. “Now, tell me how a carpet from the rest of India, which usually has less than 100 knots, can match the Kashmiri carpets?”

Following the arrival of silk in the 80s, the boom in the entire carpet industry in Kashmir was so massive that, according to Umer, the weavers in Kashmir used to smoke a hookah of milk instead of water.

Half an hour into the conversation, he went to offer prayers and came back with two cup of tea and a variety of snacks.

“There is a stark difference in the work culture,” he resumed the conversation by drawing parallels between Kashmir and Delhi.

“Working in the valley is working at home, in an aesthetic and peaceful environment. Plus, one can go for a routine check-up, like what my dad did.”

However, as per Umer, the capital

requires a professional workforce, and if you don’t apply to that term, you can’t sustain the fast-moving nature of the city.

As part of his regimental routine in Delhi, honesty and quality have emerged as his mantra of success. His hard work, as per him, has made him what he is today – The Vice-Chairman of the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC).

“I am called the Russian King because most of my buyers are from Russia,” he said, while referring to the fame he has earned outside India.

“In one way or the other, I have dominated the Russian market at least to some extent.”

Because of his quality experience in dealing with a variety of clientele, his friend—running a multi-storey complex in Kremlin—once offered Umer his showroom.

“My Company is the only one in Kashmiri carpet industry, which brought a revolution of modern designs and created a fusion of traditional with modernism,” he said with a pleased look on his face.

“And for that I credit my father’s three small, yet vital suggestions: ‘Never sell on credit, never get a bank loan, and never do overbuying.’”

The journey to this level, however, was full of hurdles. Umer was hassled at multiple occasions in the very initial years of his career in capital and he still remembers the scratches done all over his car.

“But, Almighty had a different plan for me, and that’s why I am talking to you here.”

However, as the ‘great power comes with great responsibility’, the same seems to be the case with Umer Hameed.

As a trade leader, he has dedicated himself to the renaissance of Kashmiri Carpets and reorganization of the entire industry.

“The moment I became the Vice-Chairman of CEPC, I started battling for establishing a regional office in Srinagar as there was none.”

“Also,” he added, “because of my initiative, the government reduced GST on carpets from a whopping 18% to a mere 5%. I fought for it and luckily whole of India benefited.”

Nonetheless, it’s quite hard to take the Kashmiri Carpets to their days of glory as now the material used in its making is ‘the recycled silk’ procured from Sari mills in Karnataka.

In his own words, Umer narrated how he told the same to the then Union Minister of Textiles, Smriti Irani, when she was planning to promote Kashmiri carpets on a global level.

“All the stakeholders were called by her in the meeting and the moment the union minister mentioned her plan, I intervened and asked her ‘what rubbish are you going to promote?’ The maximum life of today’s Kashmiri carpet is not more than three years. You can’t promote anything nonsense.”

Even after tons of such problematic conditions, Umer never bowed to the trouble and is still popular across the region for the finest and premium quality Kashmiri carpets, which is, nowadays, a rare sight to see.

“I have the best carpet in the world right now,” said Umer while showing me one piece out of his premium and flagship collection which contains 6,400 knots per square inch, allegedly the highest in the world.

“It took four and a half years to complete it and the woman who made it gave birth to two kids during that period. It was a once in a lifetime watch and I’m blessed to have the legacy of holding it,” he added.

Nevertheless, dedicating all his life to creating a stronghold of royal Kashmiri carpets in Delhi and earning the fame that other dream for, Umer still addresses himself as a tourist intending to go back to his homeland once call for the same is made by his heart.

“The peace of life is missing here,” the mountain man said.

“I am enjoying my stay here but it’s not permanent. The moment I would realize that my time has come, I’ll quietly move back to my Kashmir.”

## SSB Man Attempts

The injured SSB man, officials said, was rushed instantly to the nearby SKIMS Bemina hospital for treatment, officials said.

Meanwhile, Police have registered a case and initiated proceedings, they added.

## Tourist Dies

The official said that after completion of legal formalities, the body of the deceased would be flown back to his native town.

## Militant Associate

the search operation was launched on the basis of information regarding presence of JeM militants in the village.

“Upon on spot questioning one hand grenade was recovered from him which he had concealed in the compound of his home. The arrested militant associate has been in touch with the militant commanders of Jaish in Tral and across the country,” the police spokesperson said.

He further said that a case FIR number 13/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Tral.

“Further investigation is going on,” he added.

## Pandey Takes

Pandey, he said, underscored the need for involving modern and new media platforms to spread awareness about Government activities and its welfare programmes.

“The Director Information also inspected different units of the Department and interacted with the officers and employees,” the official spokesperson added.

## Timber ‘Smuggler’

damage cases registered against him since 2010.

The accused has been arrested and sent to Kot Bhalwal jail, the official added.



## Team India Trains For Final Test, Top Guns Go Full Throttle At Nets

Press Trust of India

**AHMEDABAD:** Skipper Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane went full throttle at the nets as the Indian cricket team on Monday trained in earnest for the upcoming fourth and final Test against England.

The fourth Test starts here on Thursday.

Kohli, his deputy Rahane and senior opener Rohit were seen batting at the nets in a video posted by the BCCI on Twitter.

The three senior players drove, pulled and flicked against the fast bowlers and spinners at the Narendra Modi Stadium here.

Head coach Ravi Shastri was seen interacting with Rohit and Kohli before the two star batsmen sat together for a discussion.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel, who bagged 11 wickets in India's

thumping win in the pink ball Test at the same venue, was seen rolling his arms over at the nets against some of the world's best batsmen.

They were also seen fielding with Rahane, standing next to Rohit in the second slip position, taking a one-handed diving catch to his right.

The Kohli-led Indian team lost the first Test in Chennai by 227 runs, but bounced back with a 317-run hammering of the visitors in the second Test.

In the previous match, India shot out England for 112 and 81 to wrap up the Test inside two days on a challenging Motera track.

The Indian team had a full-fledged practice session here on Sunday as well.

Leading 2-1 in the series, India will be without top pacer Jasprit Bumrah in the final Test as he has been released from the squad.

## Afridi, Wiese Lead Lahore Qalandars To Victory Over Karachi Kings In PSL



Agencies

**KARACHI:** Shaheen Afridi's ferocious pace and David Wiese's late charge spurred Lahore Qalandars to a six-wicket win over defending champion Karachi Kings in the Pakistan Super League.

Afridi returned figures of 3-27, with his bowling reaching speeds of 94 mph (around 150 kph) on Sunday. That helped to restrict Karachi to 186-9 despite half centuries by Sharjeel Khan (64) and Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi (57).

Wiese's blistering 31 not out off nine balls carried Lahore to 189-4 in 19.2 overs in reply as the tall South African clubbed two successive sixes against Australian fast bowler Daniel Christian to finish off the game.

Karachi had a sniff of victory when Lahore required 30 off the last two overs. But Mohammad Amir's 19th over went for 20 with Wiese getting two fortunate edges to the boundary and then lofting the fast bowler over long off for a six.

"To be honest, I always felt we were in with a shout in that situation," Wiese said.

"Sometimes you smash it straight to the fielder, so those little nicks count. We've seen towards the back end it's difficult to defend here with one short boundary."

Fakhar Zaman scored a brilliant 83 off 54 balls and Ben Dunk remained unbeaten on 57 after Lahore had slipped to 0-2 in the first over and then also lost key bats-

man Mohammad Hafeez for 15 inside the batting powerplay.

Both left-handers shared a 119-run stand before Zaman holed out in the deep in the 18th over. But Wiese's late onslaught carried the team home.

Afridi could have picked up five wickets but Lahore skipper Sohail Akhtar, who won the toss and didn't hesitate to field, dropped a sitter from Khan in the first over.

Babar Azam (5) was clean bowled by Afridi in his second over but only after Zaman failed to hold onto a sharp chance offered by Pakistan's premier batsman, who went to cut Afridi's short-of-length delivery.

Afridi pegged back Karachi's hopes of going closer to 200 runs when he clean bowled Waqas Maqsood and Amir off vicious yorkers in the last over.

"They shouldn't have chased it down, but credit goes to Fakhar and David Wiese how they played," said Karachi captain Imad Wasim, who surprisingly did not bowl.

"At the end, we should have scored 40 or 50 off the last four overs but we couldn't because of some bad shots and runouts."

It was the 11th straight successful chase in this season's PSL with no team yet to defend the total after being put into bat by the opposition.

The win pushed Lahore to the top of the points table alongside Peshawar Zalmi with both teams on six points after four games. Karachi has four points.



## Rising Above Marks, This Kashmiri Roller-Skater is Creating His Own Milestones

Romaan Arora

**SRINAGAR:** On a cold February day, a boy in the Parimpora locality of Srinagar is shining his boots for a life-changing marathon.

While the race is usual for others, it's about a hard-earned reputation for him.

"I've been doing this since I was a kid," says Basharat Ahad Mir while tying his shoelaces. "It's a passion for me."

Basharat was only three years old when he won his first race. Since then, he has never stopped.

"I started roller-skating when I was nine," he recalls. "Then came ice-skating two years later."

Now 18, the skater claims to be a self-inspired sportsman, yet the motivation for ice-skating came from his desire to represent his homeland in Olympics one day.

Basharat's sports transition may appear simple, but for him, it was more complex than the Rubik's cube.

At the age of 12, when most of the kids are busy worrying about their grades and managing their cricket time with that of their tuitions, Basharat was mastering five sports — roller-skating, ice-skating, athletics, skiing, and cycling.

Eventually, he decided to go ahead with cycling — a decision made to regret.

"I gave it four precious years of my life, but fate had a different plan for me," he recounts.

From 2014 till 2019, Basharat had put all of himself into cycling, a sport he mastered to such an extent that he started believing he shall be the first cyclist from Kashmir to win a medallion at Olympics.

To his misfortune, he had all his dream of being a successful cyclist shattered, after three years of incessant failure.

Even after doing everything impeccable in each of the three trials over three precious years, he was still disqualified, without any explanation.

"I did everything perfectly, yet I wasn't selected," he recalls the painful moments of his life. "The first time it happened, I believed I would conquer it in the second trial next year."

But, he continues, when the same thing happened for three straight years, he made his decision to quit. For the next few months, the young boy went through depression to such an extent that he attempted suicide thrice in one month.

"It was the worst period of my life," he said. "I wish no one ever gets to face what I faced."

With the cloud of failure roaming all over his head and suggestions to take drugs pouring in from some sides, Basharat still remembers how he got the second life out of nowhere.

"One day, while I was countering suicidal thoughts, I got my eyes over my skates lying in a trash box. I took them and went to the field to give a second chance to my already crumbling life."

And as they say that the result of hard work can be delayed but stopped, so was the case with Basharat.



"I went to Delhi for U-19 Ice Skating selection trials. I had to borrow skates from Gulmarg Ice Skating Authority," he recalls with a radiant smile over his face.

Wearing skates with rusted blades and giving a trial in the heart of India was full of skull-breaking pressure, that too in the blistering heat of May.

However, the young boy from the mountains not only out-classed hundreds of professionals but redeemed himself in style.

Living up to the expectations, Basharat secured fourth place in the trials and got selected for the Under-19 Ice Skater's Championship in Belarus, something even he didn't expect from himself.

The Kashmiri boy was probably the only Ice skater who got selected at the national level without ever hiring a professional coach.

Nevertheless, when he had to go for the championship, he fell short of funds. But, even then, he found his way.

"I got sponsored by the DC Srinagar and my school [Burrn Hall School]," he narrates. "I will always remain indebted to them for the trust they placed on me."

Leading from the front, he played the most pivotal role in Team India's victory in the junior

short track speed skating championship held by International Skating Union in Belarus. A rousing reception on his return as a champion thrilled the youngster.

"After that feat, everyone started recognizing me," he remembers with amusement. "I started witnessing respect for myself in the eyes of my competitors. I was never happier."

Soon, however, the boy realized what every sportsperson from his age realizes at one point in time — the mismanagement between sports and study.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

## Khajuria, Nazir Centuries Earn J&K 8-Wicket Victory Over Chandigarh

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In what proved to be a batting masterclass, opener Shubham Khajuria (120) and one-down batsman, Henan Nazir (110 not out) scored a hundred each on Monday to give Jammu and Kashmir a much-needed victory over a formidable Chandigarh side in the Vijay Hazare Group E match at Jadavpur University Campus 2nd Ground, Kolkata.

Batting first after winning the toss, Chandigarh were bowled out for a total of 241 runs in 48.3 overs.

Captain Manan Vohra (54), Ankit Kaushik (44) and Raman Bishnoi (31) were the top scorers for Chandigarh. For Jammu and Kashmir, Umar Nazir, Captain Parvez Rasool and Aquib Nabi took three wickets each.

In reply, J&K lost opener Suryansh Raina (1) early on but Shubham Khajuria and Henan Nazir held firm to combine together for a 183-run partnership.

Shubham Khajuria scored 120 runs in just 86 balls, smacking 5 sixes and 15 fours in the process. Henan Nazir scored an unbeaten 110 from 88 balls, dispatching 1 six and 16 fours.

The J&K team, helped by the duo's scintillating batting performance, overcame Chandigarh's total in 34 overs and with the loss of just 2 wickets.

For Chandigarh, Jaskaran Singh and Bhagmender Lather took 1 wicket each. The defeat dashed Chandigarh's hopes of direct qualification to the next round of Vijay Hazare Trophy.

## Manzi Brace Helps Mohemmadan Sporting Beat Real Kashmir 2-0 In I-League



Press Trust of India

**KOLKATA:** Pedro Manzi's brace -- a long-range stunner, and a header -- helped a 10-man Mohammedan SC beat Real Kashmir FC 2-0 in an I-League match in Kolkata on Sunday.

This is Real Kashmir's first defeat in the tournament while Mohammedan Sporting with 16 points from 10 games have now ensured a top-six finish.

After skipper Kingsley Eze was sent off in the first half, Pedro proved to be the trump card for Mohammedan as he scored two goals in the space of five minutes in the second half to lead the Black Panthers into top half.

Despite dominating possession for much of the first half, a listless performance in the attacking department let Mohammedan SC down again, in the first half.

Even new recruit Maanzy could not work his magic in a half where Mohammedan had almost 80 per cent ball possession.

The Black Panthers could only muster half-chances and Vanlalbiaa Chhangte proved to be a live-wire in the final third.

His shot in the 16th minute came agonisingly close to handing Mohammedan the lead after he was released onto goal by Manzi. However, Chhangte, from a very tight angle, could only help it away from the goal.

Meanwhile, Real Kashmir enjoyed sitting deep and tried to attack through long balls for Lukman Adefemi and Mason Robertson up front.

The Snow Leopards, boasting one of the best defensive records in the league, played as though they had shut-shop for any Mohammedan attack, comfortably keeping their opponents at bay.

Chhangte once again came close in the 25th minute after Rahman's free-kick looped over the Real Kashmir defensive line and found an on-side Chhangte.

The forward went for the spectacular in the form of a bicycle kick but failed to force the goalkeeper into conceding.

However, one long ball from the Real Kashmir defence turned the game around in the 34th minute when Lukman Adefemi, straight onto the goal, was hacked down by Kingsley Eze. Eze was shown a straight red card as the Black Panthers were reduced to 10-men.

Real Kashmir could have taken the lead in the added time of the first half, but Adefemi's through ball to Mason Robertson in the box was intercepted heroically by Rahman.

After the half-time scoreline read goalless, the Snow Leopards came out from the tunnel spurred and almost took the lead in the 48th minute.

Ralte's cross from the flank found an unmarked Pawan Kumar in the back post, but Pawan could only head it into the side netting as Mohammedan survived.

In the 61st minute, a half-chance for Haroon Amiri was saved well by the opposition custodian, after the defender tried a half volley on the turn from inside the box.

The best chance of the match fell to Manzi in the 70th minute. After Real Kashmir's goalkeeper had made an uncanny save from a long shot, the ball fell to Manzi who was inches away from the goal. Despite having a clear shot at the goal, he went for the spectacular and missed from close range.

But all it took for Manzi was a moment of pure genius to announce his return as he exercised his miss before.

In a deja vu of his goal in the 2018-18 edition of the Hero I-League when he was playing for Chennai City FC, Manzi once again delivered a goal for the highlight reels.

The forward saw the opposition goalkeeper off his lines and shot from inside his own half to hand Mohammedan the lead in the 74th minute.

## England Appoint Marcus Trescothick As Batting Coach While Jon Lewis, Jeetan Patel Join As Bowling Coaches

Press Trust of India

**LONDON:** England on Monday appointed former opener Marcus Trescothick as the new batting coach of the national team, besides roping in Jon Lewis and New Zealand's Jeetan Patel as bowling and spin bowling coaches on permanent basis.

These three are part of the four new appointments to England's coaching set-up, which is being headed by chief coach Chris Silverwood. The team is currently touring India and is down 1-2 in a four-match Test series.

Trescothick will take over from Jonathan Trott, who replaced South African Jacques Kallis in the ongoing tour. Kallis had played the role of a batting consultant for England in Sri Lanka.

"...I'm really excited about the calibre of the individuals that we've appointed into these specialist roles. Marcus, Jon and Jeetan have demonstrated their ability at

the highest level and also show huge potential for the future," England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) performance director Mo Bobat said in a statement.

Trescothick, who scored over 10,000 international runs across formats between 2000 and 2006, is expected to take up his new role in mid-March after stepping down from his position as assistant coach at Somerset.

"Working alongside Carl Hopkinson, our current Elite Fielding Coach, we have the makings of a strong specialist coaching team, possessing a diverse range of experience," Bobat said.

Besides, Richard Dawson will leave his role as Gloucestershire head coach to become England's elite pathway coach.

Current Young Lions head coach and former Gloucestershire seamer Lewis has been promoted to the role of pace bowling coach in a permanent capacity.

### GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

### J&K POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR KASHMIR

Sheikh-ul-K-Alam Complex, Rajbagh, near Government Silk Factory, Srinagar-190008

www.jkpspcb.nic.in email: regionaldirectorkmr@gmail.com Tel 0194-2135911/telefax 2311842

### PUBLIC NOTICE

### SAY NO TO NOISE POLLUTION

Use of Sound Limiter for Loud Speakers/ Public Address Systems is mandatory

- The Government of J&K Notification S.O 30 dt. 02-02-2021 has designated the:
  - (a) District Magistrate
  - (b) Senior Superintendent of Police
  - (c) Any other Officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendents of Police, and
  - (d) Any other Officer of the concerned Local Bodies, in their area of jurisdiction as authorities to take action against all aspects of Noise Pollution to avoid noise menace to maintain ambient air quality standards in respect of noise.
- These authorities to ensure that no Audio System or Public Address System shall be let out/ installed without being fitted with Sound Limiter in any Government or non-Government function in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Further, no Sound System/ Public Address System should be sold/purchased/supplied/ used by any manufacturer/dealer/shopkeeper/any agency/individual, without having Sound Limiter fitted in it.

Issued in public interest by J&K Pollution Control Board.

Sd/-(Rafi Ahmad Bhat) SFS  
Regional Director Kashmir

DIPK-NB-6063/20



## Amidst Border Tension, Chinese Hackers Targeted India's Power Through Malware: US firm

Agenceis

**Washington:** Amidst the tense border situation between India and China, a Chinese government-linked group of hackers targeted India's critical power grid system through malware, a US company has said in its latest study, raising suspicion whether last year's massive power outage in Mumbai was a result of the online intrusion.

Recorded Future, a Massachusetts-based company which studies the use of the internet by state actors, in its recent report details the campaign conducted by a China-linked threat activity group RedEcho targeting the Indian power sector.

The activity was identified through a combination of large-scale automated network traffic analytics and expert analysis.

Data sources include the Recorded Future Platform, SecurityTrails, Spur, Farsight and common open-source tools and techniques, the report said.

In New Delhi, the Ministry of Power on Monday said there is no impact on operations of Power System Operation Corporation (POSOCO) due to any malware attack and that prompt actions are taken on advisories issued against such threats.

Responding on the findings of the study, the ministry said, "There is no impact on any of the functionalities carried out by POSOCO due to the referred threat. No data breach/ data loss has been detected due to these incidents."

It further said, "Prompt actions are being taken by the CISOs (chief information security officers) at all these control centres under operation by POSOCO for any incident/advisory received from various agencies like CERT-in, NCIPPC, CERT-Trans etc."

The CERT-in (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) is the nodal agency to deal with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing. However, the ministry did not mention about the Mumbai outage in its statement.

On October 12, a grid failure in Mumbai resulted in massive power outages, stopping trains on tracks, hampering those working from home amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and hitting the economic activity hard.

In its report, Recorded Future notified the appropriate Indian government departments prior to publication of the suspected intrusions to support incident response and remediation investigations within the impacted organisations.

Since early 2020, Recorded Future's Insikt Group observed a large increase in suspected targeted intrusion activity against Indian organisations from the Chinese state-sponsored group.

The New York Times, in a report, said the discovery raises the ques-

tion about whether the Mumbai outage was meant as a message from Beijing about what might happen if India pushed its border claims too vigorously.

In response to the US firm's allegation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Monday rejected the criticism about China's involvement in the hacking of India's power grid, saying it is "irresponsible and ill-intentioned" practice.

"As a staunch defender of cyber security, China firmly opposes and cracks down on all forms of cyber attacks. Speculation and fabrication have no role to play on the issue of cyber attacks, as it is very difficult to trace the origin of a cyber attack."

"It is highly irresponsible to accuse a particular party when there is no sufficient evidence around. China is firmly opposed to such irresponsible and ill-intentioned practice," Wang said in Beijing.

According to the Recorded Future report, from mid-2020 onwards, Recorded Future's midpoint collection revealed a steep rise in the use of infrastructure tracked as AXIOMATI-CASYMPTOTE, which encompasses ShadowPad command and control (C2) servers, to target a large swathe of India's power sector.

Ten distinct Indian power sector organisations, including four of the five Regional Load Despatch Centres responsible for operation of the power grid through balancing electricity supply and demand, have been identified as targets in a concerted campaign against India's critical infrastructure.

Other targets identified included two Indian seaports, it said, adding the targeting of Indian critical infrastructure offers limited economic espionage opportunities.

"However, we assess they pose significant concerns over potential pre-positioning of network access to support Chinese strategic objectives."

"Pre-positioning on energy assets may support several potential outcomes, including geostrategic signalling during heightened bilateral tensions, supporting influence operations, or as a precursor to kinetic escalation," it said.

RedEcho has strong infrastructure and victimology overlaps with Chinese groups APT41/Barium and Tonto Team, while ShadowPad is used by at least five distinct Chinese groups, it said.

Recorded Future said in the lead-up to the May 2020 border skirmishes, it observed a noticeable increase in the provisioning of PlugX malware C2 infrastructure, much of which was subsequently used in intrusion activity targeting Indian organisations.

"The PlugX activity included the targeting of multiple Indian government, public sector and defence organisations from at least May 2020," it said.



## Saudi Arabia Maintains Neutrality Over Kashmir Issue

Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** Much to Pakistan's dismay and India's delight, Saudi Arabia maintained neutrality over the Kashmir issue, even when Islamabad is making all efforts to mend its relations with the Gulf country and is wooing it to change its stance.

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, his government has had good relations with Saudi Arabia. After the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Riyadh in October 2019, Saudi Arabia has maintained neutrality over Kashmir and backed India on cross-border terrorism, said Abhinav Pandya, a strategic analyst and the CEO of Usanas Foundation, an India based think tank, told The Epoch Times.

The Saudis have had ambiguous stands on Kashmir on various global diplomatic forums—many times they supported Pakistan's stance before they recently took to neutrality in India's favour.

"Three events of 1979 had a direct impact on Kashmir [seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the Islamic Revolution of Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan]," said Pandya.

"After 1979, the Saudis sponsored Wahhabism across the globe." Muslim majority Kashmir became a "natural choice for Wahhabi proselytization" because of the deep penetration of Pakistan, which had historically close relations with the Saudis, added Pandya.

The rift between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia started when Riyadh didn't heed Pakistan's demand to call a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC, which Saudi Arabia leads) to discuss the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's internal political status by the Modi govt.

"Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi asked Saudis to show 'leadership' and threatened that if Saudi doesn't call a meeting of the foreign ministers of the OIC over Kashmir, Pakistan will be forced to go to Iran, Malaysia, and Turkey for support," said Madiha Afzal, in an analysis for the Brookings Institute.

Meanwhile, the Saudis also denied permission to the Pakistan embassy in Riyadh and the consulate in Jeddah to organise Kashmir black day programs on October 27 last year.

The ruler of Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India on October 27, 1947, and Pakistan observes that date as the Kashmir Black Day every year.

In recent years, India's relationships with the Arab countries have significantly improved, particularly with Saudi Arabia because India is an emerging economy and a key global market.

"Riyadh, like many countries, sees India as an important player, as a key market and a country that it doesn't want to antagonize. Obviously, if you refrain from supporting the Kashmir cause publicly that certainly will help your cause with India," said Michael Kugelman, the Deputy Director of the Asia Program at the Wilson Center in Washington, DC.

There are multiple geopolitical reasons vis-a-vis Pakistan that have influenced the Saudi stance over Kashmir.

Afzal said that Saudis didn't take kindly to Pakistan's "overt pressure" last year and immediately recalled a USD 1 billion loan it gave to Pakistan in 2018 as part of a USD 3 billion loan.

Hamid Bahrami, author and an independent Middle East analyst based in Glasgow, told The Epoch Times over a chat platform that

new and asymmetric blocks are emerging in the geopolitical arena, and the Saudis have lost some interest in its relationship with Pakistan, which is impacting the Saudi stance over Kashmir as well.

"Since Pakistan has disappointed Saudi regarding the war in Yemen, and Pakistan took neutrality between Saudi and Iran, MBS (Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman) has been convinced that the current Pakistani approach is not favouring him," said Bahrami.

"Moreover, Pakistan political establishment has a positive view of MBS' political rival inside the Saudi royal family." Bahrami said the close relations of Saudis with the United States and Pakistan's close ties with US rival China also add to the dynamics of foreign policies in Kashmir.

"The main threat is China, and unfortunately, Pakistan is paving Beijing's way to access the Middle East through the port of Gwadar. This is a serious threat to the Saudi-US camp. I consider Iran-Pakistan-Turkey-China-Russia as an asymmetric camp with different interests but the same rivals," said Bahrami. The United States and Saudis are moving closer to India than to Pakistan to control China and the emerging asymmetric camp, he said.

"If we want to get deeper, MBS' view about geopolitics and protecting Saudi interests is not based on a religious agenda of supporting Wahhabism. MBS' seeks economic development under 'Vision 2030' and Pakistan does not have enough capacity for a profitable bilateral relation with Saudi," said Bahrami.

Moreover, the Chinese equation with Pakistan has complicated the situation, and MBS, according to Bahrami, is sending a warning to Pakistan.

## Tejashwi Tells Biharis Living In Bengal To Back Mamata, Prefers Silence On Alliance

Press Trust of India

**KOLKATA:** Seeking to forge unity among secular parties in the West Bengal assembly elections, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav met Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday and appealed to the people from Bihar domiciled here to vote for the ruling TMC.

Emerging from a meeting with Banerjee at the state secretariat, Yadav said that the first priority of his party was to stop the BJP's progress in West Bengal.

He, however, avoided giving a straightforward answer to ques-

tions by journalists about whether the RJD will contest the elections in alliance with the TMC, saying the upcoming polls will be a fight for saving "ideals and values".

"Our party's stand is to provide full support to Mamataji," he said, appealing to the people from Bihar domiciled in Bengal to stand with Banerjee's party.

Banerjee, on her part, said she and jailed RJD supremo Lalu Prasad share "mutual respect".

"When we are fighting, it is brother Tejashwi who is also fighting, we are together," Banerjee said.

BHIMA KOREGAON CASE

## Supreme Court To Hear Bail Plea Of Activist Gautam Navlakha On Wednesday

Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Wednesday the bail plea of activist Gautam Navlakha in the alleged Elgar Parishad-Maoist link case.

The activist, on February 19, had moved the top court against the Bombay High Court order of February 8 dismissing his bail plea.

The high court had said that "it sees no reason to interfere with a special court's order which earlier rejected his bail plea".

A three-judge bench of the top court comprising justices U U Lalit, Indira Banerjee, and K M Joseph would take up the appeal of Gautam Navlakha for hearing on March 3 against the high court's order.

According to police, some activists allegedly made inflammatory speeches and provocative statements at the Elgar Parishad meet in Pune on December 31, 2017, which triggered violence at Koregaon Bhima in the district the next day.

Police also alleged that the event was backed by some Maoist groups.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is conducting a probe into the case.

Gautam Navlakha had approached the high court last year, challenging the special NIA court's order of July 12, 2020, that rejected his plea for statutory bail.

On December 16 last year, the high court bench reserved its verdict on the plea filed by Gautam Navlakha, seeking statutory or default bail on grounds that he had been in custody for over 90 days, but the prosecution failed to file a charge sheet in the case within this period.

The NIA had argued that his plea was not maintainable, and sought an extension to file the charge sheet.

The special court had then ac-

cepted NIA's plea seeking an extension of 90 to 180 days to file the charge sheet against Gautam Navlakha and his co-accused, activist Dr Anand Teltumbde.

Gautam Navlakha's counsel had told the high court that the NIA was granted the extension to file its charge sheet.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal had said Gautam Navlakha had already spent 93 days in custody, including 34 days of house arrest, and that the high court must count house arrest as a period of custody.

While he was under house arrest, Gautam Navlakha's personal liberties remained curtailed, Kapil Sibal had said. However, Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who appeared for the NIA, had argued that Gautam Navlakha's house arrest could not be included in the time spent in the custody of police or NIA, or under judicial custody.

SV Raju argued that the Pune police arrested Gautam Navlakha in August 2018, but had not taken him into custody. He said the accused remained under house arrest, and the Delhi High Court quashed his arrest and remand order in October 2018.

The FIR against him was re-registered in January 2020, and Gautam Navlakha surrendered before the NIA on April 14.

He spent 11 days in the NIA's custody till April 25 and since then he in judicial custody in the Taloja jail in neighbouring Navi Mumbai.

SV Raju had argued that if the court "looked from the other angle, it would see that if he (Gautam Navlakha) was arrested on August 28, 2018, he should have been enlarged on bail."

"He was a free man till April 2020. He was neither on bail nor in custody. There cannot be a gap in the custody and detention period," SV Raju had said.

## Are You Willing To Marry Her, SC Asks Man Accused Of Raping Girl, Grants Protection From Arrest

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** "Are you willing to marry her," was the question posed to a public servant, who is accused of repeatedly raping a minor girl but when the Supreme Court on Monday was told that he is already married he was asked to seek regular bail from the concerned court.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde was hearing a plea filed by the accused who is serving as a technician in Maharashtra State Electricity Production Company Ltd and has moved the apex court against the Bombay High Court February 5 order which had cancelled the anticipatory bail granted to him in the case.

When the hearing commenced, the Bench also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, asked the accused "Are you willing to marry her?"

"If you are willing to marry her



then we can consider it, otherwise you will go to jail," observed the Bench adding "we are not forcing you to marry".

After taking instructions on the query posed by the Bench, the counsel appearing for the petitioner, said the accused was initially willing to marry the girl but

she had refused and now he was married to someone else.

As the counsel said that the accused is a public servant, the Bench said, "You should have thought this before seducing and raping the girl. You knew that you are a government servant."

The counsel said charges in the

case are yet to be framed.

"You apply for regular bail. We will stay arrest," the Bench said.

The apex court granted the accused protection from arrest for four weeks. The top court was hearing a plea filed by the accused against the Bombay High Court's February 5 order cancelling the anticipatory bail granted to him by the trial court in January last year.

He has also been accused of offences punishable under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

In his plea filed in the top court, he has referred to the Maharashtra Civil Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules 1979 and said it pointed out that if a government servant is detained in police custody under criminal charges for a period of 48 hours, then he shall be deemed to have been placed under suspension by an order of appointing authority.

## Above Normal Summer Temperatures Likely Across Country: IMD

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Day temperatures are likely to be above normal in north, northeast, parts of east and west India, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday in its summer forecast for March to May. However, it has forecast a likelihood of below normal temperatures in south and adjoining central India.

"During the upcoming hot weather season (March to May),



above normal seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of north, northwest and northeast India, few subdivisions from eastern and western parts of central India and few coastal subdivisions of north peninsular India.

"However, below normal seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of south peninsula and adjoining central India," it added. PTI

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