



P5 STATE

PSAJK OFFERS GOVT TO TAKE OVER STUDENTS' TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department Thursday held a road show at Ahmedabad in Guajrat as part of its promotional campaigns across India to attract tourists...

P7 THINK

WHEN POPE VISITS GRAND AYATOLLAH

ALL eyes are on the 84-year-old pontiff's first-ever pastoral pilgrimage to the birthplace of Prophet Abraham (AS) in Iraq and his historic meeting with Grand Ayatollah Sayed Ali...



P11 SPORTS

PANT CENTURY CARRIES INDIA TO 294/7 ON DAY 2 OF FINAL TEST AGAINST ENGLAND

Rishabh Pant changed his game-plan and in turn India's fortunes with a magnificent century, helping the side snatch control from England's grip to finish the second....

**Widom Quote!**

Spoon feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon.
— E.M. Forster

NEWS DIGEST**J&K Records 81 New Cases, 1 Death**

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir on Friday recorded 81 new coronavirus cases, raising the tally to 1,26,853, officials said. The union territory also reported one death due to the infection in the past 24 hours, they said. Of the fresh cases, 20 were detected from the Jammu division and 61 from the Kashmir division. The officials said Srinagar district recorded the highest of 35 cases, ● [More On P10](#)

8 Gamblers Held In Raids: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday claimed to have arrested eight gamblers in separate raids in Sumbal and Awantipora town of north and south Kashmir. After receiving a tip-off, a police team carried out a raid at village Pushwari in Naidkhai Sumbal and apprehended four gamblers from the spot, a police spokesperson said Friday. He said playing cards and an amount of Rs 28,100/- were recovered from their possession. ● [More On P10](#)

Arms Recovered In Reasi, 1 Held

JAMMU: Police on Friday arrested a man and recovered arms and ammunition from a hideout in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, officials said. Reyaz Ahmed, 21, was apprehended by a police team from Mahore town, they said. On interrogation in the presence of the executive magistrate, Mahore, he disclosed that he has hidden a cache of arms and ammunition in a hideout located between Makhidhar and upper ● [More On P10](#)

2 Men Wanted In Jammu Robbery Case Held

THANE: Two people wanted in an armed robbery case in Jammu and Kashmir were held in Thane in Maharashtra, police said on Friday. The case against the two among others was registered in Jammu's Bahu Fort police station on January 31 this year after a gang entered a house there and robbed it at gun-point, said Mumbai police station senior inspector Madhukar Kad. Acting on a tip off from ● [More On P10](#)

Heroin-Like Substance Seized In Poonch

POONCH: Heroine-like substance weighing 840 grams has been recovered from Mendhar town, police said on Friday. Senior Superintendent of Police Poonch Ramesh Angal said that on a specific input, a police team along with Army's 37 RR and NCCIU launched a joint operation in Dharana area of Mendhar. "During search, around 840 grams of heroin like substance was found" he said. The police team which was part of operation was ● [More On P10](#)

Following Developments In J&K Closely: US**'Will Continue To Support Direct Dialogue Between India, Pak On Kashmir'**

File Photo

Press Trust Of India

WASHINGTON: A day after welcoming the steps taken by New Delhi to return Jammu and Kashmir to full economic and political normalcy, the United States said on Thursday that the Biden

administration will continue to support direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on Kashmir and other areas of concern. "We have continued to follow very closely developments in Jammu and Kashmir. Our policy towards the region ● [More On P10](#)

WHEN IT COMES TO HOW WE WILL support that, we continue to support direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on Kashmir and other areas of concern."

'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav'**LG Calls For Grand Celebrations In J&K**

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday directed administrative secretaries to organise various commemoration activities across the union territory as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav', a central government programme to mark 75 years of India's independence, an official spokesperson said.

Chairing a high-level meeting on preparations for the programme at the

civil secretariat here, Sinha also asked the officials to ensure that birthplaces of freedom fighters are selected for curtain-raiser events on March 12.

The LG called for grand celebrations for 'Azaadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' across Jammu and Kashmir and directed the administrative secretaries to organise various commemoration activities to mark the beginning of the programme, the spokesperson said.

He issued instructions for holding ● [More On P10](#)



ALL DEPARTMENTS WERE DIRECTED to submit their respective action plan with the detailed calendar of commemoration activities for 75 weeks, covering all districts.

Militants Attack Police Post, Trigger IED Blast

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Suspected militants on Friday lobbed a grenade towards a police post in Fateh Kadal area of the Old City here and triggered off a low intensity improvised explosive device (IED) in south Kashmir's Pulwama district, officials said.

Panic gripped Urdu Bazar locality of Fateh Kadal on Friday evening when suspected militants hurled a grenade towards a police post that exploded with a bang, officials said.

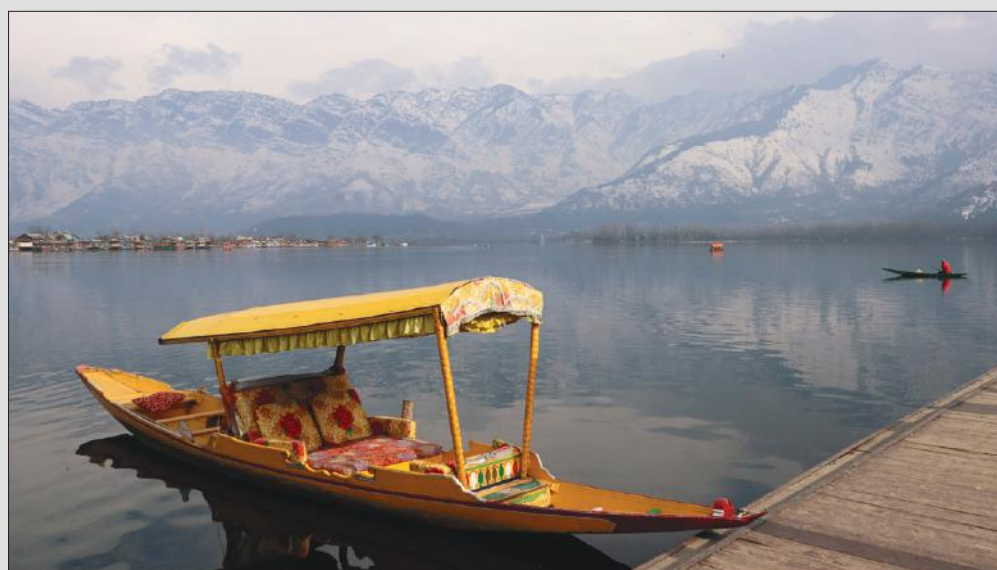
However, they added that the grenade attack did not cause any loss of life or injury.

Soon after the attack, additional forces of police and CRPF reached the area to launch a manhunt to nab the attackers.

Meanwhile, suspected militants triggered off a low intensity IED blast in Dangerpora area of Pulwama district, officials said.

However, they said there was no loss of life or injury reported in the explosion which took place at Dangerpora area.

A senior police officer said that the small sized IED was placed near a shop "there was no loss of life ● [More On P10](#)



File Photo

Mercury Dips In Parts Of Kashmir Amid Rain Forecast

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Barring Srinagar and Qazigund, the minimum temperatures decreased across Valley ahead of the wet weekend predicted by the weather department from Saturday.

A meteorological department official said that Srinagar recorded a low of 4.2 degree Celsius against 3.9 degree

Celsius on the previous night. The temperature was 2.2 degree Celsius above normal for this time of the year in this summer capital, the official said.

Qazigund recorded a low of 2.3 degree Celsius against 2.2 degree Celsius on the previous night while the mercury settled at minus 0.3 degree Celsius at the famous resort of Pahalgam against ● [More On P10](#)

Two Way Traffic On Highway Today

The Jammu-Srinagar highway, the only surface link connecting Kashmir Valley with the outside world, will reopen for two ways on Saturday, officials said. "Tomorrow (March 6), ● [More On P10](#)

MP Akbar Lone's Son Released On Bail

Agencies

BANDIPORA: National conference leader Hilal Akbar Lone, who was booked under UAPA, was released after additional session judge Baramulla granted him bail in a "hate speech" case that was registered against him by Hajin police a month ago, officials said Friday.

An official said that Hilal Lone, who is also the elder son of member parliament from north Kashmir and senior NC leader Mohammad Akbar Lone was released late Thursday night.

He said Additional Session Judge Baramulla granted bail to Hilal in a hate speech case that was registered against him by Hajin Police, a month ago.

Earlier, Hilal was booked under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for delivering a "hate ● [More On P10](#)

Police Orders Seizure Of Vehicles Over Militancy

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Carrying out its crackdown against alleged militant supporters, the Jammu and Kashmir police on Friday ordered seizure of five vehicles to restrict militant activities in the Union Territory.

In exercise of power conferred by section 25 of Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, (UAPA), Jammu and Kashmir Police Headquarters has accorded permission for seizure of five vehicles to restrict the militant activities in Jammu and Kashmir," a handout issued by police here said Friday.

It further said that following

due procedures of the law, the police have accorded sanction for seizure of four vehicles which included a Mahindra Bolero, a load carrier, an Eon Car, a Tavera vehicle besides a truck through different orders to ensure that the militant activities are kept under check.

"These vehicles were used for transportation of arms/ammunition and militants. In 2021 so far, PHQ has accorded sanction for seizure of fifteen vehicles which include ten four wheelers and five two wheelers. The permission for seizure has been granted under section 25 Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967," ● [More On P10](#)

World's Highest Rail Bridge On Chenab Nearing Completion

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The world's highest railway bridge on Chenab river in Jammu division is all set to be ready this year.

Officials said that the Chenab bridge is being built in the deep gorge and the main arch of the bridge has a length of 476 metres which is the largest arch in India. They said that once this arch will be complete, work will be started on track laying beside the viaduct.

The bridge is built at a height of 359 metres above the river bed and is said to be around 30 metres taller than



File Photo

the Eiffel Tower. The length of the bridge is one kilometre and 315 metres.

Sources said that due to

inclement weather and challenging terrains bridge has missed several deadlines so far.

They said that ● [More On P10](#)

DELIMITATION EXERCISE**ECI Puts On Hold Special Summary Revision In J&K**

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Since re-organisation of Jammu & Kashmir, the Election Commission of India has not undertaken its annual exercise of revision of electoral roll in the newly carved out Union Territory, sources disclosed Friday.

They said that the poll-body will not undertake special summary revision of voters in the UT till delimitation exercise is not completed.

"The ECI doesn't carry out special summary revision of electoral roll in the States and Union Territories where the

delimitation exercise is underway or where polls are scheduled," they said, adding that Special Summary Revision-2020 and SSR-2021 were not carried out in the UT due to the delimitation exercise.

A delimitation commission was set-up by central government on March 05, 2020 to fix boundaries for Assembly and Parliamentary segments of the UT.

The panel headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice (ret'd.) Ranjana Desai and comprising Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and J&K's State Election ● [More On P10](#)

Public Notice

I am applying for the issuance of Fertilizer license under name and style "OG AgRow Bonabazar Shopian ". If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Chief Agriculture Officer Shopian within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Owais Ahamd Turay
S/O Mohammad Yaseen Turay
R/o New Coloney Gagren Shopian

ast

Public Notice

It is to inform to all that my name is wrongly entered as Yas-meena Akhter instead Yasmeena Kounsar in my met life policy no 20483296 which is due to withdrawl. So In this connection I am going to withdraw money. If any body having any objection in this regard can contact PNB Metlife. 3 Hadika Complex Baghat Barzulla Srinagar within a weeks time. After that no objection shall be entertaiend.

Yasmeena Kounsar

SULT

Public Notice

My Date Of Birth has been wrongly written in school records as 16-11-2013 while my correct DOB is 16-11-2015 which needs immediate correction. if any body having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Mohamadia High School Kunzer within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Aayat Jan D/O Shahnawaz Ahamd Dar
R/o Gutabal Kunzer

BMG

Public Notice

I am applying for the issuance of Fertilizer license under name and style "Evergreen Fertilizer Balpora ". If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Chief Agriculture Officer Shopian within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Tawseef Ahmad Dar
S/o Gh Mohd Dar R/O Balpora Shopian

ast

THE J&K BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL (BOPEE) ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS

Tel/Fax: 0194-2433590- , 2437647 (srinagar) : 0191-2479371, 2470102 (jammu) website: http://www.jakbopee.org, email: ceojakbopee@gmail.com

Subject: Admission to B.Sc. Nursing/ B. Sc. Paramedical/ B.Sc. Technology Courses for academic session-2020 Extension in time of admission & lowering of eligibility in marks thereof.

Reference: F.No.1-6/Lt/2021-INC/12869 dated 26.02.2021 of Indian Nursing Council, New Delhi.

Notice No: 029-BOPEE of 2021

Dated: 04.03.2021.

In pursuance to Indian Nursing Council , New Delhi letter F.No.1-6/Lt/2021-INC/12869 dated 26.02.2021, it is hereby notified for information of particularly all eligible candidates of B.Sc. Nursing/B.Sc. Paramedical / B.Sc. Technology Courses-2020 that the last date of admission of these courses has been extended upto 31st of March-2021.

It is further notified that the Board has reduced the eligibility criteria from 30 to 25 marks / score in respect of open merit candidates.

The schedule for conduct of another round of counselling shall be notified separately in due course of time. The candidates are advised to visit BOPEE website regularly for further updates, if any.
The other terms and conditions shall remain the same as notified vide e. Information Brochure, Notifications and Notices issued by the Board from time to time by the Board.

Errors and Omissions Excepted.

(Dr. Sunil Gupta)
Controller of Examinations
J&K BOPEE

No: BOPEE/Exam-35(iii)/2020

Dated: 04-03-2021.

DIPK-NB-6170/20

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MUGHAL ROAD PROJECT DIVISION SHOPIAN

NIT No: - 10/MRP/SPN/e-TENDERING/2020-21

Dated: 03/03/2021

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir (UT), e-tenders in single cover system are invited from registered and experienced authorized registered dealers for the following works:

S. No.	Name of work	Major Head	Class of Contractor	Estimated Cost (Lacs)'	Time of Completion' (Days)	Cost of Tender Document	Position of AAA/TS	Position of Funds
1	Supply of Stationery items/ Divisional Office at Shopian	Contingencies	Authorized Dealer	0.34	10 days	150.00	Accorded	Available
2	Supply of Computer Accessories for Superintending Engineer's Office at Lalmandi Srinagar and Divisional Office at Shopian	Contingencies	Authorized Dealer	1.93	10 days	400.00	Accorded	Available

The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

Date of Issue of Tender Notice	03-03-2021	<
> Document downloading Start Date.	04-03-2021	From 10:00 a.m.
Document Downloading End Date.	11-03-3021	Up to 4:00 p.m.
Bid Submission Start Date.	03-03-2021	From 10:00 a.m.
Bid Submission End Date.	11-03-2021	Up to 2:00 p.m.
Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	03-03-2021	At 3:00 p.m.

- Bidders must upload the requisite cost of tender document sin shape of e-challan/ treasury challan receipt in fvuor of Executive Engineer Mughal ROad Division Shopian (Tender Receiving Authority) . (Name oof work, to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan/ Receipt). Teh date of treasury challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) Pledged to Executive Engineer Mughal Road Division Shopian (Tender Receiving Authority)
- All the Bidders have to upload / submit Bid Security Declaration Form instead of Earnest money as per the Circular of Finance Department (Bid security Declaration Form is as per Annexure "A" below).
- The 1st lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of contract as Perf mance Security in the shape of CDR within 03 days before fixation of Contract.
- The date and time of opening of Bids should be notified on website www.jktendere.gov.in arid conveyed to the Bidders automatically through an e-mail message oh their e-mail address. The bkls of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the of- fice of theExecutive Engineer Mughal Road Division Shopian (tender receiving authority).

No. MRDS/747-54
Dated: 03-03-2021

Executive Engineer
MUGHAL ROAD PROJECT
Division SHOPIAN

DIPK-14468/20

از دفت نایب تحصیلدار است ناگ با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب درخواست جناب: ساوئس شیر پسر شیر پسر امھوگر ساکن ابوبگ نوگام تحصیل ضلع ناگ بھڑ حوصل بیک دارڈانیر یا سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO 294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکن صدر نے ایک درخواست بھڑ حوصل بیک دارڈانیر یا سرٹفلٹ دتہ ہارہ میں پیش کیا ہے حسب رپورٹ پٹاری حلقہ تفصیل افراد تکبہ بذیل درج ہے:-

نام صاحب تکبہ ولدیت	عمر	پیش	آمدنی
شیر احمد نوگر ولد محمد رمضان	51 سال	مزدوری	6000
سلیمہ بانو زوجہ شیر احمد	50 سال	گھریلو کام	
مرثیٰ بیٹی پسر	19 سال	زیر تعلیم	
ادیس شیر پسر	18 سال	---	
خانم شیر دختر	15 سال	---	

اسکے علاوہ اوکوئی فرد تکبہ میں موجود ہیں ہے ساکن کا تکبہ پچھلے پندرہ سالوں سے دھ ہارہ میں رہا ہے پسر ہے اور ساکن کی تکبہ کی سالانہ آمدنی حد مقررہ سے کم تک ہے اس حوالے سے اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو مذکورہ سرٹفلٹ اجرا کرنے میں کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر اندر اپنا اعتراض دتہ ہارہ میں پیش کریں۔ معیاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

تحریرا الصدر نایب تحصیلدار است ناگ mja

از دفت نایب تحصیلدار است ناگ با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب درخواست جناب: چندنیاض بیاض بیاض پسران فیاض احمد بی ساکان ابوبگ نوگام تحصیل ضلع است ناگ بھڑ حوصل بیک دارڈانیر یا سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO 294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکان صدر نے ایک درخواست بھڑ حوصل بیک دارڈانیر یا سرٹفلٹ دتہ ہارہ میں پیش کیا ہے حسب رپورٹ پٹاری حلقہ تفصیل افراد تکبہ بذیل درج ہے:-

نام صاحب تکبہ ولدیت	عمر	پیش	آمدنی
فیاض احمد ولد غلام محمد بیٹ	50 سال	مزدوری	5000
افروزہ بانو زوجہ فیاض احمد	48 سال	گھریلو کام	
چندنیاض پسر	28 سال	زیر تعلیم	
عیدنیاض پسر	27 سال	---	
الفت فیاض دختر	26 سال	---	

اسکے علاوہ اوکوئی فرد تکبہ میں موجود ہیں ہے ساکن کا تکبہ پچھلے پندرہ سالوں سے دھ ہارہ میں رہا ہے پسر ہے اور ساکن کی تکبہ کی سالانہ آمدنی حد مقررہ سے کم تک ہے اس حوالے سے اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو مذکورہ سرٹفلٹ اجرا کرنے میں کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر اندر اپنا اعتراض دتہ ہارہ میں پیش کریں۔ معیاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

تحریرا الصدر نایب تحصیلدار است ناگ mja

از نیابت ماگام با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب ماگام

عنوان: مضنون درخواست فاروق احمد گوہر پھونڈا ولد علی اصغر گوہر پھونڈا ساکنہ ماگام برآمد عطا گی ST سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست برآمد ST سرٹفلٹ پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اور اجرا کرنے مطلوب ہے کہہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے

فاروق احمد ولد علی محمد گوہر پھونڈا	مزدوری	45 سال
جانا تنگیز زوجہ فاروق احمد	گھریلو کام	40
نفیسہ بانو	زیر تعلیم	18
شیمہ بانو	زیر تعلیم	16
ذاکر احمد	زیر تعلیم	14
محمد شاہد	زیر تعلیم	12
حاجب احمد	زیر تعلیم	10
رتبہ بانو	زیر تعلیم	08

اسکے علاوہ عہد کی مہانت آمدنی زرلج و غیر زرلج 6250 ہے سرٹفلٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔

نایب تحصیلدار ماگام sult

از نیابت ماگام با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب ماگام

عنوان: مضنون درخواست نصرت جعفر دختر جعفر احمد لون ساکنہ ماگام برآمد عطا گی بیکوارڈ ایریا سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست برآمد بیکوارڈ ایریا سرٹفلٹ پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اور اجرا کرنے مطلوب ہے کہہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے

محمد سلطان ولد امبر لون عمر رسیدہ	70 سال
حفیظہ تنگم	عمر رسیدہ 65
جعفر احمد لون	مزدوری 45
نازہ تنگم	گھریلو کام 40
شاہینہ بانو	زیر تعلیم 18
نصرت جعفر	زیر تعلیم 16
صدیہ بانو	زیر تعلیم 14
آسین احمد	زیر تعلیم 12

اسکے علاوہ عہد کی مہانت آمدنی زرلج و غیر زرلج 8750 ہے سرٹفلٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔

نایب تحصیلدار ماگام sult

از نیابت ماگام با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب ماگام

عنوان: مضنون درخواست غلام محمد تانترے ولد قلندر تانترے ساکنہ ماگام برآمد عطا گی بیکوارڈ ایریا سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست برآمد بیکوارڈ ایریا سرٹفلٹ پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اور اجرا کرنے مطلوب ہے کہہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے

غلام محمد تانترے	مزدوری	55 سال
شازیہ تنگم زوجہ غلام محمد	گھریلو کام	50
فریدہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	21
سماہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	19
نازینہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	17
ریحانہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	11
جعفر احمد تانترے	زیر تعلیم	09
افروزہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	15
رایہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	07
ناوہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	05
ادیس احمد پسر	زیر تعلیم	—

اسکے علاوہ عہد کی مہانت آمدنی زرلج و غیر زرلج 17000 ہے سرٹفلٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔

نایب تحصیلدار ماگام sult

از نیابت ماگام با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب ماگام

عنوان: مضنون درخواست عبدالعزیز گوہر میلو ولد تاج دین گوہر میلو ساکنہ ماگام

برآمد عطا گی ST سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست برآمد ST سرٹفلٹ پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اور اجرا کرنے مطلوب ہے کہہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے

عبدالعزیز گوہر میلو	مزدوری	48 سال
فریدہ تنگم زوجہ عبدالعزیز	گھریلو کام	35
شکور احمد پسر	زیر تعلیم	18
افروزہ بانو دختر	زیر تعلیم	16

اسکے علاوہ عہد کی مہانت آمدنی زرلج و غیر زرلج 7916 ہے سرٹفلٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔

نایب تحصیلدار ماگام sult

از نیابت ماگام با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب ماگام

عنوان: مضنون درخواست مجاز ادم بیک ولد غلام محمد بیک ساکنہ پانپورہ برآمد عطا گی بیکوارڈ ایریا سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست برآمد بیکوارڈ ایریا سرٹفلٹ پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اور اجرا کرنے مطلوب ہے کہہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے

سارہ تنگم زوجہ غلام محمد بیک	گھریلو کام	70 سال
پروینہ احمد ولد غلام محمد	زمینداری	27
سہیلنہ زوجہ پروینہ احمد	گھریلو کام	22
ذیشان پروینہ	زیر تعلیم	05
چنید پروینہ	زیر تعلیم	03
مجاز احمد ولد غلام محمد	زیر تعلیم	24

اسکے علاوہ عہد کی مہانت آمدنی زرلج و غیر زرلج 5666 ہے سرٹفلٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔

نایب تحصیلدار ماگام sult

از نیابت ماگام با اجلاس جناب نایب تحصیلدار صاحب ماگام

عنوان: مضنون درخواست غلام رسول گوہر کھانہ ولد حسن دین گوہر کھانہ ساکنہ ماگام برآمد عطا گی ST سرٹفلٹ تحت SRO294

اشتہار برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست برآمد ST سرٹفلٹ پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اور اجرا کرنے مطلوب ہے کہہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے

غلام رسول گوہر کھانہ ولد حسن دین	مزدوری	50 سال
حاجرہ تنگم	گھریلو کام	55
انجاز احمد	مزدوری	35
شہینہ تنگم زوجہ انجاز احمد	گھریلو کام	32
سیرہ بانو	زیر تعلیم	12
سجاد احمد پسر غلام رسول	زیر تعلیم	28
عربندہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	25
افشانہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	20
شاہینہ دختر	زیر تعلیم	16

اسکے علاوہ عہد کی مہانت آمدنی زرلج و غیر زرلج 7083 ہے سرٹفلٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔

نایب تحصیلدار ماگام sult

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division Srinagar

CORRIGENDUM FOR EXTENSION

Subject: - Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Air Conditioning Units for CT Scan Room at Govt. SMHS Hospital, Srinagar.

References:This office e- NIT no: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/299/e-tendering Dated 23.02.2021.

In view of poor response and to have wider Participation, the critical datesof the above referred NIT are extended as follows:-

S.No	Description	Date and Time
1.	Last Date of Bid Submission	10.03.2021 (13.00 hours)
2.	Date of Bid Opening	10.03.2021 (16.00 hours)

All the other terms and conditions will remain the same.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
MHCH Division
Srinagar.

MHCHD/TS/10696-99Dt:-04-03-2021

DIPK-14459/20

Protesters Clash With Police In Downtown Srinagar

APHC Condemns 'Govt's Flip-flop'



PHOTO ABID BHAT

Srinagar: Scores of civilian protesters broke into spontaneous protests inside Jamia Masjid Srinagar after the government barred Kashmir's head priest and senior separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq from offering Friday prayers, a day after several reports said that he has been released from 20-month long house detention.

Soon after the Friday prayers ended, eyewitnesses said, the protesters assembled outside the Masjid and raised "pro-freedom" slogans. They said that the forces fired tear-gas shells to disperse the protesting civilians. The protesters pelted stones on forces triggering minor clashes.

Government had placed in elaborate security arrangements around the old city to apparently block any protests in the area.

While several media reports earlier this week said that Mirwaiz Umar, who head the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, has been released from 20-month long detention, but a statement issued by the amalgam said that Mirwaiz was

barred from moving out of his house.

In a statement All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) expressed strong resentment and regret that after announcing the release of it's chairman from twenty month long house detention since August 2019, Government authorities went back on their decision.

The APHC said that late last night police officials visited the Mirwaiz's residence to convey to him that he continues to be under house arrest, and will not be allowed to go to Jamia Masjid for Friday prayers and Majlis waz-o-tableeg. "And since early morning additional forces have been deployed outside his house and in the area converting it into a garrison."

APHC condemned "authoritarian flip flop of the Government".

The statement said that "this imperious decision of the authorities has hurt the sentiments of people and further aggrieved them, as they were eagerly awaiting for Mirwaiz's release from arbitrary house arrest". (With Inputs From CNS)

Let Media Operate Freely Without Becoming The News: KEG

Srinagar: Kashmir Editors Guild (KEG) on Friday expressed concern over the recurrent incidents of media bashing in the Valley.

While on Friday, a group of journalists covering the Friday congregation at Jamia Masjid was roughed up by the security personnel, a senior journalist has been asked to vacate his official residence for unexplained reasons, a statement issued by the Guild said.

"At least two photo journalists were beaten while covering a protest demonstration after the Friday congregation was over. This happened in presence of some senior journalists who were also covering the development," it said. KEG reiterated its stand that a free media is in everybody's interest and should be permitted to operate without obstructions.

"A free media is fundamental to democracy. The guild is calling upon the security grid to ensure the media operates freely without becoming the news," the statement added—(KNO)

MMU Condemns Govt Action

Srinagar: Muttahida Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU) Jammu & Kashmir Friday expressed strong resentment over the continued house arrest of MMU and APHC Chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq for the last 20 months, saying the undue restrictions on the peaceful activities of the Valley's topmost religious leader and preventing him from performing his duties as the Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir was unacceptable.

In a statement MMU condemned the "autocratic approach" of the authorities for not allowing Mirwaiz to address the faithful at the historic Jamia Masjid despite announcing on Thursday that he is no more under house arrest.

"Imams and Khateebis across the Valley said in their sermons that not allowing the Mirwaiz to visit Jamia Masjid and deploying additional number of police

personnel outside his residence and blocking roads leading to his house by placing armoured vehicles, barricades and concertina wires, was sheer interference in the religious affairs and unacceptable."

The MMU said the people from across the Valley had come to Jamia Masjid Srinagar to listen to the sermon of Mirwaiz.

"However, they were severely disappointed as well as angered with the news that the Mirwaiz was not allowed by the authorities to even move outside his residence, which resulted in a massive peaceful protest wherein people carried banners slamming the administration," statement said.

It said such repressive measures by the authorities was not only unacceptable but deeply hurt the sentiments of the masses.

Two Journalists Assaulted, Kashmir Press Club Condemns

Srinagar: Kashmir Press Club Friday condemned the assault on two photojournalists by the police while the duo was performing their professional duties in Srinagar's Downtown on Friday.

The two journalists identified as Shafat Farooq, cameraperson with BBC and Saqib Majeed, a freelance photographer were beaten after protests broke out in Nowhatta area after the culmination of congregational Friday prayers at Srinagar's historic Jamia Masjid.

"As we were covering the protest, police chased us. A policeman came from nowhere and hit me in my back. I asked the cop why did he hit me. Senior police officials present on the spot apologised for what had happened," Shafat told Kashmir Press Club management.

He complained of severe back pain after the assault.

Shafat said that another photojournalist was also beaten by police.

"We were dispensing our professional duties. However, soon after a police party chased us and one of them caught me by my collar, slapped me several times and even dragged me on the road," said Saqib after the assault to a few media outlets.

While taking note of the assault and condemning the police behaviour, Kashmir Press Club urged the police authorities to sensitise its ranks about its conduct/response towards the press/media persons. Else, it becomes clear that the intimidation, harassment and assaults are meant to stop journalists from doing their duties.

The KPC hoped that the journalists are allowed to conduct their professional duties without fear and coercion.

Mayor SMC Stresses On Need For Decentralisation Of Administrative Wards

Srinagar: Mayor Srinagar Junaid Azim Mattu Friday held a meeting with all the senior officers of the Corporation to review works pertaining to works division, planning, establishment, drainage, town planning, street lights and other routine works.

Mattu stressed the need to have the decentralisation of 35 administrative wards to be expanded into 74 administrative wards in order to have effective monitoring and smooth flow of working at ward level and in this regard passed on directions to Commissioner SMC to have in place a detailed proposal with inclusion of smart ward offices.

This will not only enable the staff to deliver their duties in an effective way but also discharge their duties in a time bound manner.

While expressing concern over the improvisation and efficacy of employees in

rendering better services to the people of Srinagar, Mattu also said that it is very imperative to form an executive committee which will take decisions regarding execution of developmental projects and for devising a strategy for internal staffing pattern, their proper hierarchy in each ward to overcome the shortage of staff and to further make a transparent transfer policy.

This shall help to have result oriented progress in the system, Mattu said according to an SMC statement.

He stressed the need for implementation of Srinagar masterplan recommendations and said it is significantly important that the ward officers and building inspectors are well versed with the subject.

In this regard directions were passed to go for capacity building programs, capsule courses of the ward officers and



building inspectors so that the building norms envisaged in master plan are followed in letter and spirit.

He further emphasised that a tight vigil needs to be kept on the activity of structures falling in residential area and in this regard concerned were directed not to let these structures come up or be

converted into commercial ones.

Mattu further urged Commissioner SMC Amir Athar Khan to look up for the solutions with adoption of technological innovations / interventions for curbing illegal constructions in the city.

While reviewing drainage works, Mattu sought the status on working of Masterplan of Drainage networks of Srinagar city and also took review of various ongoing projects in place.

Mayor besides taking review of Municipal Landfill Site Achan, passed on directions to the works / solid waste management wings to prepare a detailed presentation for holistic development of Landfill site.

He also reviewed the current status of streetlights and further passed on directions to the concerned to go for allocation of three high mast lights in each electoral ward of Srinagar city.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR MECHANICAL HOSPITAL & CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR

Corrigendum for Extension

Subject: 1. Design, Construction, Supply, Erection, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 10 KLD m³ day Effluent Treatment Plant based on MBBR technology at AH GMC Anantnag.
2. Design, Construction, Supply, Erection, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Ten 10 KLD m³ day Effluent Treatment Plant based on MBBR technology at District Hospital Pulwama. References: 1. This office e- NIT no: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/262/e-tendering Dated 25.01.2020.
2. This office e- NIT no: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/269/e-tendering Dated 02.02.2021

In view of no response to the above referred NIT, the critical dates are extended as follows:-

S.No	Description	Date and Time
1	Last Date of Bid Submission	15.03..2021 (15.00 hours)
2	Date of Bid Opening	16.03.2021 (16.00 hours)

All the other terms and conditions will remain the same.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
DIPK-14519/20
MHCH Division Srinagar.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR JAL SHAKTI DEPARTMENT

Office of the Chief Engineer, Kmr. Irri. & F.C Department Srinagar.
Engineering Complex, Near Silk Factory, Rajbagh Srinagar – 190008 e-mail: kmrirrigation@rediffmail.com&ce@ifckashmir.com Phone: 0194-2311834 Fax: 0194-2311085.

Sh. Mohabat Ali Khan
S/o Rehmat Ullah Khan
R/o Shartpora Hyhama Tehsil

No: CE/I&FC/PS/5532-42
Dated: 04/03 /2021

NOTICE

Whereas this office is in receipt of letter No. DRDK/Estt/PF/55/JA/14527-31 dated: 02-03-2021 from office of the Director, Rural Development Kashmir alongwith a copy of complaint by one Sh. Farooq Ahmad Mir alleging that you have managed contractor registration card through fraudulent mean and are getting allotment from various Department on this Registration Card.

Whereas vide above referred letter of the Rural Development Department it has been informed that you are on permanent establishment of the Department as Junior Assistant in District Kupwara and is presently under suspension w.e.f. 31-08-2016.

Whereas you had submitted documents along-with your application, which also includes the Un-employment Certificate wherein it is clearly mentioned that you are not employee of any government or semi Government Department.

In order to ascertain the actual facts, you are given a chance to explain your position within seven days positively. Failure to do so action warranted under rules shall be initiated against you and the Registration Card issued in your favour shall be cancelled forthwith, besides initiating criminal proceedings against you. Meanwhile Registration card bearing No. CE/I&FC/Sgr/103 (One Hundred and Three) Civil/ Sanitary/2017-18 issued in your name is suspended forthwith.

DIPK-14489/20

Sd/-
(Iftikhar Ahmad Kakroo)
Chief Engineer

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



**HIJRI
CALENDAR**
21 Rajab
1442

PRAYERS

FAJR	5: 31
ZUHR	12: 43
ASR	4:50
Magrib	6:34
ISHA	7:54

This Day In History

- 1953 - Malenkov becomes chairman of the USSR
- 1957 - Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) declares independence from UK
- 1957 - Centenary of Dred Scott slavery court decision marked by rediscovery of Scott's grave
- 1959 - Farthest radio signal heard (Pioneer IV, 400,000 miles)
- 1960 - President Sukarno disbands Indonesia's parliament
- 1964 - Constantine succeeds Paul I as king of Greece
- 1975 - Algiers Accord: Iran and Iraq announce a settlement of their border dispute.
- 1981 - France performs nuclear test at Mururoa atoll
- 1981 - Soyuz 39 returns to Earth
- 1984 - Twelve-month-long strike in British coal industry begins.
- 1987 - 6.8 earthquake hits Ecuador, kills 100
- 1991 - Following Iraq's capitulation in the Persian Gulf conflict, US President George H. W. Bush told Congress that "aggression is defeated. The war is over"
- 1994 - United Arab Emirates beat Kenya by 2 wickets to win ICC Trophy
- 1994 - Referendum in Moldova results in the electorate voting against possible reunification with Romania.
- 1998 - First time the British Union Flag is flown over Buckingham Palace (following the controversy after Princess Dian's death; formerly the only flag flown was the Sovereign's standard indicating the monarch's presence.)
- 2012 - 9,000 residents are evacuated from Wagga Wagga, Australia, as the Murrumbidgee River threatens to overflow
- 2013 - Syrian rebels capture Ar-Raqqa, their first major city
- 2013 - Microsoft is fined €561 by the Euro Commission for not providing alternative web browsers
- 2013 - 9 people die after a plane crashes after being ensnared in power lines in Peru
- 2014 - Crimean parliament votes unanimously to make the Crimea part of Russia
- 2015 - NASA's Dawn space probe enters orbit around the dwarf planet Ceres
- 2017 - US President Donald Trump signs his second executive order barring travelers from 6 mostly-Muslim countries for 90 days but leaves out Iraq
- 2018 - "Highest overdose death rates ever recorded in the US", 142,000 overdoses in 2016-17 period according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- 2018 - Sri Lanka imposes first nationwide state of emergency since civil war after unrest between Sinhalese and Muslim areas in Kandy District
- 2018 - American WWII aircraft carrier USS Lexington rediscovered in Australia's Coral Sea, lost during 1942 Battle of the Coral Sea
- 2018 - Forbes names Amazon founder Jeff Bezos the world's richest person for the first time at \$112 billion, Bill Gates no. 2

From KO Archives

Muzaffarabad Bus Forms From Today

Observer news Service

Srinagar - The designated authorities on either side of the dividing line of control are all set to start issuing application forms for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service scheduled to begin on April 7, from Friday.

Regional Passport Office Srinagar has been designated as issuing authority for application forms and applicants are required to fill forms in triplicate and then submit those with the said office for verification purposes. Those who have been cleared for travel shall be informed in advance, sources said.

The authorities expect application forms for travel by the first bus to reach the Srinagar Passport Office, by mid-March.

The format of the forms, respective immigration posts on apparently from that for visa applications will have to be produced at the respective immigration post on either side of the LoC. As has been agreed upon by India and Pakistan, no passport details will be sought from the applicants.

The entry permit, sources said will be valid for one month and those coming over will be free to travel the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir during this period. On the Pakistan side, the permit will also be valid for travel to Gilgit and Baltistan.

One report said buses from either side will not cross the LoC. Instead, passengers will travel up to there, cross by foot and will be issued entry permit at the immigration post of the host country They will then board the buses on either side for onward travel. This arrangement will be temporary till Lal Pul, a key bridge over Jehlum river, is reconstructed for the purpose, sources said.

(Kashmir Observer, 06 March, 2005)

Pope Francis arrives in Baghdad for risky, historic Iraq tour

Francis' plane touched down at Baghdad's airport just before 2 pm local time (1100 GMT)

Baghdad: Pope Francis landed in Baghdad on Friday for his most risky foreign trip since his election in 2013, saying he felt duty-bound to make the "emblematic" visit because Iraq had suffered so much for so long.

An Alitalia plane carrying him, his entourage, a security detail, and about 75 journalists, touched down at Baghdad International Airport slightly ahead of schedule just before 2 p.m. local time.

Iraq is deploying thousands of additional security personnel to protect the 84-year-old pope during the visit, which comes after a spate of rocket and suicide bomb attacks raised fears for his safety.

"I am happy to be making trips again," he said in brief comments to reporters aboard his plane, alluding to the coronavirus pandemic which has prevented him from travelling.

The Iraq trip is his first outside Italy since November 2019.

"This is an emblematic trip, and it is a duty towards a land that has been martyred for so many years," Francis said, before donning a mask and greeting each reporter individually, without shaking hands.

Francis's whirlwind tour will take

him by plane, helicopter and possibly armoured car to four cities, including areas that most foreign dignitaries are unable to reach, let alone in such a short space of time.

He will say Mass at a Baghdad church, meet Iraq's top Shi'ite Muslim cleric in the southern city of Najaf and travel north to Mosul, where the army had to empty the streets for security reasons last year for a visit by Iraq's prime minister.

Mosul is a former Islamic State stronghold, and churches and other buildings there still bear the scars of conflict.

VIOLENCE AND HOPE

Since the defeat of the Islamic State militants in 2017, Iraq has seen a greater degree of security, though violence persists, often in the form of rocket attacks by Iran-aligned militias on US targets, and US military action in response.

On Wednesday 10 rockets landed on an airbase that hosts US, coalition and Iraqi forces. Hours later, Francis reaffirmed he would travel to Iraq.

Islamic State also remains a threat. In January, a suicide attack claimed by the Sunni militant group killed 32 people in Baghdad's deadli-



est such attack for years.

Francis will meet clergy at a Baghdad church where Islamist gunmen killed more than 50 worshippers in 2010. Violence against Iraq's minority religious groups, especially when a third of the country was being run by Islamic State, has reduced its ancient Christian community to a fifth of its once 1.5 million people.

The pontiff will also visit Ur, birthplace of the prophet Abraham, who is revered by Christians, Muslims and Jews, and meet Iraq's revered top Shi'ite Muslim cleric, 90-year-old Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

The meeting with Sistani, who wields great influence over Iraq's Shi'ite majority and in the country's politics, will be the first by a pope.

Some Shi'ite militant groups have opposed the pope's visit, framing it as Western interference in Iraq's affairs, but many Iraqis hope that it can help foster a fresh view of Iraq.

"It might not change much on the ground, but at least if the pope visits, people will see our country in a different light, not just bombs and war," said Ali Hassan, a 30-year-old Baghdad resident picking up relatives at the airport. — Reuters

China hikes defence budget to USD 209 billion, 6.8 per cent increase



Beijing: China on Friday hiked its defence budget to USD 209 billion, maintaining a single-digit growth for the sixth consecutive year with a 6.8 per cent increase in 2021.

The budget hike was announced by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at the country's Parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC).

Defending the increase, Zhang Yesui, spokesperson for the NPC, told the media here that China's efforts to strengthen the national defence do not target or threaten any country.

Whether a country poses a threat to others depends on what kind of defence policy it pursues, he said, adding that China is committed to the path of peaceful development and adheres to a defence policy that is defensive in nature.

Last year, China allocated 1.268 trillion yuan (about USD 196.44 billion), according to the state-run Global Times.

China's annual defence budget maintains a single-digit growth for a sixth consecutive year, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

This year's planned defence spending will be about 1.35 trillion yuan (about USD 209 billion), it said.

China's defence budget is about one-quarter of the US figure, which is USD 740.5 billion for the 2021 fiscal year, it said.

As the world's second-largest economy and the most populous country, China's planned defence spending per capita in 2021 will be less than 1,000 yuan (USD 154), it said.

China applies strict mechanisms of fiscal allocation and budget management on its defence expenditure, which is mainly assigned to personnel, training and sustainment, and equipment, it said.

China has voluntarily downsized its armed forces by over four million troops since 1978, according to a white paper released in 2019. — PTI

Xi Goes Mask-Free, Raising Questions Over Vaccination Status

China: Despite being one of the first countries in the world to authorize vaccines for use, China has said nothing about the vaccination status of its top leaders, who all appeared without face masks in Beijing.

It's become a standard photo op of the pandemic: leaders rolling up their sleeves for Covid-19 shots to trumpet the advent of vaccines. Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu was one of the first, Joe Biden did it on live television, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inoculation is being credited with reviving a lackluster rollout.

But despite being one of the first countries in the world to authorize vaccines for use, China has said nothing about the vaccination status of its top leaders, who all -- including President Xi Jinping -- appeared without face masks in Beijing Friday, mingling with thousands of delegates from across China at the country's biggest political gathering of the year.

While officials seated in the rows behind them were all masked, Xi and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang moved around the Great Hall of the People, where the National People's Congress is opened every year, mask-free. The exception seemed to apply only to members of the Politburo and a handful of other top Communist Party leaders. Xi also went without a mask at last year's NPC, seen as a statement on China's virus success with the Wuhan outbreak largely quelled.

Does Xi's confidence come from China having all but eliminated Covid-19.

World no closer to answer on COVID origins despite WHO probe: Expert

Critics accuse WHO of relying too much on politically compromised Chinese fieldwork, data

Shanghai: Despite a high-profile visit to China by a team of international experts in January, the world is no closer to knowing the origins of COVID-19, according to one of the authors of an open letter calling for a new investigation into the pandemic.

"At this point, we are no further advanced than we were a year ago," said Nikolai Petrovsky, an expert in vaccines at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, and one of 26 global experts who signed the open letter, published on Thursday.

In January, a team of scientists picked by the World Health Organization (WHO) visited hospitals and research institutes in Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the coronavirus was identified, in search of clues about the origins of COVID-19.

But the mission has come under fire, with critics accusing the WHO of relying too much on politically compromised Chinese fieldwork and data.

Team members also said China



was reluctant to share vital data that could show COVID-19 was circulating

months earlier than first recognised. The open letter said the WHO mis-

sion "did not have the mandate, the independence, or the necessary accesses to carry out a full and unrestricted investigation" into all theories about the origins of COVID-19.

"All possibilities remain on the table and I have yet to see a single piece of independent scientific data that rules out any of them," said Petrovsky.

At a press briefing to mark the end of the WHO visit to Wuhan, mission head Peter Ben Embarek appeared to rule out the possibility that the virus leaked from a laboratory in Wuhan.

But Petrovsky said it "doesn't make any sense" to rule any possibility out, and said the aim of the open letter was "to get an acknowledgement globally that no one has yet identified the source of the virus and we need to keep searching."

"We need an open mind and if we close down some avenues because they are considered too sensitive, that is not how science operates," he said. — Reuters

Vaccine hesitancy in Pakistan heightens risk of COVID resurgence

Islamabad: Pakistan – Pakistan's success at managing the coronavirus pandemic – with relatively low rates of severe disease and death – and distrust of government-led and foreign-funded public health initiatives has driven vaccine hesitancy, which could put the country's fragile gains against COVID-19 at risk, say experts and officials.

Since the pandemic began, Pakistan, a country of 220 million people, has registered more than 586,000 cases of the virus, with 13,128 deaths, as per government data.

Its current case-fatality rate of 2.2 percent is comparable to countries such as France and Canada – and is slightly higher than the United States – but is extremely low when its very low rate of testing is accounted for.

Pakistan conducts 0.18 tests per 1,000 people, compared with 4.62 per 1,000 in France or 2.76 per 1,000 in the US, as per government data.

In February, the country opened up vaccinations for hundreds of thousands of front-line healthcare workers across the country, with the arrival of more than 500,000 doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine donated by the Chinese government.

Almost immediately, however, the campaign hit a snag.

"Even in the healthcare community, people thought that taking the vaccine might be harmful," says a se-



nior health official involved in vaccination efforts in Sindh province, which saw some of the worst of Pakistan's COVID-19 pandemic.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity.

While thousands of healthcare workers registered themselves for the vaccine, initial rates of vaccination were slow, with doctors saying they were concerned about possible side-effects or reactions to the vaccine.

In the first two weeks after vaccinations began, only 32,582 front-line healthcare workers in Sindh, out of an eligible 78,000, had gotten their first jab of the vaccine, as per government data. In other provinces, the situation was even worse.

"Initially, people did not get vaccinated and a lot of people were concerned about reactions [and side-effects]," says Dr Ahmed Zeb, a physician in the northwestern city of Peshawar, which saw hospital intensive care units overflowing in June, during

Pakistan's first peak of coronavirus cases.

Dr Faisal Sultan, Pakistan's health minister, says the hesitancy has been driven by healthcare workers "over-analysing the data".

"That is a hazard in today's world, with a number of vaccines available and people looking at all the pros and cons and analysing efficacies, and sometimes losing sight of the fact that for the individual the most important number to remember is the protection against severe disease," he told Al Jazeera.

"And all the licenced vaccines protect against severe disease in the 90 percent [range]."

So far, a month after vaccinations began, Pakistan has only administered 197,000 doses of the vaccine, or 0.09 vaccinations per 100 members of the population, putting it almost dead last in countries where vaccination data is available, according to the Our World In Data dataset.

COVID-19 in China: Anal swab test mandatory for international passengers

China: As per the Chinese Government, the anal swabs provide higher rate of accuracy than the other screening methods for the virus.

China has made the anal COVID-19 swabs testing mandatory for all foreign travellers arriving in the country. Despite receiving criticism from several countries, the country has gone ahead with its testing method and with new requirement, testing

with the changes in the epidemic situation as well as relevant regulations.

According to Li Tongzeng, a respiratory disease medic, the virus stay longer in fecal samples than they do in throat or nose.

However, Japan has expressed its disapproval for the anal swab testing method stating that it could cause 'mental anguish' to the people.



hubs shall be coming in Beijing and Shanghai airports. As per the Chinese Government, the anal swabs provide higher rate of accuracy than the other screening methods for the virus.

As per a report in Times UK, Wang Wengbin, Spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry said that the screening is 'science based'. The tests are being conducted

Anal swab testing method began in China's capital Beijing in January as a part of the mass testing drive. According to China's National Health Commission, to collect samples, the swab needs to be inserted about three to five centimetres (1.2 to two inches) into the rectum and rotated several times. After this, it needs to be placed inside a sample container.

PSAJK Offers Govt To Take Over Students' Transportation Services

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Private Schools Association of Jammu and Kashmir (PSAJK) Friday offered the government to take over the transportation wing of all the private educational institutes and provide quality and affordable transportation facilities to students.

The Association said that such a scenario will be a win-win situation for the students, parents, and the school managements.

"In the interest of the society, it is amending the previous order of not plying its school buses and other vehicles."

Addressing a Press Conference at Kashmir Press Club in Srinagar, the Association's President GN War said that the last time "we had decided to keep our transport off the roads". "After that we got numerous requests from parents and the government too jumped in to discuss the issue with us. From the government side we got assurances and promises which are yet to be implemented on ground

He said to give more time to parents to make their own arrangements and government to implement its promised orders, "we have decided to ply our vehicles for the next two weeks".

War said that the main work of the private schools is to provide quality education to children and providing transport services is not a necessary domain of an educational institute. "The transportation service has become a white elephant for us. It not only impedes our working but has also become a financial burden on us. In



the absence of collection of transportation charges from the parents of the students since August 2019, schools in no way can afford to ply their buses," he said.

In such a scenario, he said the association asked the government to take over all of the buses and other vehicles. "The government has a full fledged transport department and hundreds of vehicles. They can easily arrange transport for the children," said Var. "They can charge minimally or whatever they like and provide quality transport. For government

school children they spend billions let them provide a paid service to private school children."

The Association said that schools have to bear cost of carrying children in its vehicles anywhere from Rs 2384-5885 depending on the type of vehicle and in return students pay a minimal fee which is not sustainable.

"In the era of COVID pandemic the transportation fee is set to increase due to SOPs which we tend to implement strictly."

The Association said that such is the situation that

over 250 private schools are on the verge of closure due to financial burden arising out of non-collection of fee and transportation charges.

"We provide employment to 70000 persons and education to over 7 lakh students. Just imagine if the private school sector collapses what will happen to our society," said Var. "Our only source of income is fee from students."

The Association said that it is ready to work under rules and regulations provided the same are made according to some logic and not according to whims of an officer.

"The problem is that we have multiple authorities to govern us and it often leads to contradictory orders. Be it fee committee, district administration, divisional administration, director school education etc. It would make our life easier if all are on same page," said Var.

There is chaos in the administration regarding Affiliation, Registration and Upgradation of schools. After the formation of UT, there were number of good central guidelines regarding education sector meant for implementation here, but those files are pending in GAD and we don't know what has happened to them. Can anybody tell us when are those guidelines being implemented here?

"Recently an order was issued by the Fee Committee but they have least bothered to take school representatives on board. The result is zero implementation. We need a transparent and just system that works according to laws. The orders shouldn't change with the change of chairs," said Var.

DC Ramban Asks Officers To Expedite Work On Rail Project



RAMBAN: Deputy Commissioner, Ramban, Mussarat Islam, Friday conducted an extensive tour of Sub-Division Banihal to take stock of the progress on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Line (USBRL) Project besides resolving issues hindering the pace of ongoing construction work.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Harbans Lal, who is also the Collector, Land Acquisition (Railways); Chief General Manager IRCON Railway, S. Moray; SDM, Banihal, Zaheer Abass Bhat; Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B), Ramban and SDPO, Banihal besides other senior officers from Railway and Civil Administration were also present.

During the meeting held at Banihal, the DC assured

Railway authorities of full support of the District Administration in facilitating the completion of the prestigious Project which will connect Kashmir valley with the rest of the country.

The Deputy Commissioner reviewed location-wise issues and passed necessary directions to the concerned officers for expediting the pace of work. He directed the construction agencies to adhere to SOPs at work place.

Earlier, Chief General Manager, Railways, gave a brief power-point presentation on the to-date status of the project, besides apprising the DC about the bottlenecks, for which he sought the intervention of the District Administration.

The Deputy Commissioner informed that the District Ad-

ministration is holding weekly virtual meets in order to resolve the issues for hassle-free construction.

Later, the DC along with DDC Vice Chairperson, Rabia Beig and DDC Members, Imtiyaz Khanday and Bashir Naik, visited Forwogon, Bankoot, Chapnari, Gund Adolkote, Tatnihal and Chalmwas and listened to the grievances of the locals. They were assured that their issues will be looked into on priority for redressal.

During the visit, various deputations, led by PRIs, met with the DC and apprised him about their demands. They sought bus service from Bankoot to Tatnihal, Khari to Banihal, water supply scheme for Chapnari, sanction of PMAY houses and BPL ration cards for deserving families.

Grenade Hurled On ROP In Kupwara

Observer News Service

Kupwara: Suspected militants on Friday hurled a grenade on a road opening party of Central Reserve Police Force and Jammu and Kashmir Police near bus stand in Kupwara.

However, the grenade did not explode and nobody was injured.

Sources said that militants targeted the road opening party of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Jammu and Kashmir Police when they were checking the local vehicles.

They said the rusty grenade



missed the target and didn't explode.

Security forces cordoned off the area and conducted search operation, however, no

arrests were made.

A police official said that a case against unknown militants has been registered and investigation taken up. (KNT)

OFFICE OF THE JOINT ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION FOR J&K LADAKH

Regd. Office: Railway Road, Ambedkar (Panama Chowk, Jammu-180016)

Email: secretary-jercjkl@gov.in

Phone: 0191-2470160

The Joint Director,
Information department, Jammu/Srinagar
No.JERC/Tech13/2021/171-182

Dated: 05-03-2021

Subject: Publishing of Notice in leading Newspapers.

Madam/Sir,

Kindly find enclosed herewith copy of the public notice regarding inviting objections/suggestions on the adoption of regulations of JERC for state of Goa and other UTs by JERC of J&K Ladakh. In this regard, I am directed to request you to kindly get the notification published in atleast three leading newspapers (Urdu/Hindi/English) of Jammu/kashmir regions for the information of general public and others stake holders

The Govt. of India vide S.O. 1984(E) dated 18.06.2020 has constituted Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh.

The commission is in the process of framing various regulations under Electricity Act, 2003. However, pending notification of the regulations, it is deemed necessary to have in place regulations for regulating the work of different Power Utilities in the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh for now.

Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission for UTs of J&K and Ladakh contemplates to adopt following Regulations along with up-to date amendments issued by JERC for state of Goa and UTs.

1. JERC Goa and UTs (Solar PV Grid Interactive System based on Net Metering) Regulations, 2019.
2. JERC Goa and UTs (Consumer Grievances Redressal Forum and Ombudsman) Regulations, 2019 with Corrigendum issued in 2019.
3. JERC Goa and UTs (Electricity Supply Code) Regulations, 2018.
4. JERC Goa and UTs (Terms and Conditions for Tariff Determination from Renewable Energy Sources) Regulations, 2019.
5. JERC MYT Goa and UTs (Generation, Transmission and Distribution) Regulations, 2018.
6. JERC Goa and UTs (Connectivity and Open Access in Intra-State Transmission and Distribution) Regulations, 2017.
7. JERC Goa and UTs (Standard of Performance for Distribution Licensees) Regulations, 2015.
8. JERC Goa and UTs (Solar Power-Grid Connected Ground Mounted and Solar Rooftop and Metering) Regulations, 2015.
9. JERC Goa and UTs (Demand Side Management) Regulations 2014.
10. JERC Goa and UTs (Procedure for filling Appeal before the Appellate Authority) Regulations 2013.
11. JERC Goa and UTs (Distribution Code) Regulations 2010.
12. JERC Goa and UTs (Procurement of Renewable Energy) Regulations 2010.
13. JERC Goa and UTs (Electricity Trading) Regulations 2010.
14. JERC Goa and UTs (State Grid Code) Regulations 2010.
15. JERC Goa and UTs (Appointment of Consultants) Regulations, 2009.
16. JERC Goa and UTs (Treatment of other Business of Transmission Licensees and Distribution Licensees) Regulations, 2009.
17. JERC Goa and UTs (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2009.
18. JERC Goa and UTs (State Advisory Committee) Regulations, 2009.

These regulations of JERC for state of Goa and UTs are readily available on its website <http://www.jearcuts.gov.in> and are contemplated to be adopted for JERC, J&K and Ladakh for a period of one year or till framing of its own regulations, for discharging functions assigned under the electricity Act,2003

Stakeholders/interested persons may file their objections/suggestion, specific to the above proposal within 21 days from the publications of this notice on the below mentioned address

Secretary JERC,
Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

DIPK-14534/20

Government Revises Circular For Promotions

JAMMU: The Government Friday issued instructions aimed at proper implementation of reservation rules and bringing clarity in the procedures being followed by the departments/Departmental Promotion Committees while making promotions. These instructions have been issued to amplify the advisory earlier issued by the Government in furtherance of the interim directions passed in SLPs viz. Mohammad Haneef Lone, Vinod Kumar Bhagat and Nasib Singh cases, by the Supreme Court.

Noticing that the reservation rules and the instructions issued on the subject were resulting in utilisation of two reservation roster points for a single candidate and as such adversely affecting the career prospects of the employees and efficient cadre management, the Government has now clarified the entire procedure to be followed by the Appointing Authorities while making promotions. The issuance of these instructions was necessitated to bring about uniformity in application of the rules in all departments of the Government and also to address the administrative difficulties which arose on account of inconsistent application of the rules.

Helpline Numbers Notified To Counter Sale Of Spurious Pesticides



SHOPIAN: Taking the fight against spurious pesticides a step further, the District Administration Shopian Friday notified helpline numbers for receiving grievances / complaints regarding sale of spurious pesticides in the district so that stringent actions under rules are taken against such dealers.

To register complaints/grievances regarding sale/availability of spurious drugs anywhere in the district, people can call/text message/WhatsApp on following numbers for immediate punitive action against defaulters.

01933-260280/7051585438 (Horticulture Department) 01933-260280/7006849675/9697848586 (Agriculture Department).

Meanwhile, on the directions of District Development Commissioner (DDC) Shopian, S K Vaishya surveillance teams are carrying out inspections of various pesticide outlets/warehouses/godowns to check quality of pesticides.

They have lifted samples for laboratory testing and have also forfeited 10 outlets for non compliance to norms under Insecticide Act (1968) and rules thereof.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
SEWERAGE & DRAINAGE DIVISION No:
1st SULIMAN COMPLEX DALGATE SRINAGAR**

Notice Inviting e-Tendering
GIST of e-NIT No: Mech.33 of 2020-21

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, U.T of J&K State e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from original equipment manufacturer (O.E.M) or their authorized dealers / representatives and registered reputed firms / Government contractors for the following work:

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Amount of Work	Time of Completion	Cost of Tender Document
1.	Supply, Fabrication Testing, Laying and Commissioning of 10 inch Diameter mild steel Rising main, 6.4mm wall thickness from Raw sewage sump constructed within the premises of STP Brari-Numbal for receiving sewage lifted from Bagwanpora Dewatering station up-to the raw sump well of 17.08 MLD STP Brari-Numbal under Nai Sadak Gowkadal Sewerage scheme.	7.54	12 Days	500/=

IMPORTANT DATES:-

1	Date of publishing	04/03/2021
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	04/03/2021 to 15/03/2021 up-to 4:00 PM
3	Bid submission Start Date	04/03/2021 from 4:00 PM
4	Bid submission End Date	15/03/2021 up-to 4:00 PM
5	Date & time of opening of bids (online)	16/03/2021 at 11:00 AM or any other convenient date.

Tender Receiving Authority:

Executive Engineer S&D Division Ist Sulaiman Complex Dalgate Srinagar

Sd/= Executive Engineer S&D Division Ist Srinagar

DIPK-14498/20

The Exact Name

R. Raj Rao

In his autobiography titled, *By Many a Happy Accident*, former Vice-President Hamid Ansari puts the onus on the electorate, saying that the electorate alone can set things right through the power to vote

*Intelligence, give me
The exact name of things!*

*Let my word be
The thing itself,*

*Newly created by my soul
Through me may all those*

*Who have no knowledge of things reach them;
Through me may all those*

*Who have forgotten things reach them..
Through me may all those*

*Who even love things reach them..
Intelligence, give me*

*The exact name, and yours,
And his, and mine, of things*

-Juan Ramón Jiménez

Freedom House is a Washington-based think tank which describes itself as a non-profit global watchdog that ranks nations of the world on the basis of their democratic parameters. It was founded in 1973, and is funded by bi-partisan outfits, comprising both Republicans and Democrats. It lies at the intersection of policy and activism. Countries are graded in terms of 'Free', 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free'.

In 2018, India's score was 75 out of 100, and was called a 'Free' country. In 2019, our score dropped to 71, but we were still 'Free'. In 2020, however, our score further dipped to 67, and now we are only 'Partly Free'.

Freedom House's reasons for reducing our score are several. Principal among these are the harsh, unplanned lockdowns of March 2020 that led to hordes of migrant labourers having to trek back home for thousands of miles in the scorching sun, many of them dying on the way. The discriminatory treatment accorded to Muslims, especially those belonging to the Tablighi Jamaat sect, who were wrongly held responsible for the spread of the coronavirus when they attended a markaz at Nizamuddin, Delhi, last March, also brought our score down. The discrimination continued as the state governments of UP and MP falsely accused Muslim men of marrying Hindu women with a view to converting them to Islam, and even passed a dubious law known against what has incorrectly been called 'Love Jihad'.

Freedom House had also taken into consideration Justice Ranjan Gogoi's appointment to the Rajya Sabha after his retirement.

Then there were internet shutdowns. Out of 155 internet shutdowns in the world in 2020, as many as 109 were in India. The second, third and fourth places were occupied by Yemen, Ethiopia and Jordan, with merely six, four and three internet shutdowns respectively. There was a huge gap between India and



Arun Sankar/AFP

the next country in this respect.

Other parameters employed by Freedom House were the imprisonment of those who dissented with the government; the intimidation of intellectuals and journalists; bigoted attacks on minorities, especially Muslims; and a crackdown on political rivals.

Kashmir, both India-administered Kashmir, and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, were rated separately, with scores of 28 and 29 respectively, and were thus 'Not Free'. In India's case, this was way below the national score of 67, while in Pakistan it was somewhat below their national score of 39. China's score was just 9, while the country with the highest score was New Zealand, with a score of 99 (making me wish I lived in New Zealand!).

The poem by the Spanish poet Jimenez quoted above speaks of, "the exact name of things". Freedom House's ratings have prompted many Indians to compare the year 2020 to the year 1975, when, by virtue of Article 352 of the Constitution, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared her infamous Emergency, for which her grandson Rahul Gandhi even recently apologized, calling it a "mistake". Today, however, though Freedom House's analysis implies that conditions in India are similar to those in 1975, we shy away from using the word 'Emergency'. Are we thus reluctant to give things their exact name, which is an attribute of intelligence? Are we thus an unintelligent bunch of people?

Whatever the ills of the Emergency, it lasted for just two years, after which Indira Gandhi called for elections and badly lost. Those who disagreed with the government spent much less time in jail during the Emergency than they do now. Speaking of arrests without trial on bogus sedition charges, retired Su-

preme Court judge Madan Lokur has pointed out that the Emergency was bad in terms of habeas corpus violations, but today it is "much worse". For one Varavara Rao who has been released on bail for a period of six months on grounds of his deteriorating health, there are several, including 83-year-old Stan Swamy who continue to languish in jail.

The central government is dismissive of Freedom House's democracy report, seeing it as unwarranted foreign interference. But then, as journalist Raghu Karnad says, this itself aligns them with the Emergency, for during the Emergency, the government was "paranoid" about foreign interference in India's internal affairs.

In his autobiography titled *By Many a Happy Accident*, former Vice-President Hamid Ansari puts the onus on the electorate, saying that the electorate alone can set things right through the power to vote. Indeed, that is what happened in 1977, when the electorate terminated the Emergency by voting the Congress out of power.

In May 2024, may we expect an encore on the part of the electorate again? Let us wait and see.

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

Dr. R. Raj Rao is an internationally known Indian English novelist, poet and critic. He was Professor and Head of the Department of English at the University of Pune in Maharashtra. He has also been a Visiting Professor at universities in Canada and Germany

The Changing Contours of World Wide Web

RISHI IYENGAR, CNN BUSINESS

"incendiary and baseless" hashtags which means those accounts weren't visible within the country but could still be accessed outside. (The South Asian nation has also shown a greater willingness to go after foreign tech companies, proposing major restrictions on their operations and, amid a diplomatic standoff with China, banning TikTok and dozens of other Chinese-owned apps.)

It's a very different landscape from the one that allowed US tech firms to accumulate enormous wealth and power. With notable exceptions such as China and North Korea, Facebook and its peers were able to launch their products all over the world with little pushback. Now that openness may no longer be a given.

A combination of rising nationalism, trade disputes and concerns about the market dominance of certain global tech companies has prompted threats of regulatory crackdowns all over the world. In the process, these forces are not just upending the tech companies that built massive businesses on the promise of a global internet, but also the very idea of building platforms that can be accessed and used the same way by anyone anywhere in the world

"What's legal in Sweden isn't legal in Pakistan, and so we have to find some way to reconcile that with the way the internet works," Keller said. The result is that "either platforms voluntarily or governments forcibly are erecting geographical barriers, so that we see different things in one country than in another."

The great retreat

While Facebook isn't the only tech company in the crosshairs of governments around the globe, it is perhaps more emblematic than any other Silicon Valley business of the promise of a global internet running up against various countries' laws.

Five years ago, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was talking up his goal of reaching 5 billion users, or the majority of the world's population. Already, the company has more than 3 billion monthly active users across its various apps, in a testament to its rapid expansion all over the world.

"We want to make it so that anyone, anywhere — a child growing up in rural India who never had a computer — can go to a store, get a phone, get online, and get access to all of the same things that you and

I appreciate about the internet," Zuckerberg said in a 2013 interview with CNN's Chris Cuomo.

Even in China, where the government's online censorship apparatus known as the Great Firewall has locked Western tech companies out for decades, Facebook and Google both sought to make concessions to be allowed in (albeit with little success).

Now, Facebook is instead turning to what's become an increasingly tried-and-tested playbook for the tech industry: threatening to pull its products out of markets in the face of unfavorable regulation.

In 2014, Google (GOOGL) shut down its Google News service in Spain after the country passed a similar law to the one Australia is now contemplating. In

which would "severely limit" the content they can serve their global user base.

"They have a vested interest in trying to force any one market to not impose such regulations by threatening to pull out," he said. "The other side is basically saying: 'If you don't pay for the content, you're not going to have access to our market of consumers or the content in this market.'"

As the internet fractures, global regulators coalesce

A fight over news in Australia is a relatively small part of the clash between tech and governments, which has largely been focused on issues such as censorship, privacy and competition. But the response to Facebook's move in Australia has shown that a more international effort to rein in Big Tech may be gathering momentum — and with it, the potential for additional fracturing of how internet services function from one country to the next.

As his government faced off against Facebook last week, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison issued a warning to the social media giant: what you do here may come back to hurt you in other countries.

"These actions will only confirm the concerns that an increasing number of countries are expressing about the behavior of Big Tech companies who think they are bigger than governments and that the rules should not apply to them," he said in a Facebook post. "They may be changing the world, but that doesn't mean they run it."

On Tuesday, Morrison said Facebook's decision to restore news was "welcome," adding that the government remained committed to proceeding with its legislation to ensure "Australian journalists and news organisations are fairly compensated for the original content they produce."

Several other countries, including the United Kingdom and Canada are now considering similar legislation against social media companies — and many of those countries are talking to each other about how best to do that.

"It would be extremely useful if governments would come together in some kind of transnational process and come up with a treaty or some kind of standard about who gets to reach out and affect content and information outside their national territory," Keller said, "because that's what a lot of them are trying to do, but they haven't, and so as a result you get this very fragmented patchwork."

If that increased fragmentation is allowed to reach its natural conclusion, however, the consequences could be dire.

"If the eventual outcome of that is that we have social media platforms in every major country or market that are separate, then what we will have is an information ecosystem that is completely bifurcated or splintered across the globe," Aral said. "What that portends is a citizenry that has completely different sets of information about local events, about world events, and perhaps a very splintered worldview of reality."

When Pope Visits Grand Ayatollah

MOHAMMED KHAKU

Among the most extraordinary moments of the trip will be Popes one-on-one meeting with 90 year old Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. The meeting of the world's two most powerful religious figures with deep faith and piety is a tremendous achievement for all the peoples as this will be a significant investment in tolerance and peace

ALL eyes are on the 84-year-old pontiff's first-ever pastoral pilgrimage to the birthplace of Prophet Abraham (AS) in Iraq and his historic meeting with Grand Ayatollah Sayed Ali al-Sistani this weekend. This unprecedented papal pilgrimage to ancient Arab country with long term consequences will certainly heal old and fresh wounds besides strengthening bonds between followers of Christianity and Islam, two dominant monotheistic world religions.

Pope Francis who defied advice for postponement of the visit in view of security challenges and raging pandemic will be warmly received in Iraq. The welcome banners are up along the highway from Baghdad airport to the shrine city of Najaf.

Pope Francis landed in Baghdad on Friday, the holiest day for the Muslims. The visit aims at encouraging the dwindling Christian community to remain in their ancient homeland, considered to be the birthplace of numerous prophets. From the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham in Ur to Mosul where Daesh detonated several shrines including that of Prophet Yunus (Jonah), roads have been paved and churches decorated.

Among the most extraordinary moments of the trip will be Popes one-on-one meeting with 90 year old Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. The meeting of the world's two most powerful religious figures with deep faith and piety is a tremendous achievement for all the peoples as this will be a significant investment in tolerance and peace.

Pope Francis will meet Grand Ayatollah in his modest home situated close to the sprawling shrine of Imam Ali in the historic city of Najaf al Ashraf, the final resting place of Imam Ali (AS).

I am not a Christian, but I see in the Pope's face the embodiment of peace and humility. He has no ego and lives in a small monastic room in the Vatican guesthouse.

Who is Ayatollah Sistani?

The Grand Ayatollah Sayed Ali al-Hussaini Sistani was born in 1929 near Iran's holy city of Mashhad. A Mujtahid or Marja'a (Supreme religious guide) for his followers, Syed Sistani commands a massive following not only among Shia but those adhering to Sunni faith as well. A Marja'a is the closest thing in Islam to the position of pope. Sistani heads influential Hawza Ilmya Najaf, oldest Islamic seminary in the world.

In 2005 Iraqi Christians campaigned for the Nobel Peace Prize for Ayatollah Sistani as a tribute to his relentless efforts to protect their lives and right to practice their faith following the Daesh onslaught. He was listed as the most influential intellectual in 2005. Rarely does al-Sistani weigh in on



A poster of Pope Francis and Grand Ayatollah Sayed Ali al-Sistani is seen along a street ahead of the Pope's planned visit to Iraq, in central Baghdad on March 4, 2021 | AFP

governance matters. When he has, it has shifted the course of Iraq's modern history. An edict from him provided many Iraqis a reason to participate in the January 2005 elections, the first after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. His 2014 fatwa calling on able-bodied men to fight the Islamic State group massively swelled the ranks of the military. In 2019, as anti-government demonstrations gripped the country, his sermon led to the resignation of the then-prime minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi.

Parallels

The meeting with al-Sistani will build bridges between Muslims and Catholics. However, many do not know that there are many similarities between Shi'ism and Catholicism:

The concept of intercession (Tawassul) through great saints like Ali, Hussain, Jesus, Mary or Fatemeh: a strong emphasis on clerical authority of Marja'eya (Pope); belief in the 12 Imams (Saints); theology of sacrifice and atonement: belief in free will as to the doctrine of predestination: pilgrimage to holy places like those of Madina, Karbala, Najaf and Mashhad for healing: commemorations and observance of holy days such as Ashura and Arbaceen.

Meeting Ayatollah

In 2006 I had an opportunity of visiting these holy sites in Iraq and had

an opportunity to meet with Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani along with a select group of pilgrims.

We were escorted into a simple carpeted room with pillows against the walls to await the arrival of his eminence. When he entered, we all stood to greet him spontaneously with "God is Great."

There was a natural surge of love and admiration. He wore a black robe with a black turban and even with his white beard, he looked much younger than I expected.

He was quite alert and healthy-looking. When we were all seated, he addressed us in Farsi with Persian accent and one of our group members, Amina Inoles, a convert from Texas, translated.

He talked so softly and humbly yet with absolute command. It was clear why he is so loved by millions of Muslims. He is the most extraordinary person I have ever met. Before he started the conversation, he sat in immaculate silence and perfect equilibrium.

He was in an ocean of peacefulness. The entire group's eyes were upon the Ayatollah, and he did not show any signs of self-consciousness. His first words were to ask that the Lord accept our pilgrimage, welcome us to Najaf and express his happiness to see us.

Most of the questions were religious in nature and issues related to

daily life. One person asked him how Muslims in America should raise their children and he advised us to educate children in modern sciences and all other fields but lay emphasis on language and culture.

As I sat next to him, I could not help but stare at him and feel peace in his presence. I wish that all politicians, journalists and leaders could take time to visit him. He is the most charismatic leader of the 21st century.

Ayatollah Sistani wields enormous influence over Iraq's majority population but he remains a mystery to many in the west. He is one of Iraq's most powerful men yet he is not even an Iraqi, but an Iranian. Sistani doesn't teach the necessity of aggressive Dawa (Islamic evangelism) or Jihad against non-Muslims.

Sistani lives very modestly yet he presides over an organization which receives millions of dollars in donations (khums) and religious taxes (zakat) annually. This has had no effect on the ayatollah's life. He controls no army; he leads no political party and he harbors no political ambitions. Nor does he campaign or spin propaganda.

...
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Covid-19: How to overcome the devastating impact on our kids

MARIA L. BOCCIA

Our society's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has entailed months of "lockdowns", social isolation, and restricted movement. We are now seeing some serious consequences of these responses to the pandemic. Mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression, as well as substance abuse have all increased during the pandemic. Enforced isolation appears to be a particularly potent trigger for these increases. Reduced contact with friends and smaller households are correlated with increased difficulties. Those who already struggle with mental health difficulties or substance abuse are likely to experience deterioration during this time.

While these effects on adults are sufficiently concerning, the impact on children may be devastating. In particular, children kept out of school are showing deterioration in their mental health, with increases in depression and suicide attempts. The impact of Covid-19 on families through loss of employment, financial insecurity, loss of child care services, and available social support for families has resulted in increases in child abuse.

Intimate partner violence has also increased during the pandemic. Thus, unintended but predictable consequences from the pandemic and the consequent "lockdowns" with the associated social isolation are obvious.

The response to Covid-19 and the effort to control the pandemic by isolating



individuals and families is exposing millions of children to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which we know to be predictive of future difficulties, ranging from increased likelihood of smoking to suicide and increased morbidity and mortality in general. The relationship between ACEs and these negative outcomes is quite direct: the more ACEs an individual experiences in childhood,

the greater the likelihood that they will experience negative outcomes in adulthood. Maltreatment, substance abuse, and parental mental illness are all ACEs that are increasing through the social isolation imposed on families to deal with the pandemic.

Our children's well-being and healthy development, socially, cognitively, emotionally, and physically, all

depend on the healthy functioning of families. As the pandemic continues, and our response to it continues to isolate families and increase these unhealthy outcomes, the futures of our children are becoming darker. What can we do about this? There are many points of contact between distressed families and sources of help. Community mental health services, emergency room resources, and shel-

ters for victims of intimate partner violence have all been in demand for their services. The most powerful resource, however, may well be within the families themselves.

Healthy, supportive relationships can be the strongest protection against negative outcomes and one of the strongest resources for recovery. This social support is a significant element of many

The response to Covid-19 and the effort to control the pandemic by isolating individuals and families is exposing millions of children to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which we know to be predictive of future difficulties, ranging from increased likelihood of smoking to suicide and increased morbidity and mortality in general

of the professional and community-based support groups for alcohol and substance abuse recovery. A relationship can build resilience. That resilience is built on what relationships provide: whether it be tangible resources, emotional support, or developing coping strategies. Therefore, alongside our efforts to control this pandemic we need to consider ways to enhance resilience and protect families from the effects of isolation that we know increase the likelihood of negative outcomes for the children in these families.

...
Psychology Today

CO2 emissions cuts must increase tenfold to tackle climate emergency, study says

Press Trust Of India

Sixty-four countries reduced their fossil carbon-dioxide emissions during the period between 2016 and 2019, but the rate of global reduction needs to increase tenfold to meet the Paris Agreement goals to fight climate change, according to a study.

The researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA), UK, Stanford University in the US and the Global Carbon Project examined the progress in cutting fossil CO2 emissions since the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Climate Change, show the need for far greater ambition ahead of the important UN climate summit in Glasgow, UK, in November.

"Countries' efforts to cut CO2 emissions since the Paris Agreement are starting to pay off, but ac-

tions are not large-scale enough yet and emissions are still increasing in way too many countries," said Corinne Le Quere, Royal Society Professor at UEA.

"The drop in CO2 emissions from responses to COVID-19 highlights the scale of actions and of international adherence needed to tackle climate change," Le Quere, who led the study, said.

The researchers noted that the annual cuts of 0.16 billion tonnes of CO2 are only 10 per cent of the 1-2 billion tonnes of CO2 cuts that are needed globally every year to tackle climate change.

They explained that emissions decreased in 64 countries during 2016-2019, they increased in 150 countries.

According to the study, Global carbon emissions grew by 0.21 billion tonnes of CO2 per year during 2016-2019 compared to 2011-2015.

The researchers noted that in 2020, confinement measures to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic cut global emissions by 2.6 billion tonnes of CO2, about 7 per cent below 2019 levels.

They explained that 2020 is a 'pause button' that cannot realistically continue while the world overwhelmingly relies on fossil fuels.

Confinement policies are neither a sustainable nor desirable solution to the climate crisis, according to the researchers.

They noted that annual cuts of 1-2 billion tonnes of CO2 are needed throughout the 2020s and beyond to avoid exceeding global warming within the range 1.5 degrees Celsius to well below 2 degrees Celsius, the ambition of the UN Paris Agreement.

The world has warmed by over 1 degrees Celsius since the Industrial Revolution because of emissions of greenhouse gases from human ac-



tivities, the researchers said.

According to the study, of the 36 high-income countries, 25 saw their emissions decrease during 2016-2019 compared to 2011-2015, including the US, the European Union, and the UK.

The team noted that emissions

decreased even when accounting for the carbon footprint of imported goods produced in other countries.

The research shows that 30 out of 99 upper-middle income countries also saw their emissions decrease during 2016-2019 compared to 2011-2015.

This suggests that actions to reduce emissions are now in motion in many countries worldwide, the researchers said.

Mexico is a notable example in that group, while China's emissions increased 0.4 per cent, much less than the 6.2 per cent annual growth of 2011-2015, they said.

The growing number of climate change laws and policies appear to have played a key role in curbing the growth in emissions during 2016-2019, the researchers said, adding that there are now more than 2000 climate laws and policies worldwide.

They noted that a full bounce-back in 2021 to previous CO2 emission levels appears unlikely.

However, the reserachers said unless the COVID-19 recovery directs investments in clean energy and the green economy, emissions will likely start increasing again within a few years.

‘Birth weight of 2.5 kg or more linked to risk of developing type 2 diabetes in adulthood’

Agencies

A new study suggested that birth weight of 2.5 kg or more is strongly linked to the risk of developing type 2 diabetes in adulthood.

The findings of the study were published in the online journal 'BMJ Open Diabetes Research and Care'. The birth weight is associated with lower circulating levels of insulin-like growth factor-1, or IGF-1 for short, a hormone similar to insulin that affects childhood growth and energy metabolism in adults.

Compelling evidence indicated that susceptibility to type 2 diabetes over the life course is determined jointly by risk factors in both early life and adulthood, said the researchers.

To find out if there might be any association between adult circulating IGF-1 levels, birth weight, and the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, the researchers drew on data from 112,736 women and 68,354 men taking part in the UK Biobank study. The UK Biobank is a large population-based study, which recruited its 37 to 73-year-old participants between 2006 and 2010. It is tracking the potential impact of genetic and lifestyle factors on a wide range of common diseases of middle and old age.

At recruitment, participants provided social and demographic details, as well as information on their usual diet, lifestyle (smoking status, alcohol intake, sleep duration, and habitual physical activity), early life factors (birth weight and maternal smoking), and medical history.

They also provided blood, urine, and saliva samples, and their height, weight, body mass index (BMI), body circumferences (waist, hip, and



limbs), and skinfold thickness were measured.

Blood was checked for IGF-1, cholesterol, triglycerides, and an indicator of inflammation, C-reactive protein. And repeat measures of IGF-1 were available from 17,699 participants. Information on the development of type 2 diabetes was obtained from self-report, hospital records, and death certificates.

During an average monitoring period of nearly 10 years, 3299 people developed type 2 diabetes.

Participants with lower levels of IGF-1 tended to be older and more likely to live in a deprived area. They were also more likely to have lifestyle and clinical risk factors for diabetes.

Nevertheless, a clear inverse association emerged between IGF-1 levels and type 2 diabetes: the lower the IGF-1 level, the higher was the risk of type 2 diabetes.

But birthweight significantly altered this association, although only

for those whose weight was 2.5 kg or more at birth, and only in men.

Compared with those in the lowest 20 per cent of IGF-1 levels, the odds of type 2 diabetes were 14 per cent lower for those in the second-lowest 20 per cent, and up to 36 per cent lower for those in the highest 20 per cent of IGF-1 levels.

The findings held true, irrespective of any genetic predisposition to birthweight.

This is an observational study, and as such, can't establish the cause. Nor was there any information on whether the births had been premature or full-term, or on ethnicity-factors that may well be influential, say the researchers.

Nevertheless, their findings echo those of other epidemiological studies, they note. "Our findings highlight the importance of early-life risk factors in the development of the life course prevention strategies targeting IGF-1 and [type 2 diabetes]," they concluded.

Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology of Kashmir

Estates Wing, Main Campus Shalimar – 190 025

Notice Inviting e-Tender

E-NIT NO. (22) Of 2020

For and on behalf of Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST(K), e-tenders in (single-cover system) are invited from approved and eligible Electric contractors whose cards are valid up to 31-03-2021 registered with State PWD, CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Govt. departments for the following work:-

Dated:01.03.2021

S. No	Name of the work	Estimated Cost (In Lacs)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Major Head of Account	Cost of Tender document	Time of completion
1.	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Hybrid Solar 50 Kw Plant with Battery backup, complete in all respects for Veterinary Clinic at FVsc and A.H Shuhama SKUAST-K(Please see terms and Conditions in Technical Document for Serial 01 only)	51.14	102298/-	Having Executed Similar Nature of Work Successfully	CAPEX (Under Solar/Green Energy Harvesting)	500/-	20 days
2.	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Servo voltage Stabilizers for synchronising of Solar Grid Connected PV Plant of Nundreshi Hall, Comptroller Office, Registrar Office, HVC Secretariat and Ground Mounted Solar Plant near RCRQ at various locations at Shalimar SKUAST Kashmir.	19.68	39368/-	AAY class	---do---	500/-	20 days
3.	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Hybrid Solar 5 Kw Plant with Battery backup, complete in all respects at Gurez SKUAST-K	5.55	11102/-	AAY class	---do---	500/-	15 days

- a) Position of AAA: Accorded
b) Position of T.S : Sanctioned
c) Position of funds: Available
1. The Bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, set of terms and conditions and other details can be downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per following schedule:-

1.	Date of issue of Tender Notice	01.03.2021
2.	Date of start of downloading	01.03.2021
3.	Pre-bid meeting date	NA
4.	Bid submission start Date	01.03.2021
5.	Bid submission end date	15.03.2021
7.	Date & Time of opening of Technical bid/ Financial Bids of qualifying bidders (online)	16.03.2021

Further information can be had from the Office of the undersigned

No. Au/Estates/E-NIT (21)/220
Dated: 04 .03 .2020

DIPK-NB-6158/20

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
SKUAST-K

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI FEROPORA BASIN IRRIGATION DIVISION TANGMARG.

Short term E-TENDER NOTICE No.36 2020-21 OF (FBID Tangmarg)

Office Phone No.01954-254611Email Address:fbidivisiontangmarg@gmail.com

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of UT Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders on item rate basis are invited from approved registered eligible contractors with J&K UT.Govt. for following works: -

S. No	Name of work	Estt. Cost of Work (In Lacs)	Earnest Money In BDC	Time of completion	Class of Contract	Cost of Tender document (Amount in Rupee)	M.H. of Account	Ref.to AAA No	Position Of Funds
1	Replacement improvement to existing 100mm 150mm dia DI supply main intake main for WSS Kongambara Nowlari under improvement extension programme part A	11.15 lacs	BDC	12 days	BEE/ CEE/ DEE	Rs.- 500/-	Capex Budget	SE/DB/PIHE/ Sopore/AAA162 of 02/2020-21 dated:- 26-02-2021	Assured
2	Restoration of Escape Channel of Sheikhpura Escape Gate by way of laying of crate work etc on Babul Canal at Sheikhpura	1.99 lacs	BDC	05days	DEE	Rs.- 200/-	2701 M&R	SE/Hyd/DB/04 of 2020-21 dated:- 11-02-2020	Assured

POSITION OF TS:- ACCORDED:-

1.	Publishing date:	05-03-2021	04:00 PM
2.	Download date start:	05-03-2021	05:00 PM
3.	Bid Submission date start:	05-03-2021	06:00 PM
4.	Bid Submission date Ends:	11-03-2021	04:00 PM
5.	Date of Opening	12-03-2021	11:00 AM

Terms and Conditions:-

- The contractor has to produce the following documents along with the hard copies of Bid Security deceleration in dully notarized/Treasury Receipt/E-Challan etc. GST /Clearance certificate. The Lowest bidder has to submit hard copies in the office of Executive Engineer, FBI Division Tangmarg or Superintending Engineer, Hydraulic Circle Baramulla H.Q. Sopore, above within 03 days from the date of opening of tender
- If the tender is found beyond 35% against the advertised cost The tender will be rejected out rightly.
- The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specification, Bill of Quantities (B.O.Q) set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Department's website www.w.jktenders.gov.in.
- The tenders shall be uploaded in electronic format on the departmental website www.w.jktenders.gov.in The tenders uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened as per the schedule above in the office of the Executive Engineer, FBI Division Tangmarg.
- The complete bidding process will be online.
- Tenders must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in the shape of Treasury Receipt/E challan pledged to Tender Receiving Authority and bidders shall quote Enit No./S.No.of the work on E Challan/treasury Challan/ Bid Security deceleration in dully notarized.
- The penalty shall be imposed if:-
a) any tenderer withdraws his tender during the period of tender validity or make any modification in terms and conditions of the tender.
b) the contractor fails to execute the agreement within 07 days after fixation of contract.

Sd/
Executive Engineer,
Jal Shakti FB I Division
Tangmarg

DIPK-14496/20

Office of the Executive Engineer Generation Division USHP II Kangan

Email: xenekangan@gmail.com

E-NITNo: USHP-II/GD/ 59 of 2020-21

Dated:- 27/02/2021

For and on behalf of the Managing Director, J&K State Power Development Corporation, sealed bids (Part-A: Techno Commercial Bid) & Part-B: (Price Bid) valid for 180 days, accompanied with earnest money in the shape of DD/ Bank Guarantee from any Nationalized/ Scheduled Bank @ 2% of the estimated cost pledged to the Executive Engineers Generation Division USHP-II Kangan, are invited from Registered firms/ MSMEs/SSI unit holders/Licensed Electrical Contractors/Registered Workshop owners having sufficient related experience for undertaking the following titled work at USHP-II Kangan.

Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of PRV drain valves of unit IST,IIIND, and IIIRD at the Power House USHP-II, Kangan as per scope.

The e-tender can be downloaded from jktenders.gov.in or jkspsc.nic.in. The tenders should be addressed to the Superintending Engineer, Generation Circle PDC Bemina. However, the downloaded document at the time of submission should be accompanied with cost of tender document in the shape of Demand Draft pledged to CP&AO Kangan along with EMD @2% of Estimated Cost pledged to Executive Engineers Generation Division USHP-II Kangan.

S. No	Description	Quantity	Estimated cost (Lacs)	Amount of EMD	Cost of tender specification (Non Refundable)	Time of completion
	Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of PRV drain valves of unit IST,IIIND, and IIIRD at powerhouse USHP-II Kangan as per scope.	As per scope	4.02 lacs (inclusive of all applicable taxes and duties including GST, Insurance etc.)	2 % of the estimate cost i.e. Rs 8040/-	Rs. 1000	20 Days

CRITICAL DATES

1.	Date of Issue of tender notice.	27/02/2021
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents.	01/03/2021 to 16/03/2021
3.	Bid submission start date.	01/03/2021
4.	Bid submission end date.	16/03/2021
5.	Deadline for receiving the hard copies (CDR&EMD).	17/03/2021
6.	Date & time of opening of Online tenders (techno commercial).	18/03/2021

Note:

- The price bid need to be uploaded online as only as such no need to submit along with the hard copy.
- The bidders are advised to visit the site for assessment and go through the contents of this SBD before quoting the rates.

Sd/
Executive Engineer
Generation Division
USHP-II Kangan

DIPK-NB-6136/20

No: GD /USHP-II/ 1726-17

Dated: 27 /02/2021

'High petrol and diesel prices burden on consumers,' admits Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

The Finance Minister felt that a tax cut on fuel prices should be a joint call of Centre and states

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday acknowledged that consumers have a case for petrol and diesel prices to be brought down but said a reduction in taxes to make that happen should be a joint call of the central and state governments.

As much as 60 per cent of the retail price of petrol, which has shot above Rs 100-mark in some places in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and is at an all-time high elsewhere in the country, is made up of central and state taxes. Taxes make up for about 56 per cent of the record high diesel rates.

Sitharaman, who had increased central excise duty on petrol and diesel by a record margin last year to mop up gains arising from international oil prices plunging to a two-decade low, remained non-committal on taking the first step to cut central taxes to give relief to consumers.

For consumers, "there is enough case to say that prices should be down, it's a burden," she said while interacting with journalists at IWPC. She said that while the burden on the consumers is



"understood", the pricing is a vexatious issue.

"That's where I use the word 'dharamsankat'. It is a question which I would like states and the Centre to talk about because it's not just the Centre which has duties on petroleum products, it also has the states charging," she said.

Stating that both states and the Centre draw revenue out of taxes levied on petrol and diesel, she said 41 per cent of the tax collections made by the Centre go to the states. "So there is an issue which is layered and as a result that has to be a matter ideally for the Centre and the states to talk about," she added.

On the issue of bringing petrol and diesel under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, which will end the cascading impact of taxes and bring uniformity, the finance minister said the call has to be taken by the GST Council, the apex decision making body of the indirect tax regime.

Currently, the central government levies a fixed rate of excise duty while states levy different rates of VAT. Under the GST, the two would merge and bring uniformity, solving the problem of fuel rates being higher in states with higher VAT. "Whenever the GST Council decides to take up this issue, they are

well within their interest to take it up and discuss. It's a call which the Council has to take," she said.

Asked if the Centre will take such a proposal to the Council in the next meeting likely this month, she said a call will be taken "closer to the date of the Council meeting".

Sitharaman raised excise duty by Rs 13 and Rs 16 per litre on petrol and diesel, respectively, between March 2020 and May 2020 and it now accounts for more than one-third of the Rs 91.17 a litre price of petrol in Delhi and 40 per cent of Rs 81.47 per litre rate of diesel.

Earlier this week, economists at SBI in a report stated that petrol price can go down to Rs 75 a litre across the country if it is brought under the ambit of GST.

Diesel will come at Rs 68 a litre and the revenue loss for the Centre and states will be only Rs 1 lakh crore or 0.4 per cent of GDP, according to the calculation by the economists made under the assumption of global crude prices at USD 60 a barrel and exchange rate at Rs 73 per dollar.

PLI scheme likely to boost India's manufacturing output by USD 520 billion in 5 years: Modi

Addressing a webinar, the PM says the government is carrying out reforms to boost domestic manufacturing



New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, which is aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing and exports, is expected to increase the country's production by USD 520 billion in the next five years.

Addressing a webinar, Modi said the government is carrying out reforms to boost domestic manufacturing.

In this year's Budget, about Rs 2 lakh crore was earmarked for the PLI scheme for the next five years and "there is an expectation that the scheme would result in increasing the production by about USD 520 billion in the next five years", he said.

He said there is also an expectation that the current workforce in the sectors, which will avail the benefits of the PLI scheme, would be doubled and job creation

would also increase.

The Prime Minister said the government is working to reduce compliance burden, further improve ease-of-doing business and cut down logistics costs for the industry.

"PLI scheme would boost manufacturing in sectors from telecom to auto to pharma. PLI is aimed at expanding manufacturing and boosting exports," he said. PTI

Indian economy to do better than -8 per cent prediction: Finance Ministry

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is likely to do better than the projection of an 8 per cent shrinkage in the current fiscal as economic activity gathers pace with mild stiffening of pandemic curve and the roll-out of vaccines, the finance ministry said on Friday.

The Department of Economic Affairs in its monthly report said the recovery of global output has slowed following the re-imposition of lockdowns in advanced countries amid renewed COVID-19 waves and its emerging variants.

However, economic activity in India has gathered pace with mild stiffening of the COVID-19 curve, failing to deter a steady uptick in consumer sentiment, which has been bolstered by the inoculation drive.

"Often overlooked in the spate of COVID-19 vaccine development and ongoing inoculation drive, social distancing poses as a social vaccine that also needs to be continuously administered for health and economy to make a quick recovery in India as well as abroad. The social vaccine is as important as the real vaccine," it said.

While India continues to avoid the second wave of the pandemic, there has been a surge in cases in eight states -- Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Haryana -- underscoring once again the inevitability of social distancing in keeping the pandemic at bay until a critical mass of inoculated population builds up immunity to control the growth of infection in the country.



"Positive GDP growth in Q3 of FY21, for the first time since the onset of the pandemic, adds to the positive sentiment as the economy is set to close the year with activity levels higher than measured in the second advance estimates of GDP," the report said.

It said the Reserve Bank's industrial outlook survey (IOS) conducted in Q3 of FY21 has also re-affirmed this optimism, with respondents indicating a strengthening of production, order books and employment during the third quarter, driven

by easing of lockdowns, re-opening of businesses and improvement in the availability of finance from banks and internal sources.

GDP growth is expected to be in positive territory in the second half of 2020-21, the report noted.

The second advance estimates of National Income for FY2020-21 recently released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) indicate real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contraction at 8 per cent, larger than real Gross Value Added (GVA) contraction of

6.5 per cent.

GDP is derived by adding taxes and subtracting subsidies to GVA. The Finance Ministry's Economic Survey had in January projected economic contraction this fiscal ending March at 7.7 per cent.

"Since GDP growth (or contraction) has been distorted in FY 2020-21 on account of significant growth of subsidies, GVA growth is a more appropriate measure to follow in the current year," the report added.

The ministry said that both food and fer-

tiliser subsidy outgo is Rs 3.7 lakh crore more than what was budgeted for 2020-21.

"After making adjustments for pre-payment of loans of 2.0 trillion rupees taken for paying subsidy of previous years, the balance 1.7 trillion rupees emerged as the additional subsidy paid in the pandemic year.

"This enhancement between budget estimates and revised estimates caused the growth of subsidies to be significantly higher than the growth of indirect taxes," the finance ministry's monthly economic report said.

The lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of the COVID pandemic pummelled the economy as demand dried up and non-essential businesses were shuttered.

In the April-June quarter, the economy contracted by the steepest ever 24.4 per cent, and 7.3 per cent in the September quarter.

However, in October-December it came back in positive territory with 0.4 per cent growth. The report further said large industries credit growth remained in negative territory in February possibly explained by high rating borrowers raising resources from alternative routes like bonds, debentures and other market-based instruments to take advantage of the prevailing low-interest rate regime and also to retire past high-cost debt.

Corporate bond issuances at Rs 6.3 lakh crore during April 2021-January 2021 were 21.6 per cent higher than those in the same period of last year.

Saudi Arabia asks India to use cheap oil it bought last year to cool prices

NEW DELHI: International oil prices rose after OPEC and its allies ignored India's plea to ease production control, with Saudi Arabia asking New Delhi to instead use oil it bought at rock bottom rates last year.

Brent crude, the most widely used benchmark, on Friday rose nearly 1 per cent to USD 67.44 a barrel after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, agreed not to increase supplies in April awaiting more substantial recovery in demand.

Brent crude rose nearly 1 per cent to USD 67.44 a barrel on Friday.

India's Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had in the run-up to Thursday's OPEC meeting urged the producers' group to ease production curbs to fulfil their promise of stable oil prices.

He felt rising international oil prices were hurting economic recovery and demand.

Responding to a question on India's pleas, Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman at a press conference after the OPEC+ decision on Thursday said New Delhi should take some of the crude out of storage that they



had purchased at very cheap rates last year.

"With regard to India, very simple. I would ask my friend that he withdraw some of the cheap oil that they bought in April, May and June (last year)," the Saudi Minister said. "There is an opportunity cost for not withdrawing it now."

India had purchased 16.71 million barrels of crude in April-May, 2020 and filled all the three Strategic Petroleum Reserves created at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and Mangalore and Padur in Karnataka. The average cost of that crude purchase was USD 19 per barrel, according to Pradhan's written reply to a question in

the Rajya Sabha on September 21, 2020.

Retail petrol and diesel prices, which already are at historic highs, should rise if the oil companies decide to pass on the surge in international oil prices to consumers.

Petrol and diesel prices have remained unchanged for the last five years and oil companies have in past not revised prices in the run to crucial assembly elections in 2017 and 2018 ahead of elections in states like Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry and Assam will go to the polls in the next few weeks.

Budget focuses on growth, shows tax rate stability: Economic Advisory Council chief Bibek Debroy

NEW DELHI: Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) chairman Bibek Debroy on Friday said that while giving the message that tax rates will remain stable, the Union Budget 2021-22 focussed on promoting growth by driving reforms to boost consumption, investment and government expenditure.

The economic growth in the next financial year has been pegged at 11 per cent. In the current financial year, the economy is estimated to contract by 8 per cent on account of the coronavirus pandemic. He said that real growth sector comes from four different sources -- consumption, investment, government expenditure, and net exports.

However, there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding growth in the external sector. "So, the real sector growth has to primarily come about through consumption, investments and government expenditure...the budget drives reforms on all three counts, consumption, investment, and government expenditure. All too often historically budgets have been associated with tinkering in the tax rates. One of the messages in this budget is the message



that tax rates will have stability," he said at the Dun & Bradstreet BFSI & FinTech Summit 2021.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had presented the Budget 2021-22 in Parliament on February 1.

Observing that 2021-22 numbers are going to be good because of the base effect, Debroy said, "What is important for us to ponder about and what is important for us to ask is not what is going to happen in 2021-22 but what is going to happen from 2022-23."

The numbers in 2022-23 are not going to be that spectacular, he said adding that "but in nominal growth terms, once the effects of the low base are out of the way even

in 2022-23, we will probably get a nominal GDP growth rate of around 11 per cent which again means corporate average corporate profitability of 17-18 per cent".

Debroy further said the worst of the COVID-19 crisis, economic activity wise, is over, and "we can look forward with some optimism for the economy in general".

Speaking at the event, Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian said India's financial sector has not really grown as fast as it should have and is "still very, very small". For instance, he said, while India is the fifth largest economy in the world, the largest Indian financial institution that is SBI is ranked 55th in the world.

On the other hand, countries which are a mere fraction of India's size have several of their financial institutions featuring among the top 100 in the world. He also said the Budget has made a significant push towards reforming the financial sector and adding vitality to it.

The chief economic advisor also stressed that financial technology (fintech) can play a significant role in improving both the quantity and the quality of the financial intermediation in the country. Subramanian further said while banks, especially public sector lenders, are investing in data architecture, "we still have a long way to go" in enabling the kind of data architecture that banks globally employ.

Dun & Bradstreet India Managing Director Avinash Gupta said digital technologies have played a great role in keeping Indians connected and "transactional" during the lockdown situation.

As a matter of fact, he said digital transactions to the tune of about Rs 4,525 crore have already been executed between April 2020 and March 1, 2021, as against a target of Rs 4,630 crore set for the entire fiscal year.

Freedom House Report Downgrading India's Status 'Misleading, Incorrect, Misplaced': Govt

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The government on Friday strongly rebutted a Freedom House report downgrading India's status to a "partly free" country, calling it "misleading, incorrect and misplaced", and asserted that the country has well established democratic practices.

While the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) stressed that the country treats all citizens equally without discrimination and that discussion, debate and dissent are part of Indian democracy, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India has robust institutions. The MEA also took a dig at the Democracy watchdog, saying India does not need 'sermons', especially from those who cannot get their basics right.

A new report by Freedom House, a US government-funded NGO, released on Wednesday had also claimed sustained erosion of civil liberties in India.

"The Freedom House report, titled 'Democracy Under Siege', in which it has been claimed that India's status as a free country has declined to 'partly free' is misleading, incorrect and misplaced, the MIB said in a statement.

Asked about the report at a media briefing, MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "The political judgements of Freedom House are as inaccurate and distorted as their maps."

Srivastava was referring to a wrongful depiction of India's map by Freedom House.

"For example on the COVID-19 situation, there is a widespread appreciation in the world of our response, of our high recovery rate and of our low fatality rate," he said.

"India has robust institutions and well established democratic practices. We do not need sermons especially from those who



cannot get their basics right."

In a detailed rebuttal, the MIB said, "Government of India treats all its citizens with equality as enshrined under the Constitution of the country and all laws are applied without discrimination."

It said due process of law is followed in matters relating to law and order, irrespective of the identity of the alleged instigator.

"With specific reference to the North East Delhi riots in January 2020, the law enforcement machinery acted swiftly in an impartial and fair manner. Proportionate and appropriate actions were taken to control the situation. Necessary legal and preventive actions were taken by the law enforcement machinery on all complaints/calls received, as per law and procedures."

The government statement also rebutted the allegation in the report that the COVID-19-induced lockdown "left millions of migrant workers in cities without work or basic resources" and "resulted in the dangerous and unplanned displacement of millions of

internal migrant workers".

It said the lockdown was announced to control the spread of the coronavirus and the period allowed the government to ramp up production capacity of masks, ventilators, personal protection equipment (PPE) kits, etc. and thereby effectively prevent the spread of the pandemic. "India has, on per capita basis, registered one of the lowest rates of active COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 related deaths globally.

Rejecting the report's claims that academicians and journalists were intimidated, it said, Discussion, debate and dissent is part of Indian democracy. The Government of India attaches highest importance to the safety and security of all residents of the country, including journalists."

The Centre has issued a special advisory to the States and Union Territories on safety of journalists requesting them to strictly enforce the law to ensure safety and security of media persons, the statement added.

The report had also claimed

that though the private media are vigorous and diverse, and investigations and scrutiny of politicians do occur, but attacks on press freedom have escalated dramatically under the Modi government, and reporting has become significantly less ambitious in recent years. Authorities have used security, defamation, sedition, and hate speech laws, as well as contempt-of-court charges, to quiet critical voices in the media.

Responding to this assessment, the government statement said that 'Public Order' and 'Police' are State subjects under India's federal structure of governance.

The responsibility of maintaining law and order, including investigation, registration and prosecution of crimes, protection of life and property, etc., rests primarily with the concerned State governments. Therefore, measures as deemed fit are taken by law enforcement authorities to preserve public order, it added.

The report has also alleged that a wide variety of NGOs

operate, but some, particularly those involved in the investigation of human rights abuses, continue to face threats, legal harassment, excessive police force, and occasionally lethal violence.

Rebutting this, the government said the Indian Constitution provides for adequate safeguards under various statutes, including the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 for ensuring protection of human rights.

On the report's claim that the authorities used assembly bans, internet blackouts, and live ammunition between December 2019 and March 2020 to quell widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and proposals to roll out a citizens' registration process across the country, the government said, "...the temporary suspension of telecom/internet services is resorted to with the overarching objective of maintaining law and order under strict safeguards."

The government also rebutted the claim that the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) amendment led to freezing of NGO Amnesty International's assets, and said the NGO had received permission under the FCRA Act only once and that too 20 years ago (December 19, 2000).

Since then Amnesty International, despite its repeated applications, has been denied FCRA approval by successive governments since as per law it is not eligible to get such an approval. However, in order to circumvent the FCRA regulations, Amnesty U.K. remitted large amounts of money to four entities registered in India, by misclassifying the remittance as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), it said.

This malafide rerouting of money was in contravention of extant legal provisions.

Set up COVID-19 test facilities for students, staff: Govt to DCs

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The government on Friday asked the Deputy Commissioners (DC) of all the ten districts of Kashmir Valley to set up random rapid COVID-19 test facilities for educational institutions. The decision has been taken in wake of the reopening of schools after nearly one year.

In an order, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Pandurang K Pole has ordered setting up of random rapid COVID-19 test facilities in Kashmir to prevent spread of infection among teachers and students.

"Deputy Commissioners of

ten districts of Kashmir division are directed to put in place random rapid COVID-19 test facilities for educational institutions in order to prevent the spread of virus," the order reads.

The order reads that the schools in Kashmir opened from March-01-2021 and students of classes 9th to 12th are now attending their schools as per the guidelines by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, MHA and the divisional administration.

He said that as per the guidelines the students of class 5th to 8th are supposed to attend their classes from March-08—(KNO)

Ensuring Victory Of Cong In Assembly Polls Priority: Azad

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Friday said that ensuring victory of the party in the forthcoming assembly elections is a priority and he along with his colleagues will work towards it and campaign in these polls. Polls in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and Union Territory Puducherry will begin from March 27.

Azad, who is a prominent member of the group of 23 leaders who had demanded organisational overhaul in the Congress, said that for the next two months the party is the top priority.

"We will campaign where ever the party sends us for campaigning or candidates invite us to campaign for them in the upcoming assembly elections in five states," he said during an interaction with reporters.

"Ensuring the victory of the Congress in the upcoming assembly elections is our top priority. Everything else will be secondary. I and my colleagues will campaign in all upcoming state polls," Azad said, adding that "we will try our best that the Congress wins in



these elections".

Members of the group of 23 leaders, who had demanded an overhaul in the Congress, had recently said at an event in Jammu that the party has weakened. Asked whether the members of the 'G-23' will campaign even if the party does not ask them, Azad said, the party always sends main campaigners for some candidates.

He said he has seen the party functioning for many years and has always gone to campaign wherever needed. Members of the Congress will get requests from candidates for campaigning once the scrutiny of nomination papers is complete, Azad said.

The 'G-23' group has triggered several rows through its comments ever since it wrote to Congress president Sonia Gandhi demanding organisational overhaul and elections for every post in the party.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Following Developments

has not changed. We call on all parties to reduce tensions along the Line of Control by returning to the 2003 ceasefire commitments," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said at his daily news conference on Thursday.

He was responding to a question on the India-Pakistan ceasefire agreement, Price told a reporter that America's policy towards the region has not changed.

"We condemn militants who seek to infiltrate across the Line of Control. When it comes to how we will support that, we continue to support direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on Kashmir and other areas of concern," Price said when asked as to what US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is going to do to ensure or try to ensure that the ceasefire announced between India and Pakistan is maintained.

The comments by Price followed a joint statement issued after a hotline discussion between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan on February 25 during which the two sides agreed to strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the Line of Control and all other sectors.

India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but it has hardly been followed in letter and spirit over the past several years.

India last month said that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has said the onus is on Pakistan to create an environment free of terror and hostility.

"Our position is well-known. India desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said. "The onus is on Pakistan for creating such an environment," he said in New Delhi.

Militants Attack

or injury in the incident," he said.

The area, he said, has been cordoned off and further investigations have been taken up.

ED Summons

summoned but indicated that it could be linked to alleged financial irregularities in loans taken in the past from Jammu and Kashmir Bank.

The agency had searched the premises of Anjum Fazili, a close aide of the PDP leader, in December last year and had seized over Rs 28 lakh in cash.

The raids were carried out at Fazili's premises in Srinagar and Delhi in connection with a money laundering case.

Criticising the ED summons to Mehbooba, People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) chairperson Farooq Abdullah said "political vendetta" would not help in improving the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Centre should "put an end to this kind of vendetta" and allow democratic processes to continue smoothly, said Abdullah, also a former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Political vendetta will not help in improving the situation in Jammu and Kashmir," the National Conference chief added.

The PAGD is an alliance of various mainstream parties in Jammu and Kashmir,

including the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). These parties have come together to work towards restoring Jammu and Kashmir's special status that was revoked by the Centre in August 2019.

Farooq Moves

of alleged money laundering. The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister challenged the December 2020 order before the high court on Wednesday. It is scheduled to come up for hearing later on Friday.

The ED has alleged that Mr. Abdullah "misused" his position as president of the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) from 2001-2011 and made appointments in the sports body so Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) sponsored funds could be laundered.

Mr. Abdullah said the list of properties attached by the ED in Jammu and Kashmir were unrelated to the alleged criminal activity mentioned in the Final Report/FIR and termed it a "continuing violation of his fundamental rights".

According to party MP Hasnain Masoodi, the properties were either ancestral or acquired before the alleged offence took place and were therefore not involved in any money-laundering or related criminal activity.

Mr. Abdullah raised the validity of the ED in the case. He said in his petition that on the date of the registration of the ECIR (Enforcement Commission Information Report) and the initiation of investigation, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was governed by the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, 1956, and had special status under Article 370 of the Constitution of India.

He said the ED registered the case on December 28, 2018, under the Ranbir Penal Code (the Indian Penal Code's substitute in the erstwhile state) without ascertaining whether it had any jurisdiction to do so.

On December 19, 2020 the ED issued a provisional order attaching the properties under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). An appeal could be filed before the adjudicating authority of the PMLA within a six-month period.

According to an ED statement, the attached properties include three residential houses — at Gupkar Road in Srinagar, Katipora Tehsil in Tanmarg and Bhatindi in Sunjwan village of Jammu.

"A commercial building at posh Residency Road in Srinagar has also been attached besides lands at four different places in JK," the agency had said.

While the book value of the attached properties is Rs11.86 crore, their market value is estimated to be about Rs 60-70 crore, officials said.

The 84-year-old NC patron has been questioned by the ED in the case several times, the last in October 2020 at Srinagar.

LG Calls For

cultural programmes, khadi exhibitions, Shikara rallies in Dal lake, seminars, cycle rallies, yoga camps, bike rallies and other activities over the 75 weeks leading up to the country's 75th year of independence in August 2022.

Sinha asked the officials to involve all sections of society, including public representatives, youths and schoolchildren, to ensure

maximum public participation in the celebrations, the spokesperson said.

He also directed the officials to make optimum use of various online and offline media platforms for publicising the festival, he said.

All departments were directed to submit their respective action plan with the detailed calendar of commemoration activities for 75 weeks, covering all districts, he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' on March 12, the day Mahatma Gandhi launched the Dandi March from Gujarat's Sabarmati Ashram in 1930.

The commemorations will include 75 events for 75 weeks with one prominent event every week. The programmes will be planned at 75 places or monuments of historical significance spread across states and UTs.

Mercury Dips

2.1 degree Celsius on the earlier night.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of 3.1 degree Celsius against 3.4 degree Celsius on the previous night.

The minimum temperature settled at 1.0 degree Celsius in Kupwara against 3.4 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said.

Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.4 degree Celsius against minus 1.0 degree Celsius in the previous night.

"There is possibility of light to moderate rain with thunder and lightning over plains and light to moderate snow over higher reaches during late night of 6th March and 7th March and thereafter decrease in intensity and distribution," the Met official said.

Possibility of heavy snow over isolated places particularly over higher reaches can't be ruled out during March 7, the officials said.

He said that the probable impacts include disruption of surface transport over higher reaches, possibility of landslides and shooting stones over Jammu-Srinagar Highway, possibility of hailstorm at isolated places over plains of Jammu Division and fall in maximum temperature by 4-8 degree Celsius.

There are four types colour codes signifying the level of caution: green which means no action, yellow—situation to be watched), amber—government agencies need to be prepared for severe weather and red—action needed by the agencies. (GNS)

Two Way Traffic

subject to fair weather and better road condition, LRVs (Passenger) shall be allowed from both sides on Jammu-Srinagar highway viz Jammu towards Srinagar and vice-versa," traffic officials said.

"However, TCU Jammu/Srinagar shall liaise with TCU Ramban before releasing the traffic." The thoroughfare was closed on Friday for maintenance and repairs.

MP Akbar Lone's

speech" while addressing a public rally during DDC election campaign in Hajin last year.

The official said that Hilal was granted subject to the condition that he would furnish a surety bond of Rs 2 lakh and remain present during the trial—(KNO)

Police Orders

the police statement said.

During last over three decades, Jammu and Kashmir Police along with the other security forces and investigation agencies is fighting the sponsored militancy to ensure peaceful atmosphere in Jammu and Kashmir. In last year alone 255 militants were neutralized and 299 militants/associates were arrested in the sustained anti-militancy operations," it added.

Elaborating the law under which the vehicles will be confiscated, the police hand-out said that Section 25 Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 provides for the more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations, and for dealing with militant activities, and for matters connected therewith.

Pertinently, last month police approved seizure of at least 72 movable and immovable properties, including a house belonging to separatist leader Asiya Andrabi's mother in law and a SUV of her close aide Sofi Fahmeeda.

World's Highest

the bridge will have stations at both ends and it has been built in seismic zone IV besides that it has been designed to be a blast proof.

They added that this bridge will have a design speed of around 100 kilometres per hours with a lifespan of 120 years.

The bridge will include a 14m-wide dual carriageway and a 1.2m wide central verge.

The bridge will include 17 spans with a 469 m main arch across the Chenab river and viaducts on either side and according to officials Steel was chosen to construct the bridge as it will be more economical and able to resist temperatures of - 20°C and wind speeds of above 200 Km/h.

Besides Chenab bridge, the Anji Bridge, India's first cable stayed bridge is also constructed on the same railway project.

Officials said that in view of site conditions, the bridge has been divided into three parts which include a 120 m long approach viaduct on Reasi side, the main bridge of 473 m cable-stayed portion and a central embankment of 94 m.

They said that this bridge stands at a height of 331 m above the river bed.

Officials said that the Chenab bridge will be completed in ongoing year while as cable-stayed rail bridge is expected to get complete next year.

The Jammu-Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail line project was undertaken by the government of India in the year 2003. Jammu to Udhampur section was completed and opened in 2005.

"The Udhampur-Baramulla rail project will be completed by December 2022 besides that all northern state capitals except Shillong to be connected by March 2023," Union Railway Ministry had said recently—(KNO)

ECI Puts On Hold

Commissioner Kewal Kumar Sharma was given one-year extension earlier this week.

The panel is empowered to fix boundaries for 90 Assembly seats and five parliamentary segments of Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory. It has also been tasked to reserve seats for scheduled castes and schedule tribes in the Assembly.

Going by the laws and parameters governing reservation for SCs and STs, 18 seats are likely

to be reserved in the UT Assembly.

It is worthwhile to mention that Assembly of the erstwhile state of J&K had 87 seats, of which four seats were Ladakh. Ladakh is no more part of Jammu & Kashmir from October 31, 2019 when it started functioning as a separate Union Territory—(KNO)

J&K Records 81

followed by 14 in Jammu district.

While nine districts did not report any fresh case, nine others had cases in single digits, they said.

The number of active cases in the union territory is 892, while 1,24,002 patients have recovered so far, the officials said.

The death toll in the union territory has reached 1,960 they said.

8 Gamblers Held

The police spokesperson said that all the accused have been arrested and a case FIR No. 26/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered at police station Sumbal in this regard.

Similarly in Awantipora, the police spokesperson said a raid was carried out at village Mandakpal in Khrew on the basis of input about gambling activities. He said four gamblers were arrested and an amount of Rs 4940 was seized from their possession.

"They have been arrested and shifted to Police Station Khrew where they remain in custody. Accordingly, a case FIR No. 08/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered and investigation has been initiated," he added.

Arms Recovered

Shikari ridge of Mahore tehsil, the officials said.

A joint search operation by the Jammu Kashmir Police and the Army was launched in the area and two UBGL and MGL, five grenades, one RPG, three mortar bombs, 80 rounds of ammunition and explosive material were recovered, they said.

Investigation so far revealed that this cache of arms and ammunition was to be delivered to a person from Gool in Ramban district, the officials said.

It was also revealed that the consignment was sent by Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Khobaib (resident of Doda and now based in Pakistan), they added.

Khobaib has been continuously trying to send in money and arms to the Jammu region to revive militant activities in the Chenab valley by recruiting young boys for the outfit, the officials said.

This is the third big recovery of arms and ammunition from the area this week, they said.

2 Men Wanted

their Jammu counterparts, Thane police nabbed Moinudeen Aneesh Ahmed Shaikh (19) and Shah Alam Ansari (31) from Mumbra.

Heroin-Like

headed by SDPO Mendhar Zaheer Abbas Jafri and a case under relevant sections of law stands registered.

"Investigation is going on to identify the source of consignment and to nab the accused." (GNS)

17th Senior National Soft Tennis Championship Begins In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: 17th Senior National Soft Tennis Championship for men and women has begun at the Multi Sports Activity Centre, Gindun Stadium, Rajbagh here.

Joint Secretary Kashmir, J&K Sports Council Nuzhat Ara was the chief guest on the inaugural function, while Executive Director Amateur Soft Tennis Federation of India, NG Vegda and Manager Gindun Sports Stadium, Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar were the

guests of honour on the function. J&K Amateur Soft Tennis Association in collaboration with J&K Sports Council is conducting the championship at different venues of Srinagar in which more than 350 players from 32 States and Union Territories are participating.

A large number of spectators including officials, participants, parents and different concerned departments were present on the occasion.

The championship will continue till 8th of March 2021.

Maiden 2-Day Chenab River White Water Rafting Festival Begins In Doda



Observer News Service

DODA: The first ever white water rafting festival was today organised by Bhaderwah Development Authority and JK Adventure Group here in the river Chenab at Premnagar Shibnote to promote the adventure tourism in the district.

The festival, which will continue for two days, witnessed huge participation of adventure sports lovers and local public. The event is being held under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner (DC), Dr Sagar D Doifode.

Over 1500 people from across the district, especially youth attended the festival on day 1 and about 200 participated in the rafting trip from Premnagar, Shibnote to Karac.

The DC along with the DDC Chairperson, DDC member Thathri, BDC Chairpersons besides MBBS students of first batch of GMC Doda participated in the event and

also took rafting ride.

Apart from the rafting, the district administration has organised multifarious activities at the venue for the enjoyment of the participants which includes volleyball matches, tug of war, display of music, etc.

The activities are being conducted under strict standards of safety measures and the people especially the youth of the district enjoyed the entire event.

The participants extended gratitude to the district administration for holding a youth engagement programme in the district.

Among others present at the festival were Senior Superintendent Police, Doda Mumtaz Ahmed; Chief Executive Officer, BDA, Dr Rajinder Khajuria, Assistant Commissioner Development, Prem Singh Chib, SDM Thathri, Athar Amin Zargar, SDM Gandoh, Pritam Lal Thapa, SDM Assar Rishi Sharma, besides senior officers from civil as well as police administration.



Real Kashmir Lose 2-1 To Churchill Brothers In I-League Phase 2 Opener

Press Trust of India

KOLKATA: Fredsan Marshall's injury-time strike gave Churchill Brothers a 2-1 win over Real Kashmir FC in the I-League in Kolkata on Friday.

After Lukman Adefemi's (67th) second-half strike had cancelled out Luka Majcen's first-half goal (45+1), Marshall's (90+4) long-range screamer proved to be the difference between the two sides.

Churchill Brothers played the first half explosively, restricting Real Kashmir FC mostly in their own half. With Churchill Brothers dominating possession and the tempo of the play, Real Kash-

mir relied on their solid defending and rarely moved forward through counters and long balls.

However, at the stroke of half-time, a long ball by Vinil Poojary that took a heavy deflection led Haroon Amiri to make an error as he failed to clear the ball that fell pleasingly to Luka Majcen.

Clear on goal, Majcen slotted past a hapless opposition goalkeeper to take Churchill Brothers into half-time leading 1-0.

If the first half belonged to Churchill, the second belonged to Real Kashmir FC. The Snow Leopards started quick off the blocks, spurred by conceding late in the first half.

In the 67th minute, Lukman

Adefemi produced an absolute stunner to grab the leveller for Real Kashmir.

Adefemi, who has been in red-hot form recently -- scoring multiple goals over the last couple of matches, edged past Joseph Clemente with the outside of his boot connecting to a cross from the right flank. The volley went crashing into Shilton Paul's net as the scoreline read 1-1.

In second-half stoppage time, Churchill Brothers substitute Marshall ran on towards goal and with the opposition defence backing out from tackling, his shot from distance crashed into the bottom right corner, proving to be the winner.

DC Baramulla Reviews Infrastructure Facilities In Sports Sector

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Bupinder Kumar today chaired a meeting of concerned officers to take an appraisal of infrastructural and other allied facilities available in sports sector.

On the occasion, the DC took a comprehensive review of various aspects associated with sports wherein he was briefed by the concerned authorities about the overall scenario of sports in the district.

During the meeting, DC stressed for involving all concerned stakeholders more especially the PRIs to scale up sports activities in the district. He directed to work in coordination and synergy to involve more and more youth towards sports. He also termed sports necessary for channelizing the potential of our youth towards the right direction.

The DC further added that syn-



ergy between departments like Rural Development, Youth Services & Sports and Sports Council is must for development of sports infrastructure and reiterated his commitment for upgrading it by exploring all possible means.

He also directed to ramp up the pace of work on the projects

taken in sports sector besides assuring all possible assistance on the part of his administration.

ADDC Baramulla Aijaz Abdullah Saraaf, ADC, JDP, ACD, CEO, District Youth Services and Sports Officer, Manager Sports Council among other concerned officers attended the meeting.

IND VS ENG 4th Test

Pant Century Carries India To 294/7 On Day 2 Of Final Test Against England



Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD: Rishabh Pant changed his game-plan and in turn India's fortunes with a magnificent century, helping the side snatch control from England's grip to finish the second day at a robust 294 for 7 in the final Test here on Friday.

England dominated the first two sessions and India looked in all sorts of trouble before Pant (101 off 118 balls) suddenly decided to catch the opposition by the scruff of their necks, effortlessly changing gears in company of Washington Sundar (60, 117 balls, 8x4).

The duo added 113 runs in 26 overs but more importantly, landed an exquisite "left-hook" on England's hopes of turning party-poopers, having already conceded a first innings lead of 89 runs.

At stumps, Washington was still at the crease with Axar Patel (11).

For someone, who has always been panned for his lack of game awareness, it was Pant 2.0 at play where he defended when it was necessary but unlocked his brutal attacking instincts when required.

The first 50 came off 82 balls and the next off 33 balls with Washington being the ideal foil, holding one end well en route to his third half century in Test cricket.

Just like playing a single spinner in the third Test was a blunder, England paid the price for playing a bowler short as their main four got tired during the final session.

In Virender Sehwag style, Pant deposited Dom Bess into the "cow corner" of the stands against the turn, to complete his third Test hundred, first at home, having missed at least five in recent years.

When he finally got out, Root's frustrated expression was a dead giveaway that the match was now out of hand for England, having conceded as many as 141 runs in a single session.

Pant had hit 13 fours and two sixes during an innings which, in all likelihood, will earn him the "Man of the Match" award.

Ben Stokes (22-6-73-2) troubled the Indians with reared up deliveries, one of those got skipper Virat Kohli (0), but there was no trouble for Pant, who would gleefully pull the England all-rounder.

The audacity with which he came down the track against Anderson (20-11-40-3), depositing him over extra cover for a boundary, could have taken anyone's breath away.

So subtly Pant changed the pace of his innings, that even Root didn't know what hit his team which looked in control when India went into the tea at 153 for 6.

Pant was then batting on 36,

defending the deliveries that would turn and jump off the rough while playing Anderson and Stokes judiciously.

England till then had maintained the shine of the ball well but post tea as the ball got soft, Pant took charge.

With Washington looking solid at the other end, Root asked Jack Leach (23-5-66-2) to come round the wicket and the idea played into Pant's hands as the visitors didn't attack the rough areas enough.

It was one fascinating day of Test cricket where flamboyant players like Rohit Sharma (49 off 144 balls) and Pant traded their natural attacking instincts for a more conservative approach.

The pitch wasn't very difficult to bat on but certainly not as easy as Pant made it look with his devil-may-care approach which later rubbed on Washington.

Earlier, in the first session, Cheteshwar Pujara (17 off 66 balls) and Kohli's (0 off 8 balls) dismissals brought England back in the game.

Ajinkya Rahane (27 off 45 balls) hit a flurry of boundaries to get the scoreboard moving but James Anderson had him caught at second slip with a beautiful delivery that held its line at the stroke of lunch in a session.

The approach taken by Rohit and Pujara during their 40-run stand of 24 overs in the morning session, wasn't a bad one. They saw off Anderson's morning spell with Stokes bending his back at the other end.

The flashy shots were cut out and with all the time at their disposal, they were ready to grind the bowlers out and dispatch those occasional bad balls to the boundary.

Stokes' one such full toss or a tossed up one from Leach was given some rough treatment by Rohit, who otherwise produced a dead defensive bat on multiple occasions.

It was only towards the fag end of the session that he played an aerial shot, slog-sweeping Dom Bess between deep mid-wicket and deep square leg for a boundary.

Pujara also did the hard work but ended up frustrated with Leach making him his bunny.

He prodded forward hiding his bat behind the pads to a straighter one from Leach and Nitin Menon made a good decision factoring in the deliberate padding to a ball that was hitting off-middle.

The sparse Motera crowd, anticipating a "Friday matinee show" from the megastar Indian captain was left high and dry when Stokes produced an effort ball with extra bounce outside the off-stump corridor which Kohli edged to Ben Foakes behind the stumps.

'See The Ball And React, That's My USP,' Says Rishabh Pant

Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD: Rishabh Pant on Friday said he has got the license to go for his shots on most occasions but considering the game situation, he had to bide time before going for the most outlandish of strokes during his sensational innings.

Pant plundered 13 fours and two sixes in his breathtaking 101 off 118 balls on Day 2 of the final Test against England. The reverse sweep off the great James Anderson was easily the most outrageous shot he played on the day.

When asked about that particular stroke after stumps, Pant said: "You have to premeditate reverse-flicks, but if luck is going your way you can take the odd chance."

"I get the license most of the time, but I have to assess the situation and take the game head on. I like to make the team win and if the crowd is entertained by that, I'm happy."

Pant came in when India's batsmen had been choked for runs on a difficult track. The 23-year-old displayed tremendous game sense to first bide his time before taking on a worn out England attack to the cleaners. He completed his hundred with an audacious six off Dom Bess.

The left-hander, who not so long ago was criticised for his reckless approach, said he needed to be cautious considering the match situation.



"If the bowlers are bowling well, respect it and take the singles, and that was on my mind. I like to play the situation and I just see the ball and react - that's the USP (unique selling point) of my game," he said.

The 23-year-old anchored India's innings, sharing 41 with opener Rohit Sharma (49 off 144 balls) first and then forging a 113-run partnership with Washington Sundar (60 not out).

"The plan was just to build a partnership when I joined Rohit. That

was the only thing on my mind. I was thinking I would assess the pitch and then play my shots," Pant said.

"The team plan was to get to 206, past the England total, and then get as many runs as possible."

Last month, Pant had won the ICC Men's Player of the Month for his performances in the two Tests against Australia where he scored a 97 at Sydney and an unbeaten 89 at Brisbane that led India to a historic series win.

Captain Finch Stars As Australia Level T20 Series With New Zealand

Agencies

WELLINGTON: Captain Aaron Finch carried his bat for 79 from 55 balls to propel Australia to a 50-run win over New Zealand in the fourth T20 and level the five-match series 2-2 on Friday.

With Finch's impetus, Australia made 156-6 batting first before New Zealand foundered on a slow pitch, bowled out for 106 in 18.5 overs.

Finch won the toss and decided Australia would bat first on the same pitch where it had beaten New Zealand by 64 runs in the previous match, and which he said "looks hard and at its best for batting".

It was anything but. The wicket at the Wellington stadium -- empty of spectators for the second match in a row -- was sticky and the slow bowlers wreaked havoc in both innings.

After Finch, Marcus Stoinis's 19 and Glenn Maxwell's 18 were the next-best scores in an innings which looked inadequate and unlikely to test New Zealand. Leg spinner Ish Sodhi took 3-32 and left-arm Mitchell Santner 1-16.

Finch reached one of the slowest of his 14 T20 half centuries from 47 balls without hitting a six and Australia struggled to 100 from 15 overs. But he made amends by hitting three sixes and 26 runs from the last over by Kyle Jamieson to lift his side to a competitive total.

On 35, Finch overtook David Warner (2,265) to become Australia's leading

run scorer in T20s.

"I think just hanging in there towards the end helped me out," Finch said.

"I had visions of ending up something like 50 off 60 balls and looking a right fool."

"But I was lucky to get some momentum towards the end of the innings. I think I was trying to hit it a bit too hard before that."

"We lost a couple of wickets along the way and couldn't load up from the 15th or 16th over, so we just had to take it as deep as we could and it was nice to get a few out of the middle near the end."

New Zealand couldn't gain any momentum in its reply, losing wickets at regular intervals and lacking a contribution to match Finch's.

Jamieson's 30 from 18 balls, batting at No. 9 in a lost cause, was the best effort. Opener Tim Seifert made 19 and Devon Conway 17.

Seifert and Santner dragged balls onto their stumps, Glenn Phillips (1) was run out in a mix-up with Conway and the remainder of the batsmen were out to catches close to, or in front, of the wicket. That reflected the slow pace of the pitch.

Australia had the confidence to use three spinners and they shared six wickets for 49 runs. Ashton Agar took 2-11, following his 6-30 in the third match, Maxwell claimed 2-14 and Adam Zampa picked up 2-24.

Paceman Kane Richardson took 3-19 from 2.5 overs.

Rijiju Bats For Hosting Olympics In India

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday pitched for hosting the Summer Olympics in the future, saying the Olympic movement is not complete till India hosts an edition of the quadrennial sporting extravaganza.

During a virtual conference organised by the Conference of Indian Industry, the 6th CII Scorecard, Rijiju complimented United Kingdom for hosting the Olympics on three occasions.

He said to establish itself as a sporting powerhouse, India has to host the Olympics in future.

"India hasn't claimed its rightful place in sports. The Olympics is the biggest event in sports. London has hosted three Olympics, Tokyo has already hosted an Olympics in 1964 before the one scheduled for this year."

"The Olympic movement is not complete till India hosts an Olympic Games. We are taking this very seriously," the Minister said during his keynote address.

On the occasion, Rijiju also highlighted his ministry's two big initiatives -- the Khelo India and Fit India programmes. He appealed to corporates to launch the Fit India movement in their offices.

Rijiju also appealed to the business fraternity to help in making sports a vibrant industry in India.

"Sports is a big industry, if we really take it forward, it can become a big part of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), sports can give big direction to our youth. The CII can play a role in making sports a vibrant industry. The industry can set a target of what should be the share of sports in GDP," he said.

"After the lockdown, tournaments have resumed across the world and they are happening successfully."

"We have the Shooting World Cup in Delhi later this month and the Badminton Super Series is scheduled for May this year. I want to tell the industry to contribute through Corporate Social Responsibility for organising international events in India. Rijiju was joined in the conference by his UK counterpart Nigel Huddleston, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in Sport, Tourism and Heritage.

Saudi Arabia Asks India To Use Cheap Oil It Bought Last Year To Cool Prices

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: International oil prices rose after OPEC and its allies ignored India's plea to ease production control, with Saudi Arabia asking New Delhi to instead use oil it bought at rock bottom rates last year.

Brent crude, the most widely used benchmark, on Friday rose nearly 1 per cent to USD 67.44 a barrel after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, agreed not to increase supplies in April awaiting more substantial recovery in demand.

Brent crude rose nearly 1 per cent to USD 67.44 a barrel on Friday India's Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had in the run-up to Thursday's OPEC meeting urged the producers' group to ease production curbs to fulfil their promise of stable oil prices.

He felt rising international oil prices were hurting economic recovery and demand.

Responding to a question on India's pleas, Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman at a press conference after the OPEC+ decision on Thursday said New Delhi should take some of the crude out of storage that they had purchased at very cheap rates last year.

"With regard to India, very simple. I would ask my friend that he withdraw some of the cheap oil that they bought in April, May and June (last year)," the Saudi Minister said. "There is an opportunity cost for not withdrawing it now."

India had purchased 16.71 million barrels of crude in April-May, 2020 and filled all the three Strategic Petroleum Reserves created at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and Mangalore and Padur in Karnataka. The average cost of that crude purchase was USD 19 per barrel, according to Pradhan's written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha on September 21, 2020.

Retail petrol and diesel prices, which already are at historic highs, should rise if the oil companies decide to pass on the surge in international oil prices to consumers.

Petrol and diesel prices have remained unchanged for the last five years and oil companies have in past not revised prices in the run to crucial assembly elections in 2017 and 2018 ahead of elections in states like Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry and Assam will go to the polls in the next few weeks.

Earlier this week, Pradhan had said India, where fuel demand is recovering to pre-pandemic levels, wants reasonable and responsible oil prices.

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, had supported the decision of the oil producers' cartel OPEC and its allies to cut production last year in view of the oil demand collapsing due to the spread of COVID-19.

"At that point in time, the producers especially OPEC assured the global market, that by the beginning of the 2021 demand will be coming back and production will be as usual. But I am sorry to say the production is yet to be normal," he said. "If you do not supply properly if there is a gap in demand and supply artificially (created), there is a price rise."

The average price of crude oil India imports was less than USD 50 per barrel between April and December 2020 and comparable to 2019-20 average rate of USD 60.47 in months thereafter but petrol and diesel prices are at historic highs now as the government has so far not rolled back the taxes it levied when prices plummeted almost a year back.

The record taxes coupled with international rates returning to pre-COVID levels on resurrecting demand have meant that petrol has crossed Rs 100 mark in some places in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Excise duty was raised by Rs 13 and Rs 16 per litre on petrol and diesel between March 2020 and May 2020 and now accounts for more than one-third of the Rs 91.17 a litre price of petrol in Delhi and 40 per cent of Rs 81.47 per litre rate of diesel.

The basket of crude oil India imported in February averaged USD 61.22 per barrel and USD 54.79 in January this year. It had fallen to USD 19.90 in April last year and was between USD 40 and USD 49 during June and December.

India imports about 85 per cent of its oil needs and local retail rates are benchmarked to international prices. OPEC+, which is currently reining in about 7 million barrels per day of production—about 7 per cent of pre-pandemic supply—has helped engineer a nearly 80 per cent rise in the Dated Brent benchmark since November.

CBSE Revises Board Exam Dates For Few Class 10, 12 Subjects

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Central Board of Secondary Education on Friday issued a revised board exam date sheet for a few subjects, including mathematics, commerce and physics, for classes 10 and 12.

For class 10, the science exam has been deferred to May 21. Earlier, it was scheduled for May 15. The mathematics exam which was scheduled for May 21, will now be held on June 2, according to the latest date sheet. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said that for class 12-science stream, the May 13 physics exam will now be held on June 8.

Exams for mathematics and applied mathematics, which were earlier scheduled for June 1, will now be conducted on May 31 for class 12 science and commerce streams, it

said in the revised date sheet.

The board has revised the date for the June 2 geography exam of the arts stream, and it will now be held on June 3.

The exams for classes 10 and 12 will begin from May 4 and conclude on June 10.

Usually, practical exams are conducted in January and written exams begin in February and conclude in March. However, the exams are delayed in this session due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools across the country were closed in March last year to contain the spread of COVID-19. They were partially reopened in some states from October 15.

The board exams last year had to be postponed mid-way in March. They were later cancelled and the results announced on the basis of an alternative assessment scheme.



Police personnel guard industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence Antilla after explosives were found in an abandoned car in its vicinity, in Mumbai. — PTI

Man Whose Explosive-Laden SUV Was Parked Near Mukesh Ambani's House Found Dead

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: Hiren Mansukh, owner of the vehicle with explosives which had been found parked near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence last week, was found dead in a creek in neighbouring Thane on Friday, police said.

In another twist in the case, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said the deceased was not the real owner of the vehicle.

Mansukh, around 45 years old, went missing on Thursday night as per his family. The body was found on the banks of the creek along the Mumbra Reti Bunder road, a senior official of Thane Police said.

Mansukh's Scorpio with gelatin sticks inside was found near 'Antilia', Ambani's multi-storey residence in South Mumbai, on February 25. Police had said it had been stolen

from Airoli-Mulund Bridge on February 18.

Crime Branch of Mumbai police had recorded Mansukh's statement in the case. Mansukh, who was in vehicle spare parts business, had said he had lodged a police complaint after the SUV was stolen.

On Friday his family members approached Naupada Police Station in Thane saying he had gone missing.

An accidental death report has been registered and probe is on, the Thane police official said.

Speaking to reporters in Mumbai, Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Devendra Fadnis said the death of a prime witness showed that something was fishy. "I reiterate the demand that the case be handed over to the NIA," the BJP leader said.

Earlier, Fadnis raised the issue in the state Assembly, seeking

probe by the National Investigation Agency.

Home Minister Deshmukh said Mansukh's body bore no injury marks. Autopsy report was awaited, and Maharashtra Police were perfectly capable of investigating the case, he said.

The home minister also said that the original owner of the SUV had handed it over to Mansukh for some interior work.

Fadnis said Deshmukh had not been briefed properly about the case, as Mansukh had told the police that he was the owner.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anil Parab said it is not necessary that the person told the truth. "Let the police probe the matter. Give them some time and have faith in them," Parab said, adding that the NIA was already conducting a parallel probe. — PTI

Overseas Cardholders Require Special Permit If They Want To Undertake 'Tabligh', Media Activities: Govt

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: All Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders will henceforth be required to take a special permission from the central government if they want to be involved in any missionary or 'Tabligh' or journalistic activities in the country.

However, the Union Home Ministry has given a major concession to OCI cardholders by allowing them parity with Indian nationals in the matter of tariffs in air fares in domestic sectors, entry fees for visiting national parks, national monuments and museums in India.

The ministry, in a notification issued on Thursday night, said the OCI cardholders will be entitled to get multiple entry lifelong visa for visiting India for any purpose but "required to obtain a special permission or a special permit from the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer or the Indian Mission to undertake research and to undertake any missionary or Tabligh or mountaineering or journalistic activities".

The OCI cardholders will also have to take a special permit to undertake internship in any foreign diplomatic missions or foreign gov-

ernment organisations in India or to take up employment in any foreign diplomatic missions in India or to visit any place which falls within the protected or restricted or prohibited areas as notified by the central government or competent authority.

In March 2020, when the nationwide lockdown was in force following the coronavirus outbreak, over 2,500 Tablighi Jamaat members found to be residing at the organisation's headquarters in Delhi despite guidelines and orders issued against large congregations of people. As many as 233 foreign Tablighi workers were arrested for violations of visa rules and many of them were blacklisted, putting a ban on their future visit to India.

Tablighi Jamaat workers, both foreigners as well Indians, indulge in preaching tours across the country also known as 'Chilla' in which a volunteer of the organisation travels for 120 days to various parts of the country and stay in local mosques where they inform the neighbourhood people about their activities besides holding special prayers.

The Home Ministry said the OCI cardholders will now be exempted from registration with the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) or

Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO) for any length of stay in India, but they have to inform the FRRO or FRO concerned whenever there is a change in permanent residential address and in their occupation. The OCI cardholders will now enjoy parity with Indian nationals in the matter of tariffs in air fares in domestic sectors in India, entry fees to be charged for visiting national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, the national monuments, historical sites and museums in India.

An OCI cardholder is a foreign national holding a passport of a foreign country and is not a citizen of India.

They will also get parity with Non-Resident Indians in the matter of inter-country adoption of Indian children subject to the compliance of the procedure as laid down by the competent authority, appearing for the all India entrance tests such as National Eligibility cum Entrance Test, Joint Entrance Examination (Mains), or other such tests to make them eligible for admission only against any Non-Resident Indian seat or any supernumerary seat, provided that the OCI cardholder shall not be eligible for admission against any seat reserved exclusively for Indian citizens, the notification read.

Over 1.8 Crore COVID-19 Vaccine Doses Administered In India: Centre

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in India has crossed 1.8 crore, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday.

These include 68,53,083 healthcare workers (HCWs) who were administered the 1st dose, 31,41,371 HCWs who were given the 2nd dose, 60,90,931 frontline workers (FLWs) who were given the 1st dose and 67,297 FLWs (2nd dose), 2,35,901 beneficiaries aged more than 45 years with specific co-morbidities (1st dose) and 16,16,920 beneficiaries aged more than 60 years.

Nearly 14 lakh (13,88,170) vaccine doses were given on Thursday, Day-48 of the vaccination drive (March 4)

The ministry said 10,56,808 beneficiaries were vaccinated across 16,081 sessions for 1st dose (HCWs and FLWs) and 3,31,362 HCWs and FLWs received 2nd dose of vaccine.

The 10,56,808 beneficiaries include 6,15,903 people aged over 60 and 92,109 individuals aged more than 45 years with specific co-morbidities (1st dose)

Six states, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, MP and Delhi, have reported high daily new cases in a span of 24 hours, the ministry said underlining 84.44 per cent of the new cases reported in a span of 24 hours (16,838) are from these six states.

Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 8,998. It is followed by Kerala with 2,616 while Punjab reported 1,071 new cases.

Eight states are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases, the ministry highlighted.

India's total active caseload stands at 1.76 lakh (1,76,319) which comprises 1.58 per cent

of India total infections.

The ministry said that Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have shown a reduction in the active cases in a span of 24 hours.

Maharashtra, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Gujarat display a rise in the active cases during the same time period.

Showing the change in number of active cases for states in the last one month, the ministry said Kerala, UP, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu are the top 5 states showing a decline in active cases in the last one month, while Maharashtra, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi are the top 5 states showing a rise in active cases.

The ministry said 20 states and UTs have less than 1000 active cases. Arunachal Pradesh reported only 2 active cases.

The Cumulative Positivity Rate of the country shows a continuous decline and stands at 5.08 per cent

Eight states display a weekly positivity rate higher than the national average (2.09%). Among them, Maharashtra stands out with a weekly positivity rate of 10.38 per cent.

The ministry said 113 deaths were reported in a day.

Six states account for 88.5 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (60). Punjab follows with 15 daily deaths. Kerala reported 14 deaths.

Eighteen states and UTs have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in a span of 24 hours. These are A&N Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Dadara and Nagar Haveli, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh (UT), Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttarakhand.

India Steps Up Border Patrols To Stop Arrivals From Myanmar

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: Security forces stepped up patrols on the border with Myanmar on Friday to stop refugees entering after some police officers crossed over to escape taking orders from the military junta there, officials said.

"As of now, we are not letting anybody enter," Maria Zuali, senior government official in Mizoram's Champhai district, told Reuters by telephone.

The move follows the defection over the border of some low-ranking Myanmar police officers who were unwilling to obey orders to suppress demonstrations against the junta.

Myanmar's military overthrew a democratically-elected government on February 1, setting off nationwide protests that have left more than 50 people dead. A spokesman for the military has not commented on the police defectors.

Soldiers and police were patrolling the frontier on Friday.

In Serchhip district, senior official Kumar Abhishek said eight people, including a woman and a child, had crossed the border and were being taken care of.

"We are anticipating that some more may come," he said.

Authorities were making preparations to house between 30-40 people, he said.

In all, about 30 Myanmar police and their family members had crossed over into India in recent days, a senior police official in Mizoram said, including some who had come overnight.

The official, who requested anonymity, said people were slipping in despite intensive patrolling by soldiers along a border that hugs the Tiau river flowing between forested hills.

"People are coming from different routes," the official said. "The border is porous, you can't prevent it."

A security official said that police crossing over had said they did not wish to carry out orders from the military to quell the protests.

"They alleged that there are human rights violations and they were asked to shoot at civilians," the official said, also requesting anonymity.

"It's a little difficult situation for India because diplomatic balance is crucial," the official said.

India's foreign ministry did not respond to questions from Reuters on the scale of recent arrivals and on what it intends to do with those who have already crossed over.

Inspired By Daughters, 62-Year-Old Rajasthan Mla Sits For BA Exams

JAIPUR: A 62-year-old MLA in Rajasthan, encouraged by his five daughters, has resumed studies after over 40 years.

A BJP MLA from Udaipur Rural, Phool Singh Meena is now giving his BA final year exams. He was the centre of attention when he came to appear for the exam in Political Science paper at the Kota Open University centre in Udaipur on Tuesday. Education was as important as politics, he said.

The two-time MLA from Udaipur Rural constituency, Meena was earlier a Ward Member in the Udaipur municipality. Though he has passed several tests in the political arena, he used to feel embarrassed that he had not even passed board exams nor did he have any degrees. The MLA, who had studied till Class 7, said he took up studies again as he realised that his speeches to students about the importance of education sounded hollow as he was a school dropout.

Phool Singh Meena says that he had to give up studies after his father, who was in the Army, died. He then took up farming to take care of his family. As a result, the MLA could not even complete his school education. But he was determined to educate all his five daughters — 4 of them are now post-Graduates while the youngest is pursuing a degree in law.

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