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P3 CITY

COMM SMC REVIEWS DEWATERING EXERCISE IN CITY

Commissioner SMC Athar Amir Khan Wednesday took an extensive review on dewatering progress after extensive field visits at different working stations and areas under...

P7 THINK

THE CAREER CULT: MOVE BEYOND THE SCIENCES

One can not imagine how rapidly humans have progressed in recent times. There is rarely any field where one can get stuck. Be it in medical sciences or transportation or modern machinery, there is rarely any....



P5 STATE

CS SETS OUT 40-POINT DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR DCS

The Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam, Wednesday chaired a meeting to apprise the Deputy Commissioners and District Superintendents who have taken charge...



Widom Quote!

Every generation needs a new revolution.
—Thomas Jefferson

NEWS DIGEST

Driver Held With Ammunition: Police

SRINAGAR: The government forces arrested a man in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district on Wednesday after recovering a grenade and some ammunition from his possession, police said. During patrolling at a checkpoint in Kokernag area, security forces searched a vehicle driven by Was-eem Ahmad, a [More On P10](#)

Police Officer Charged In Trap Case

SRINAGAR: The anti-corruption bureau (ACB) on Wednesday filed a charge sheet against a police officer for demanding bribe from a complainant in Mendhar area of Rajouri district. Charge sheet was filed against Naseer Ahmed Khan, the then Sub Inspector, posted in police station Mendhar before the court of special judge anti-corruption Rajouri in a case [More On P10](#)

Pfizer Begins Testing Covid-19 Pill

NEW YORK: US pharmaceutical company Pfizer has begun Phase 1 clinical trial of a novel oral antiviral drug for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. The oral antiviral clinical candidate "PF-07321332", a SARS-CoV2-3CL protease inhibitor, has demonstrated potent in vitro anti-viral activity against SARS-CoV-2, as well as activity against other coronaviruses. [More On P10](#)

2 Injured In Budgam Fire Incident

SRINAGAR: At least two people on Wednesday were injured while trying to put off a fire raging from a house in central Kashmir's Budgam district. Around 3:30 am Wednesday, fire broke out from the house of Fayaz Ahmed Butt in Narbal Suzith village causing extensive damage to the structure besides damaging property worth lakhs, reports said. Two unidentified men, reports said received burns injured while trying to douse the [More On P10](#)

Bear Kills 10 Sheep, Injures 22 Others

SRINAGAR: A bear killed ten sheep and injured at least 22 others on Wednesday in Bandi Monabal area of north Kashmir's Kupwara district. Reports said that the bear entered the cowsheds of one Mohammad Ismail Barah and killed six sheep on spot and injured 12 others. The bear also entered inside the cowshed of Bayia Mohammad Baherwal and killed his at-least four sheep and injured 10 others. [More On P10](#)

NIA Tightens Noose Around Mehbooba Mufti

Says PDP President Once Spoke To Hizb Militant Naveed Babu

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Former J&K Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader Mehbooba Mufti knew arrested Hizbul Mujahideen militant Naveed Babu and had also spoken to him once, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) claimed in a charge sheet filed in connection with the case related to arrested former J&K DSP Davinder Singh.

This is for the first time that name of Mufti has come up in any of the cases being probed by the NIA in Jammu and Kashmir.

An NIA official related to the probe, according to news agency IANS said, "The name of the former Chief Minister has emerged in the case related to arrested DSP Davinder Singh and HM militant Naveed Babu."

The NIA has filed a supplementary charge sheet against three persons, including arrested Peoples Democratic



Party (PDP) youth wing chief Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra, who allegedly worked as a financier for Hizbul Mujahideen in connection with the case.

The official said that Mufti knew Hizb militant Naveed Babu and had even spoken to him once. However, the official refused to share more details.

The NIA in its supplementary charge sheet has claimed that Parra was [More On P10](#)

Mehbooba Likely To Appear Before ED Today

SRINAGAR: Mehbooba Mufti will appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) here on Thursday in connection with a money laundering case, sources in the party said. The sources said Mufti will appear before the ED at its Srinagar office on Thursday [More On P10](#)

195 More Test Positive in J&K As Cases Spike

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus continues to show an upwards trend in Jammu and Kashmir as 195 more people, including 31 travellers on Wednesday tested positive for Covid-19 in the Union Territory, taking the overall tally to 129031.

Of the fresh cases detected on Wednesday, officials said, 146 were reported from Kashmir valley and the remaining 49 from Jammu division.

Giving district-wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 77, Baramulla 29, Budgam 16, Pulwama 2, Kupwara 15, Anantnag 3, Bandipora 1, Ganderbal 2, Kulgam 1, Jammu 35, Rajouri 2, Doda 1, Kathua 2, Samba 2, Kishtwar 1, Poonch 3, Ramban 2, and Reasi 1 new case of coronavirus.

Moreover, they said, 92 more patients have recovered and were [More On P10](#)

Tulip Garden To Open For Visitors Today

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Asia's largest tulip garden, overlooking the famous Dal Lake here, will be thrown open to the public on Thursday, marking the beginning of new tourism season in Kashmir.

Formerly known as Siraj Bagh, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden was opened in 2008 by the then chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

The idea of the garden, spread over 30 hectares in the foothills of snow-clad Zabarwan Range, was conceived to advance the tourism season in the Valley by two months.

"The garden will be thrown open for public on Thursday," Tulip Garden incharge Inam Rehman Sofi said.

Sofi said the department planted nearly 15 lakh bulbs of different varieties this year. "The garden has so far achieved a bloom of about 25 per cent," he added.

PM Recommends Visit, Praises Warm Hospitality

SRINAGAR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asked everyone to visit tulip garden, located at the foothills of Zabarwan range in Jammu and Kashmir, and enjoy the warm hospitality of the people of the Union territory. Tweeting about the gardens, the prime minister said, "Whenever you get the opportunity, do visit Jammu and Kashmir and witness the scenic [More On P10](#)



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

The official said the garden houses 62 varieties of tulips this year. The average lifespan of tulip flowers is three-four weeks, but heavy rain or too much heat can destroy them.

The Floriculture Department plants tulip bulbs in a phased manner so that the flowers remain in the garden for a month or more.

The Tourism Department has

planned a cultural programme at the garden in the first week of next month as part of the beginning of the new tourism season in the Valley.

The aim of setting up the largest tulip garden in Asia was to give another choice to tourists and to advance the tourism season, which used to begin in May every year.

The garden [More On P10](#)

JAMMU: As many as six lakh devotees are expected to take part in the annual Amamath Yatra in south Kashmir Himalayas scheduled to begin in June this year, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam said Wednesday.

Chairing a meeting on Wednesday to review the arrangements for safe, smooth, and secure movement of pilgrims particularly along the Jammu-Srinagar highway and Baltal and Chandanwari yatra tracks up to the Holy Cave, Subrahmanyam enjoined upon the administration to [More On P10](#)

SRINAGAR: Unknown gunmen on Wednesday decamped with a 12-bore rifle and approximately Rs 2 lakh in cash from a bank branch in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said.

Around 3:00 pm, some masked gunmen entered the Jammu and Kashmir Bank branch at Chandapora in central Kashmir district and fired some shots into the wall of the building, a police official said.

He said [More On P10](#)

SRINAGAR: The meteorological department on Wednesday predicted significant improvement in wet weather conditions from Thursday, even as the upper reaches of Kashmir received more snow while heavy rains lashed plains dipping the day temperature sharply.

A meteorological department official said Wednesday that the weather will significantly improve from Thursday across the Union Territory after witnessing

four days of snowfall and incessant rains.

"Even as scattered to fairly widespread light to moderate rain, thundershowers and snow has been forecast over Jammu and Kashmir in next 24 hours, the weather is going to be mainly dry from Thursday till March 31," the official said.

"There is no forecast of any major rainfall activity till ending March," the official added.

Meanwhile, more snow got accumulated in higher reaches of the valley including famous skiing resort of Gulmarg while the rains [More On P10](#)

Weather To Remain Dry In Kashmir Till March 31: MeT

Observer Monitoring Desk

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SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (BOSE) on Wednesday revised the marks assessment scheme of 10th class with 20 percent marks for internal assessment and 80 percent for theoretical part only.

BOSE said that the twenty percent of marks were reserved for internal assessment in order to assess students in a diverse manner, at different times and also to observe and examine a broad

range of curriculum objectives.

"It is notified for the information of all the stakeholders in general and students of Secondary School Examination (Class 10) in particular that from the Academic Session 2020-21 (in case of Kashmir Division, Winter Zone areas of Jammu Division and UT of Ladakh) and ensuing Academic Session 2021-22 (in case of Summer Zone areas of Jammu Division), the scheme of assessment and examination [More On P10](#)

"J-K government [More On P10](#)

JAMMU: Laying special focus on making public service delivery system more robust, citizen-friendly and hassle-free, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday launched 14 e-services of municipalities across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

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Missing Soldier's Case Creating Grave Hunt In Kashmir

Auqib Javeed

RESHIPORA, Shopian – Surrounded by sighing and solidarity-spirited simpletons, Manzoor Wagay, 54, is dragging hookah in a manic manner.

The grief, it seems, has only become a festering wound for a distraught father whose summer search for his son has already passed through the harsh winter, before getting renewed by the spring statement of Jammu and Kashmir's Police Chief, Dilbagh Singh.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the inauguration of U-19 cricket tournament at SK Stadium Srinagar on March 20, 2021, DGP Singh said that there is no clue of the missing Territorial Army soldier from Shopian, who went missing last August.



"Police have not closed the case and investigations are on," Singh said. "It's not clear where he was buried by

militants. Whenever we get any information, his family will accordingly be informed."



But back home, Wagay is spearheading his own teeming search campaign. Since last summer when his visiting

son vanished into thin air, the father has been digging orchards and paddy fields with shovels. He even rented a bulldozer and dug deep into the soft earth near a bridge in Landoora village in search of his son's body. He even stormed the shelters of suspects, and exhausted his savings to travel to places in identifying the unknown bodies.

"Marnie' ky'ss damastaa'mt chandaei' bei' pan'nis nich'aeivs'y'einzlaa'sh (I'll search the body of my son till me last breath)," Wagay said, as all eyes in the room stared him through the smokescreen created by his manic hookah-dragging.

"I know he has been buried closer to home. I know that. I will find him one day. Sooner or later."

Villagers of Reshipora are equally

throwing their weight behind Wagay's search campaign. They call the missing soldier as "one of their own".

"For over the first 40 days of his disappearance, more than 400 people from this village joined me to locate the body but till date I didn't find any clue," Wagay, a farmer, rued.

As the distraught father completed two rounds of smoking pot within 20 minutes, the room full of villagers started lauding his courage. These home audiences have now become esprit de corps for the family of the missing village boy – whose soldier shift couldn't eclipse his Samaritan nature in the raging reality of the southern apple bowl.

"In Wagay's shoes," said local villager, Abdul Rashid, [More On P10](#)



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**KASHMIR
OBSERVER**

Thursday| 25-03-2021

'Stronger brain activity after writing on paper than smartphone'

Agencies

Writing on a physical paper can lead to more brain activity when remembering the information an hour later, suggest the findings of a recent study led by Japanese university students and recent graduates.

Researchers say that the unique, complex, spatial and tactile information associated with writing by hand on physical paper is likely what leads to improved memory.

"Actually, the paper is more advanced and useful compared to electronic documents because paper contains more one-of-a-kind information for stronger memory recall," said Professor Kuniyoshi L. Sakai, a neuroscientist at the University of Tokyo and corresponding author of the research recently published in Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience. The research was completed with collaborators from the NTT Data Institute of Management Consulting.

Contrary to the popular belief that digital tools increase efficiency, volunteers who used paper completed the note-taking task about 25 per cent faster than those who used digital tablets or smartphones.

Although volunteers wrote by hand both with pen and paper or stylus and digital tablet, researchers say paper notebooks contain more complex spatial information than digital paper. Physical paper allows for tangible permanence, irregular strokes, and uneven shape, like folded corners. In contrast, the digital paper is uniform, has no fixed position when scrolling, and disappears when you close the app.

"Our take-home message is to use paper notebooks for information we need to learn or memorize," said Sakai.

In the study, a total of 48 volunteers read a fictional conversation between characters discussing their plans for two months in the near future, including

14 different class times, assignment due dates and personal appointments. Researchers performed pre-test analyses to ensure that the volunteers, all 18-29 years old and recruited from university campuses or NTT offices, were equally sorted into three groups based on memory skills, personal preference for digital or analog methods, gender, age and other aspects.

served in a specific region of the brain is a sign of increased neuronal activity in that area.

Participants who used a paper datebook filled in the calendar within about 11 minutes. Tablet users took 14 minutes and smartphone users took about 16 minutes. Volunteers who used analog methods in their personal life were just as slow at using the devices

textbook printed on paper, you can close your eyes and visualize the photo one-third of the way down on the left-side page, as well as the notes you added in the bottom margin," Sakai explained.

Researchers say that personalizing digital documents by highlighting, underlining, circling, drawing arrows, handwriting colour-coded notes in the



Volunteers then recorded the fictional schedule using a paper datebook and pen, a calendar app on a digital tablet and a stylus, or a calendar app on a large smartphone and a touch-screen keyboard. There was no time limit and volunteers were asked to record the fictional events in the same way as they would for their real-life schedules, without spending extra time to memorize the schedule.

After one hour, including a break and an interference task to distract them from thinking about the calendar, volunteers answered a range of simple (When is the assignment due?) and complex (Which is the earlier due date for the assignments?) multiple choice questions to test their memory of the schedule. While they completed the test, volunteers were inside a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, which measures blood flow around the brain. This is a technique called functional MRI (fMRI), and increased blood flow ob-

as volunteers who regularly use digital tools, so researchers are confident that the difference in speed was related to memorization or associated encoding in the brain, not just differences in the habitual use of the tools.

Volunteers who used analog methods scored better than other volunteers only on simple test questions. However, researchers say that the brain activation data revealed significant differences.

Volunteers who used paper had more brain activity in areas associated with language, imaginary visualization, and in the hippocampus -- an area known to be important for memory and navigation. Researchers say that the activation of the hippocampus indicates that analog methods contain richer spatial details that can be recalled and navigated in the mind's eye.

"Digital tools have uniform scrolling up and down and standardized arrangement of text and picture size, like on a webpage. But if you remember a physical

margins, adding virtual sticky notes, or other types of unique mark-ups can mimic analog-style spatial enrichment that may enhance memory.

Although they have no data from younger volunteers, researchers suspect that the difference in brain activation between analog and digital methods is likely to be stronger in younger people.

"High school students' brains are still developing and are so much more sensitive than adult brains," said Sakai.

Although the current research focused on learning and memorization, the researchers encourage using paper for creative pursuits as well.

"It is reasonable that one's creativity will likely become more fruitful if prior knowledge is stored with stronger learning and more precisely retrieved from memory. For art, composing music, or other creative works, I would emphasize the use of paper instead of digital methods," said Sakai.

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir

NOTICE

Whereas an application has been recieved from one.

Shri : Hafiz ullah Dar
S/o: Ghulam Hassan Dar
R/o: Ranger Chadoora Budgam owner of vehicle bearing

Registration No: JK04E 2502 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S Jammu & Kashmir Bank Ltd B/U Ranger .
Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport officer ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper .



No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.3135
Dated 23/03/2021

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir

NOTICE

Whereas an application has been recieved from one.

Shri : Farida Bano
S/o: Mohammad Ramzan Khan
R/o: Narkara Budgam owner of vehicle bearing
Registration No: JK04D 4645 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S HDFC Bank B/UBudgam .



Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport officer ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper .

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.3130
Dated 23/03/2021

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR

NOTICE

Where a application for transfer of ownership has been recieved from one.

Shri : Fayaz Ahmad Rather S/o: Ghulam Ahmad Rather
R/o: Kahal Mulla Naghbal Ganderbal
(Transferor) of LMV alto. Vehicle bearing registration number JK04A-9843. Chasis number 79879 Engine No. 63960 Model 2009. in favour of Shri. Sheikh Sameer Syed S/o. S.M. Syed R/o Umer Abad Zainakote Srinagar (Transferee)



Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed transfer of ownership shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport officer ARTO Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer.

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.3141
Dated 23/03/2021

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

Public Notice

I have lost my Driving License bearing DL No: JK2220150008879. Now I am applying for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the ARTO Shopian within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.
Safer Ahmad Mir S/O Mubaraq Ahmad Mir
R/o Mantojan Shopian

ast

اطلاع ہارئے عام و خاص

سب ڈیویشنل ایگریکلچر آفسر سوپور کی طرف سے اطلاع دی جاتی ہے کہ محکمہ ایگریکلچر پروڈکشن اینڈ فارمرس ویلفیئر کمیشن کی طرف سے فارم مشینری فار سکلڈیڈ ویلجیز دینا مطلوب ہے۔ جس میں سکیم کا خرچہ کم از کم 50 لاکھ روپے اور سبڈی 80% جو کہ آٹھ لاکھ روپے تک محدود ہے۔ اس سکیم کے لئے SHG یا فارمرس گروپ FPO وغیرہ درخواست دو دن کے اندر جمع کر سکتے ہیں۔

Sub Divisional Agriculture Officer Sopore
7006561836

ams

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER KASHMIR

NOTICE



Where as an application for transfer of ownership has been received from Mohammad Altaf Matoo S/o Ali Mohammad Matoo R/o Naveedabad Batamalo (Transferor) of Alto K-10 bearing registration No.

JK01AA-0265 chasis No: 175985 Engine No: 7553505 Model 2015 in favour of Riyaz Ahamd Bab S/o Mohammad Hashim Baba R/o 72 Housipora Chadoora (Transferee).
Now, therefore, it is notified for the information of the general, public that representation/ Objection, if any in connection with proposed transfer will be received within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer to the address of undersigned.

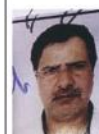
No, representation/ objection shall be considered unless it is made writing it is made in the aforesaid period.

NOJK-RTOK 8199
Dated: 24/03/2021

Sd/-
Regional Transport Office, Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER KASHMIR

NOTICE



Where as an application for transfer of ownership has been received from Ab Rashid Dar S/o Mohammad Abdullah Dar R/o Bonapora Batmaloo Sgr (Transferor) of 110 LMV bearing registration No. JK01X-3133

chasis No: 239695 Engine No: 569751 Model 2015 in favour of mujtab ali Parray s/o mohd qazim parray R/o Manzpora Old Imam Bada Srinagar (Transferee).
Now, therefore, it is notified for the information of the general, public that representation/ Objection, if any in connection with proposed transfer will be received within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer to the address of undersigned.

No, representation/ objection shall be considered unless it is made writing it is made in the aforesaid period.

NOJK-RTOK 8354
Dated: 24/03/2021

Sd/-
Regional Transport Office, Kashmir

Public Notice

My name has been wrongly written in school records as Aamira while my correct name Aameera Majeed which needs immediate correction. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the English Medium Public School Bomai Sopore within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Aameera Majeed
Parentage: Ab Majeed Malik
R/o Bomai Soapore

ams

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

Tele/Fax: 0194-2433590, 2437647 (Srinagar); 0191-2479371, 2470102 (Jammu)
Website: www.ikbopee.gov.in E-mail: coeikakbopee@gmail.com/helpdeskikakbopee@gmail.com

Subject: Provisional Select list of candidates for admission to Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing Courses-2020 in Private Colleges of .18/K after rdRound of up-gradation / allotment of seats.

Reference: (i) Notification No.002-BOPEE of 2021 dated 04-01-2021.
(ii) Notice No. 017-BOPEE of 2021 dated 06-02-2021.
(iii) Notification No. 022 of 2021 dated 11-02-2021.
(iv) Notice No. 033-BOPEE of 2021 dated 18-03-2021.
(v) Letter F. No. 1-6/Lt/2021-INC/12869 dated 26-02-2021 from Indian Nursing Council, New Delhi.

NOTIFICATION No: 043-BOPEE of 2021
DATED: 23-03-2021

The Board vide Notice No. 033-BOPEE of 2021 dated 18-03-2021 conducted the third round of up-gradation/ allotment counselling (physical) on 23-03-2021 at BOPEE Office, Srinagar/ Jammu simultaneously for filling up of vacant seats for Post-Basic B. Sc. Nursing Courses 2020. The candidates who participated in the said counselling and have been up-graded/ allotted seat / college as per their merit cum preferences are hereby provisionally selected for admission to Post-Basic B.Sc. Nursing Courses-2020 in Private Colleges of UT of J&K as per the list annexed as Annexure "A" to this Notification which is available on website of the Board (www.ikbopee.gov.in) only. The candidates are advised to report to their respective allotted Colleges/Institutions w.e.f. 24-03-2021 to 30-03-2021(3.00 PM) along with the following documents:-

1. Marks Card of 10+2 class.
2. Marks Card of GNM Course.
3. Registration Certificate, registered with Nursing Registration / Paramedical Council.
4. Domicile Certificate
5. Medical fitness certificate,
6. A Male Nurse, trained before the implementation of new integrated course besides being registered as a Nurse with J&K Paramedical Nursing Council, shall produce evidence of training approved by India Nursing Council for a similar duration in lieu of midwifery in any of the areas such as O.T. Techniques, ophthalmic Nursing, Leprosy Nursing, T.B. Nursing, Psychiatric Nursing, Neurological and Neuro Surgical Nursing, Community Health Nursing, Cancer Nursing, Orthopaedic Nursing., Any other certificates/ documents required by the College authorities.

It shall be sole responsibility of the Colleges/ Institutions to ensure proper check and verification of documents before the candidate is allowed for admission and in case of any discrepancy in the requisite documents, the same shall be reported to the Board for further course of action as warranted under rules.

The candidates allotted to Private Colleges/ Institutions in accordance with their preferences and in order of merit shall have to join against their allotted seat(s) up to 30th March 2021 positively and in case any candidate fails to join his/ her allotted seats shall not be eligible to participate in subsequent round of counselling, if any, conducted by the Board under any circumstances.
In order to complete the admission process within the prescribed mentioned cut-off date i.e. (30-03-2021) the colleges/ Institutions shall keep their admission counters open even on holiday/ off days. However, the candidates should in their own interest avoid waiting for the last day to complete admission formalities as such delay has the potential of causing hardships to the candidates only.
The Heads of the Colleges/ Institutions are advised to release/ refund the documents and fee of such candidates who have been up-graded to enable them to join in the up-graded College/ Course within the prescribed time.

The Heads of Institutions are also advised to furnish the shortfall, if any, to the Board through e-mail (helpdeskikakbopee@gmail.com/coeikakbopee@gmail.com) on 30-03-2021 (4.00 PM) positively.

Note:

1. The admission of the candidates is purely provisional and shall be cancelled in case any information furnished by any candidate proves to be false/ fabricated, and action as warranted under law shall be initiated against such candidates.
2. The other terms and conditions shall remain the same as notified in e-Information Brochure.(Notifications/ Notices issued by the Board from time to time.

E & OE

DIPK-NB-6628/20

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

No: BOPEE/Exam-35-(iv)/2020 Dated 23-03-2021

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION GANDERBAL

Address: Mini-Secretariat Ganderbal Ph.01942951904

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

NIT NO.223/2020-21 issue under endorsement No.18915-24

Dated:23-03-2021

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Item Rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with UT J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rs.)	Time of completion	M.H of Account	Class of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Upgradation of road from Main road (Wahidpora Lar road) to Parray Mohalla b.w.o GSB filling & WBM G.L.	2.50	200/-	20 Days	3054 (M&R)	DEE
2	Improvement/Upgradation of Wahidpora Lar road incl. Asthan Mohalla Theeru b.w.o construction of E/wall near L/O. Abdul Khaliq Malla.	2.75	200/-	20 Days	3054 (M&R)	DEE
3	Upgradation of link road from H/o Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh to Magray Mohalla Lar construction of covered cement concrete Drain (Balance Portion).	1.70	200/-	10 days	3054 M&R	DEE

Position of AAA: Accredited

Position of funds: Available

1. 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:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23.03.2021
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	23.03.2021 from 3.00 PM.
3	Bid submission Start Date	23.03.2021 from 3.30 PM.
4	Bid Submission End Date	27.03.2021 upto 4.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	27.03.2021 at 04.05 PM in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderbal

2. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderbal (tender inviting authority) (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date) pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderbal (Tender receiving authority).

3. All Bidders has to 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)

4. The 1st lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of contract as performance security in shape of CDR/DFR/BG within 02 Days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of work.
The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderbal (tender receiving authority).

5. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids
6. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.
- 6.1. Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in to acquaint bid submission process.
- 6.2. To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get "Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)" as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved Vendor.
- 6.3. The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No bid will be accepted in physical form.
- 6.4. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.
- 6.5. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the technical bid.

No. 18915-24

Dated: 23.03.2021

DIPK-15520/20

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
R&B Division Ganderbal

(Kashmir Observer, 25 March, 2005)

UN: Boom In Innovation For Overcoming Disabilities

Agenceis

Innovations aimed at helping people overcome mobility, sight and other disabilities have exploded in recent years, and are becoming ever more integrated in regular consumer goods, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

More than one billion people worldwide currently need technology-based assistance to overcome a disability -- a figure expected to double in the next decade as populations age, UN data shows.

Meanwhile, only one in 10 people globally currently have access to the assistive products they need.

To meet the growing demand, innovations in new assistive products have shown double-digit growth in recent years, according to a fresh report from UN's World

2020. More than 15,500 of those filings were for so-called emerging assistive technologies, like assistive robots, smart home applications, wearables for visually impaired people and smart glasses.

That was eight times fewer than the 117,000-plus patents filed for conventional technologies for well-established products like wheelchair seats or Braille-enabled devices.

But Wipo pointed out that filings for new assistive technologies were growing 17% on average each year -- three times faster than the growth rate for conventional technology filings.

The report found that China, the United States, Germany, Japan and South Korea were the countries where most innovation in assistive technology was taking place.



Intellectual Property Organization. "People living with impairments have long relied on new technologies for increased independence and fuller interaction with their world," Wipo Chief Daren Tang said in the foreword to the report.

"From the invention of the crutch in ancient Egypt through the simple prosthetics of the Middle Ages to our latter-day Braille tablets, we are now on the cusp of a future where autonomous wheelchairs, mind-controlled hearing aids and wearables monitoring health and emotion alleviate the impact of human limitations."

'Mass use'

A key finding in the report, he said, is "the evolution toward mass use of assistive tech."

Using patent and other data, the report found that more than 130,000 patents were filed for conventional and emerging assistive technologies between 1998 and

Universities and public research organisations are the most prominent when it comes to filing patent applications for emerging assistive technologies.

Wipo experts hailed how assistive technologies were rapidly converging with mainstream consumer electronics, paving the way for a greater commercialisation and lower prices.

Going mainstream

Marco Aleman, a Wipo assistant director general who leads the agency's IP and Innovation Ecosystems Sector, pointed to the swelling interest in enabling technologies like brain-machine interfaces.

As a result, big tech companies, like IBM, Google and Microsoft, and consumer product companies like Samsung and Panasonic were eagerly entering a market once dominated by specialised assistive technology companies, like WS Audioology and Second Sight.



Myanmar's Junta Kills 7-Year-Old Girl, 'Silent Strike' Hits Country

Agenceis

Military junta forces in Myanmar have shot and killed a seven-year-old girl while trying to arrest her father in their home during a crackdown on anti-coup protesters.

The forces entered the house in Myanmar's second-largest city, Mandalay, on Tuesday, and killed Hin Myo Chit, 7, as she was sitting on her father's lap, her sister told the Myanmar Now media outlet.

Security forces were trying to shoot the father, she said.

According to staff at a Mandalay funeral service, the kid died of bullet wounds in her stomach in Chan Mya Thazi Township on the same day.

She has become the youngest of about the 275 people killed in the junta crackdown, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). And her tragic death prompted activists to call for a nationwide "silent strike" on Wednesday.

The junta has not commented on the girl's shooting death yet.

Two men were also killed in the township, the report said.

Myanmar has been convulsed by mass rallies and strikes since the military ousted de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, and arrested

her and several other political leaders over election fraud allegations.

More than 2,812 people have been arrested and 250 killed, according to the AAPP.

Meanwhile, the military says it has released hundreds of demonstrators arrested during its crackdown on weeks of protests across the country.

And a court hearing for Suu Kyi -- who has been in detention for almost two months -- was adjourned until next month.

Here is more of the latest: 20 children killed, 146 arrested during protests

According to aid group Save the Children, at least 20 children have been killed in the military crackdown.

"We are horrified that children continue to be among the targets of these fatal attacks on peaceful protesters," said the organization.

"The safety of children must be protected under all circumstances and we once again call on security forces to end these deadly attacks against protesters immediately," it added.

A teenage boy was killed inside his home in Mandalay on Monday.

The aid group also expressed concern about the "hundreds of young people" being held in detention.

As of Tuesday, the group said it

had responded to 146 cases of child arrest or detention, and at least 488 students were currently being held by security forces.

According to the United Nations (UN), many people have been taken arbitrarily in nighttime raids, and their families do not know where their loved ones are or what condition they are in.

Junta says has freed 600 prisoners On Wednesday, the military junta said it had released some 600 people held for protesting against the coup in the country's commercial hub of Yangon.

"We released 360 men and 268 women from Insein prison today," a senior prison official said.

Lawyer Khin Maung Myint, who was at Insein prison for the hearing of two clients, said 16 busloads of people left the jail in the morning.

Local media showed images of the prisoners on the buses flashing the three-fingered salute -- a sign of resistance for the anti-coup movement.

"They were sent to related police stations to go back home... Some clients called me (after) informing me of their release," Myint said.

Streets deserted amid 'silent strike' Meanwhile, a "silent strike" was called by activists in the cities of Yangon and Naypyidaw on Wednesday.

Netanyahu's Future Unclear As Exit Polls Forecast Stalemate In Israel's Election

Agenceis

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's prospects for retaining power were uncertain on Wednesday after exit polls in Israel's fourth national election in two years projected yet another stalemate.

With final results not due until later in the week, the forecasts indicated that even Netanyahu's stewardship of a world-beating Covid-19 vaccination rollout - a showcase of his campaign - may not have been enough to propel him to victory.

number of seats in parliament, around 30, was "a great achievement" - it took 36 in the previous election - and that he hoped to form a "stable right-wing government".

Unless coalition-building talks, which have followed every election Israel has held since its creation in 1948, break a stalemate, a fifth national ballot could ensue.

Bennett's far-right Yamina party was forecast to win seven seats in the 120-member legislature.

Whether he could tip the balance will depend on final results. Bennett, seemingly a natural part-



Initial projections by Israel's three main TV channels after Tuesday's voting gave Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing Likud party, an edge, based on the potential support of an ultranationalist rival, Naftali Bennett, once his defence minister.

But amended forecasts indicated deadlock even with Bennett's prospective backing, with a parliament divided equally between Netanyahu's likely opponents and supporters.

Israel's opposition made a better showing than expected, and support for Likud dipped, exit polls showed, after Netanyahu's critics highlighted corruption charges against the country's longest-serving leader and accused him of mishandling the pandemic.

On social media, Netanyahu claimed a "huge victory" over the group of left-wing, centre and rightist parties trying to unseat him - even as the TV projections failed to bear that out.

He did not repeat the claim in an election night speech at a Likud rally, saying only that its projected

ner for Netanyahu, said he would wait until they were in before announcing any political moves.

An alliance between Bennett, 48, who favours annexing parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and Netanyahu's opponents to the left seemed to be a political stretch.

During the campaign, Bennett said he would not serve under an anti-Netanyahu bloc's most likely leader, 57-year-old Yair Lapid, head of the Yesh Atid party.

According to the exit polls, Yesh Atid took second place with 17 to 18 parliamentary seats, versus 30 to 31 for top finisher Likud.

A Netanyahu government with Bennett and a clutch of other ultranationalists on board would result in one of the most right-wing governments in Israel's history.

It would likely be at loggerheads with the administration of US Democratic President Joe Biden over issues such as Palestinian statehood and engagement by Washington with Israel's arch-enemy Iran over Tehran's nuclear program.

Confront Your Colonial Past, Council Of Europe Tells Portugal

Europe's top human rights group said on Wednesday that Portugal must do more to confront its colonial past and role in the transatlantic slave trade in order to help fight racism and discrimination in the country today.

The comments by the Council of Europe come as debate in Portugal over how to remember its history heated up in recent months as the country prepares to unveil its first memorial to victims of slavery, in Lisbon.

The memorial -- rows of palm trees painted in black -- was designed by Angolan artist Kiluanji Kia Henda and funded by the Lisbon council. It will stand in the centre of the city.

From the 15th to the 19th century, Portuguese vessels carried close to six million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic, more than any other nation, but up to now Portugal has rarely commented on its past actions and little is taught about its role in slavery in schools.

Rather, Portugal's colonial era, which saw countries including Angola, Mozambique, Brazil, Cape Verde and East Timor, as well as

parts of India, subjected to Portuguese rule, is often perceived as a source of pride.

"Further efforts are necessary for Portugal to come to terms with past human rights violations to tackle racist biases against people of African descent inherited from a colonial past and historical slave trade," the Council of Europe said in its yearly report on Portugal, urging Lisbon to rethink how it teaches its colonial history.

Complaints of racial discrimination increased 50 percent to 655 in 2020 but the figure is likely far below the actual rate of racist incidents, said Portugal's Secretary of State for Equality Rosa Monteiro.

"Our historical narrative is like a very serious wound that has not been properly treated. And to heal it, we have to talk about what happened," Monteiro told Reuters, adding the government was preparing a nationwide plan to combat racism.

Recent racially-motivated crimes include a KKK-style torchlight rally, the fatal shooting of a Black actor by a white man on the street and emailed threats to Black legislators.

UNHRC Adopts Resolution Against Sri Lanka's Rights Record, India Abstains From Voting

Agenceis

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Tuesday adopted a resolution titled 'Promotion of Reconciliation Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka' after 22 members out of 47-member Council voted in favour of it.

While India abstained from voting it urged Colombo to fulfil its commitments on the devolution of political authority, to carry forward the process of reconciliation and address the aspirations of the Tamil community in the island nation.

The UK, Canada, Germany and eight other member nations voted against the resolution. Apart from India, 13 other nations abstained from voting. Ahead of the voting, India said that as an immediate neighbour, it has contributed to the relief, resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Sri Lanka after 2009.

India's approach to the question of human rights in Sri Lanka is guided by two fundamental considerations, Pawankumar Badhe, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of India in Geneva said in a statement.

"One is our support to the Tamils of Sri Lanka for equality, justice, dignity and peace. The other is in ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka."

"We have always believed that these two goals are mutually supportive and Sri Lanka's progress is best assured by simultaneously addressing both objectives," Badhe said.

"We would urge that the Government of Sri Lanka to carry forward the process of reconciliation, address the aspirations of the Tamil community and continue to engage constructively with the international community to ensure that the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all its citizens are fully protected," he said.

He said India supports the call by the international community for the Government of Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitments on the devolution of political authority, including through the early holding of elections for Provincial Councils and to ensure that all Provincial Councils are able to operate effectively, in accordance with the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution.

Antibodies Against Covid-19 May Last From Days To Years: New Study

Agenceis

According to a new study, antibodies against the novel coronavirus wane at different rates, lasting for mere days in some individuals, while persisting in others for decades.

The study says COVID-19 severity could be a deciding factor in having longer-lasting protection against reinfection.

The research, published in The Lancet Microbe journal, noted that recovered patients with low levels of neutralising antibodies may still be protected from reinfection if they have robust immunity in the form of the body's T cells.

In the study, scientists, including those from Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, followed 164 COVID-19 patients for six to nine months, analysing their blood for neutralising antibodies against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, their T cells and immune system signalling molecules.

They then used this information to train a machine learning algorithm to predict the trajectories of people's neutralising anti-

bodies over time.

Based on the analysis, the researchers categorised people into five groups depending on how long their antibodies lasted.

The first group, they said, included those who never developed detectable neutralising antibodies -- also called the 'negative' group -- and comprised 11.6 per cent of the patients in the study.

The 'rapid waning' group, which included 26.8 per cent of the patients, had varying early levels of antibodies that waned quickly, the scientists said.

According to the researchers, the 'slow waning' group, which included 29 per cent of the participants, tested mostly positive for antibodies at six months.

The 'persistent' group, comprising 31.7 per cent of the individuals, showed little change in their antibody levels up to 180 days and, they said, adding that the 'delayed response' group (1.8 per cent) showed a significant rise in neutralising antibodies during late convalescence.

"The key message from this study is that the longevity of

functional neutralising antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 can vary greatly and it is important to monitor this at an individual level," said Professor Wang Linfa, from Duke-NUS Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Programme, a corresponding author of the study.

"This work may have implications for immunity longevity after vaccination, which will be part of our follow-up studies," Linfa added.

According to the study, patients, including those from the 'negative group', displayed sustained T-cell immunity six months after initial infection, indicating that individuals may still be protected if they have a robust T-cell immunity when the neutralising antibody level is low.

"Our study examines neutralising antibodies which are important in protection from COVID-19. We found that antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 wane in different people at different rates," said study corresponding author David Lye from the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID), Singapore.

NEWS MAKERS

First historic Mars helicopter flight on April 8: NASA

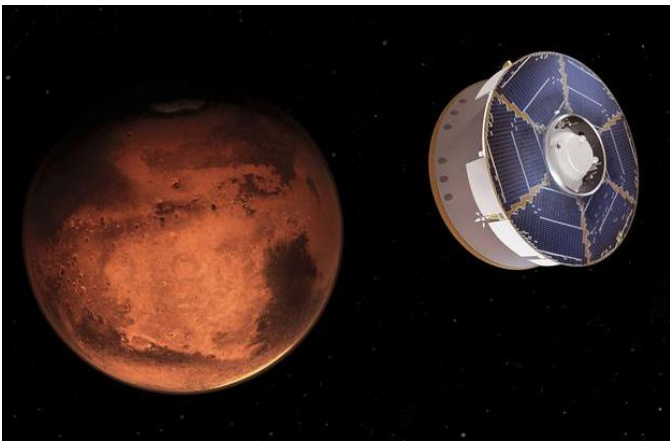
Agenceis

WASHINGTON: NASA will attempt to fly Ingenuity mini-helicopter, currently attached to the belly of Perseverance rover, on Mars on April 8, in first such attempt on another planet.

However, before the 1.8-kg rotorcraft attempts its first controlled flight, both it and its team back home must meet a series of daunting milestones.

"When NASA's Sojourner rover landed on Mars in 1997, it proved that roving the Red Planet was possible and completely redefined our approach to how we explore Mars. Similarly, we want to learn about the potential Ingenuity has for the future of science research," said Lori Glaze, director of the Planetary Science Division at NASA Headquarters.

"Ingenuity is a technology demonstration that aims to be the first powered flight on another world and, if



successful, could further expand our horizons and broaden the scope of what is possible with Mars exploration," Glaze said in a statement on Wednesday.

On March 21, the rover deployed the guitar case-shaped graphite composite debris shield that protected Ingenuity during landing.

The rover currently is in transit to the "airfield" where Ingenuity will attempt to fly. Once deployed, Ingenuity will have 30 Martian days, or sols, (31 Earth days) to conduct its test flight campaign.

Flying in a controlled manner on Mars is far more difficult than flying

on Earth. The Red Planet has significant gravity (about one-third that of Earth's) but its atmosphere is just 1 per cent as dense as Earth's at the surface.

During Martian daytime, the planet's surface receives only about half the amount of solar energy that reaches Earth during its daytime, and night-time temperatures can drop as low as minus 90 degrees Celsius, which can freeze and crack unprotected electrical components.

To survive the frigid Martian nights, it must have enough energy to power internal heaters.

"Every step we have taken since this journey began six years ago has been uncharted territory in the history of aircraft," said Bob Balaram, Mars Helicopter chief engineer at JPL.

"While getting deployed to the surface will be a big challenge, surviving that first night on Mars alone, without the rover protecting it and keeping it powered, will be an even bigger one," Balaram added.

Britain's Queen 'Delighted' At Birth Of 10Th Great Grandchild

LONDON: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II on Wednesday expressed her delight at the birth of her 10th great grandchild, after her granddaughter Zara Tindall gave birth to a baby boy who has been named Lucas Philip Tindall -- now 22nd in line to the British throne.

Zara Tindall, born to the 94-year-old monarch's daughter Princess Anne, and former England rugby player husband Mike Tindall welcomed their third child on their bathroom floor after they were unable to make it to hospital in time.

"The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh [Prince Philip] are delighted with the news and look forward to meeting their 10th Great Grandchild when circumstances allow," a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said.

The newest royal, who weighed



8lbs 4oz, has the middle name Philip in honour of Zara's grandfather, Prince Philip, and Mike's own father.

"Arrived very quickly. Didn't make it to hospital. On the bathroom floor," he told 'The Good, The Bad & The Rugby' podcast.

"So yeah, it was running to the gym, get a mat, get into the bathroom, get the mat on the floor, towels down, brace, brace, brace," he said.

"Fortunately the midwife who was going to meet us at the hospital wasn't that far away so she drove up just as we had assumed the posit [position] and the second midwife arrived just after the head had arrived," he added.

Olympic equestrian Zara Tindall, 39, and her husband, 42, have two daughters -- seven-year-old Mia and two-year-old Lena.

The birth of their son comes just a few weeks after Zara Tindall's cousin, Princess Eugenie, gave birth to her baby boy -- the Queen's ninth great-grandchild. Eugenie is the daughter of the monarch's son Prince Andrew, the Duke of York. -- PTI

2-Year-Old Girl Molested In Baramulla, Accused Arrested

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir police Wednesday arrested the accused involved in the alleged "molestation" of a minor girl at Chakloo village of Baramulla in northern Kashmir. A Police spokesperson, in a statement said that a formal complaint in this regard was received in Police Station Baramulla stating therein that 12 year old girl (name withheld) was allegedly molested in the area.

"Accordingly team from Police

station Baramulla immediately rushed to the spot and arrested the accused including minors," the police statement said.

A top police official said that subsequently FIR No. 31/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered in police station Baramulla.

"There has been some neighbourly dispute which led to scuffle between the two families for which separate FIR has been registered," the statement further added. (KNS)

Flash Floods Partially Damage Bridge In Handwara

Observer News Service

HANDWARA: The incessant rains followed by flash floods on Wednesday morning damaged a portion of bridge over Nallah Mawer at Batgund area of Mawer Handwara in north Kashmir.

According to reports, the vehicular traffic was suspended soon after the portion of bridge collapsed.

The residents of the area alleged that some miscreants are illegally extracting minerals from Nallah which has changed the course of water; leading to the

damage to the bridge.

They also demanded the immediate restoration of the bridge as dozens of villages have been disconnected with its Tehsil headquarters.

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara Imam din said, "those who are illegally extracting the Minerals from the Nallah will be booked under PSA."

He said the he will take an immediate meeting with the concerned officials and within 3-4 days it will be made functional on temporary basis. (KNS)

BJP Expels Party Member After Her Picture Goes Viral

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The BJP Unit Ganderbal Wednesday expelled its two activists from the party membership for their involvement in anti-party and anti society activities.

The party's Ganderbal Unit Wednesday held a meeting in the premises of BJP headquarters Ganderbal which was presided by district president Ghulam Hasan Rather and district Pranhari Sheikh Rashid.

In the meeting Bilal Parray General Secretary UT BJYM was also present.

"After threadbare discussion with all office bearers participated in the meeting and passed the resolution against the two party activists whose activities were found anti-party and anti society," a party statement said.

The expelled activists include Ruheena Shazad and Rabia Rasool and they have been expelled from the basic membership of the party.

"Everybody of the society and administration is apprised that both of these activists do not have any concerns or affiliation with above cited party," the BJP Ganderbal unit said.

The meeting was attended by all the officer bearers of the BJP Unit Ganderbal. They said it would not tolerate the anti-party and anti society activities of its members.

Pertinently, a picture of Rabiya with Shri Amarnathji Yatra Welfare Society, National General Secretary Raju Chandel, went viral on social media on Tuesday.

However, the statement did not mention the reasons for expelling the two party members.

Wearing Face Masks Made Mandatory In Shopain



Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopain, Sachin Kumar Vaishya on Wednesday said that wearing face masks with immediate effect is mandatory for people of Shopain district and whosoever violates the order he/she shall be booked under Disaster Management Act (DMA).

The DC said that the residents of Shopain are bound to wear face masks with immediate effect to stop the transmission of Covid-19 in the community. He said those who will float directions will be dealt strictly under Disaster DMA.

Meanwhile an order in this regard stated that all the Executive Magistrates BDOs, District/ Sectoral Officers are directed to ensure the usage of masks within their respective jurisdictions and in case any person is found without

mask at public place, a fine of Rs.500 shall be imposed to violators and the same shall be credited in the official Account of District Red Cross Society Shopain.

The DC further directed all District/Sectoral Officers to ensure usage of masks in the offices working under their control. He said that SSP Shopain, ADM & SDM Zainapora shall personally monitor the exercise within their jurisdiction through field inspection on a routine basis.

The DC appealed to the people of the district to make mask wearing successful and follow each and every guidelines of administration in letter and spirit. However he maintained that cooperation during current situations is necessary and the need of the hour is to adhere to the guidelines issued by the government on and off.

Prices Of Essential Commodities Skyrocket As Kashmir Highway Remains Shut



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Intermittent snowfall in upper areas and torrential rains in plains over the last four days in Kashmir Valley have affected daily life.

Meanwhile, the overnight heavy rainfall in most parts of the Valley brought the mercury further down while some parts of the higher reaches continued to receive snowfall for the second consecutive day on Wednesday.

However, the MeT sources have predicted significant improvement in weather conditions from Wednesday afternoon and said that the overall improvement in

the weather conditions would be witnessed from Thursday.

The closure of Srinagar-Jammu highway has added the problems of the common people with the shortage of essential commodities. Heavy rains have also submerged dozens of localities in Srinagar city including many by lanes and connecting roads.

However, the vegetable vendors said that they were getting supplies at higher rates. "Before the rainfall, the prices had stabilized to some extent, but since the closure of the highway we are getting vegetables at higher prices from

wholesale mandis," Abdul Ma-

jeed, a vendor at Lalchowk said.

Some consumers from Hazratbal said that the shopkeepers were selling vegetables at much higher prices.

Meanwhile, the extended closure of the highway has depleted the stock of vegetables and fruits in the Valley for which the highway is the only all weather surface link with the rest of India.

Emphasising upon the need for the administration to reconsider and intervene to stop the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities, the general public has appealed concerned administration to take the cognisance of matter and solve it on priority basis. (CNS)

CS Sets Out 40-Point Development Agenda For DCs

Calls For Citizen-Centric, Accountable And Efficient Bureaucracy

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam, Wednesday chaired a meeting to apprise the Deputy Commissioners and District Superintendents who have taken charge after the recent reshuffle in J&K's administration; on the priorities of the Government and procedures for regular monitoring of ongoing projects for their timely completion.

The meeting defined the major contours of good governance for the district administrations achievable through strengthened coordination and convergence. It was impressed upon the participants that the functioning of government machinery needs to be efficient, accessible, transparent, and accountable with a special focus on grievance redressal and public outreach. The meeting reviewed the progress of various sectors and laid down the district-level framework for time-bound, door-step delivery of Government services; and completion of projects.

Under the Education sector, officers from School Education Department were directed to ensure sufficient arrangements for safe drinking water and toilets across the hierarchy of schools both in government and private sectors, besides ensuring the functioning of the existing infrastructure. It was advised that shortages, if any, can be augmented through the Jal Jeevan Mission and the Swachh Bharat Mission, respectively. Higher Education Department along with Revenue Department was asked to expedite construction of infrastructure for the 51 newly sanctioned Degree Colleges across Jammu & Kashmir.

On the scholarship front, strict directions were issued to the departments of School Education, Higher Education, Social Welfare and Tribal Affairs to ramp up coordination for ensuring universal coverage of all eligible students within the stipulated timelines under respective schemes of the Central and State governments.

Further, Social Welfare Department was asked to ensure universal coverage and timely disbursement of financial assistance under various pension schemes including National Social Assistance Programme, Integrated Social Security Scheme; and PM Matritva Vandana Yojana, with a renewed focus on monitoring of services under Poshan Abhiyan and one-stop centres for women.

For providing affordable housing and a clean environment, Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) and Rural Development (RDD) departments were directed to ensure timely completion of housing projects under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban and Rural, respectively, and gradual reduction and elimination of the 'single-use plastics'. RDD was additionally asked to make MGNREGA wage payments within 15 days of work completion, and to proactively engage with youth under UMEED and self-help groups under the NRLM scheme.

For efficient implementation of the Forest Rights Act, directions were given to the departments of Forest, Rural Development, Tribal Affairs and Revenue to work in tandem and vest forest rights on the eligible scheduled tribes and traditional forest dwellers through forest rights committees, sub-divisional committees, and district-level committees. The district administrations were asked to implement respective district environment plans with a renewed focus on restoration and conservation of water bodies. The Chief Secretary asked Jal Shakti Department to provide functional tap water connections to all households in Jammu and Kashmir by 30th September 2022 under the Jal Jeevan Mission- 'Har Char Nal se Jal'. Under the recently launched Jal Shakti Abhiyan- 'Catch the Rain', it was urged that degraded eco-systems must be revived through watershed conservation programmes, and rainwater harvesting techniques that can be taken up in convergence between

line departments

To provide all-weather, pothole-free, and secure connectivity, the district administrations were asked to prioritize PMGSY projects by ensuring availability of requisite raw material, timely resolution of land issues, and provisions for issuing mandatory clearances in a time-bound manner. They were advised to identify and recommend new projects under NABARD well in time to ensure that works on the projects commence in the 1st quarter of the financial year, 2021-22.

The Chief Secretary directed the Power Development Department to actively monitor the reported failures of power distribution & transmission channels, timely repairs, and replacement of the damaged equipment to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the upcoming summer months, besides securing the existing electrical infrastructure against the extreme weather vagaries.

The Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Department was asked to monitor payment of benefits under PM KISAN Yojana, enhance enrolment under KCCs, and establish forward linkages with the industrial sector in its efforts to double the farmer's income.

The Chief Secretary asked Health & Medical Education Department to universally enroll residents of Jammu and Kashmir under Ayushman Bharat-Sehat scheme for free of cost and cashless healthcare coverage by 31st May 2021. Regarding control measures for COVID-19 case surges, the Department and district administrations were directed to enhance testing, contact tracing, roll out of micro containment strategies, besides, ramping up vaccination drives on a mission mode.

To ensure that the Government services are provided in an equitable and hassle-free manner and identified projects get completed within their timelines, the Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu were directed to coordinate, monitor, and review district-wise progress.

Thaw In India, Pak Relations Will Further Peace In J&K: NC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Wednesday welcomed the renewed engagement between India and Pakistan saying the end of hostilities between the two nations will have a major impact on the furtherance of peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

In a statement, Party Spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said that the thaw in the Indo-Pak relations is bound to have a positive impact on the people of Jammu and Kashmir who have for long bore maximum brunt of escalation of tensions on LoC and IB between the two neighbours.

He said that the alternating flair-up on the borders used to incur huge losses on the people living alongside the borders and with the renewed Indo-Pak engagement they will be able to have

a sigh of relief.

Imran said the peace process is quite significant for the region which has been the main victim of hostilities. "The fresh diplomatic outreach will have a positive impact in the entire region which has all long suffered due to the animosity between the two neighbouring countries. With the opening of a new chapter in the beleaguered relations of the two countries, the dislocated populations from the border areas have started moving back to their homes. Our party has all along been the strong votary of peace and camaraderie between the two neighbours. The fresh diplomatic outreach between the two countries should follow more Jammu and Kashmir centric CBMs including resumption of cross-LoC trade and doing away with the present barter system," he said.

PDP Hopes Thaw In India, Pak Relations Will Improve Situation In Subcontinent

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Wednesday expressed hope that the recent developments involving Indo-Pak relations could usher in the times of peace and prosperity in Jammu & Kashmir.

In a statement, the party General Secretary Dr. Mehboob Beg said that the steps, with the right intention, by the neighbouring country with regard to the improvement of relations and a clear focus on J&K could go a long way in resumption of sustainable peace process in the region by paving way to address the issue of J&K.

"The ceasefire declared on the 25th of February, 2021 which holds till date is a huge sigh of relief for the people of J&K in

general and the people of Karnah, Tangdhar, Gurez, Uri, Kathua and Poonch in particular as they directly bear the brunt of the hostilities between India and Pakistan," Dr. Beg said.

"The events after the ceasefire also inspire hope as the PM has not only wished the Pakistani Prime Minister the best of health but also in his letter, underlined the need for cordial relations between the two countries besides having wished the very best to the people of Pakistan," he added.

"Overtures like these, especially from a PM with such a huge mandate have the potential to go a long way in fostering a friendly environment between the two countries and the same should directly benefit the people of J&K," he said. (KNS)

Several Houses Damaged Due To Landslides In Budgam

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: Over half a dozen houses were damaged due to the landslides amid continuous rains in Charar Sharif area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district.

Sources said that half a dozen residential houses were damaged due to landslides and mudslides in Alamkot, Waza Bagh and Dhakan Bar villages.

The victims have appealed the concerned administration to provide them with relief. (CNS)

Former Chief Secretary Resigns From NC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Former Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir and former MLC B.R Kundal resigned from the National Conference on Wednesday. Kundal has submitted his resignation in writing to the National Conference President in which he informed the President of his decision.

Kundal in his letter to Dr. Farooq Abdullah wrote, "During a brief ceremony in March 2019, you nominated me as candidate for the Jammu-Poonch parliamentary seat. You also announced by joining with the party on the same occasion. Later said parliamentary seat was given to the Congress for unknown reasons and since then a lot of water has flowed in Tawi (Long Time has Passed). You didn't consider my services necessary to the party, and I feel no sense in remaining attached to the party. "After two years of wait, I am now distancing myself from the National Conference," added Kundal, a former IAS officer. (CNS)

Burglars Steal Two Vehicles In Ganderbal

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: Burglars Tuesday stole two Alto vehicles from Gund and Gaganger areas of central Kashmir's Ganderbal district during the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday.

The vehicles belong to Habibullah Lone of Gund, and of Bashir Ahmed Lone of Gaganger, Sonamarg.

Lone said that he had parked his car outside his house and when he came out of the house for morning prayers, he was surprised when he did not find his car. Bashir Ahmed said that he had also parked his car outside his house and when he went out in the morning, the car was missing. A senior official of police in Ganderbal said that they have already cognisance of the matter and the case stands registered under the relevant sections of the law and the manhunt has been launched to nab the culprits. (CNS)

LG E-Inaugurates AYUSH Health, Wellness Centres

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Wednesday e-inaugurated as many as 73 AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) Health & Wellness Centres under Ayushman Bharat across the UT.

The Lt Governor, while speaking on the occasion, observed that healthcare services in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a revolutionary transformation in the past several months.

Unprecedented work is being done for advancement and upgradation of medical facilities for ensuring quality and affordable healthcare



services in the UT, he added.

The Lt Governor remarked that the Government is making committed efforts to fully integrate AYUSH with the healthcare delivery system, besides promoting good health through preventive, rehabilitative, mitigative and curative interventions of Indian Systems

of Medicine and Homoeopathy (ISM&H).

He laid special emphasis on creating awareness and sensitizing all stakeholders and health service providers about the strengths of AYUSH systems for optimum utilization of its potential, and revival of the traditional systems of medicine.

DC Anantnag Orders Implementation Of Brick Sale Rates

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr Piyush today ordered for constitution of a Committee of officers to ensure implementation of Brick Sale rates fixed and notified vide order no. 325 of 2020 dated 07.09.2020.

As per the order issued, a committee headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner (S) Anantnag and consisting of AD, FCS&CA, District Mineral

Officer, Sales Tax Officer and the SHO concerned shall ensure the compliance to the fixed brick sale rates.

The order reads that the team shall raid the brick kiln establishments to ensure adherence to fixed brick rates.

The team has also been empowered to impose fine where violation of Brick sale rates is confirmed and seal the unauthorised/unregistered brick kilns as per the provisions of Brick Kilns Regulation Act.

DC Kupwara Issues Advisory, Asks Officers To Submit Damage Reports

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Imam Din has asked all Executive Engineers and Tehsildars of Kupwara district to submit damage reports of infrastructure and residential houses due to ongoing rains and flash floods in the district immediately for onward submission to the higher authorities.

Meanwhile, the DC has issued an advisory, advising the people of Kupwara district living near Nallahs, not to venture out as all Nallahs are over flowing in the district



and all the residents are advised to take precautionary measures.

The DC also directed all the Magistrates to take immediate measures to shift all those inhabitants of concerned habitations which are affected or likely to be affected to safer places.

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

Tulips beckon tourists

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter on Wednesday to urge people in India to visit Kashmir to witness 1.5 million flowers in bloom in Srinagar's famous tulip garden which is being thrown open today. The PM also attached the picture of the garden to his tweet. Spread over an area of about 30 hectares the garden which is located in Zabarwan foothills was opened in 2007, to boost tourism in the Kashmir Valley by then chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

Ever since thousands of tourists visit the garden during the limited period of bloom of tulips. Last year, no one could visit due to the Covid-19 lockdown which brought number of outside tourists to zero during April, May and June. This spring, there is an expectation of a bumper tourist season following a large tourist footfall in winter. In a recent statement to parliament, Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel said the number of tourists who visited in Jammu and Kashmir this year so far has been the highest in last 16 years.

This is a great news for the sector that has been devastated over the last two years. According to official data 8,42,202 tourists visited the valley in 2018, 4,99,582 in 2019, and only 28030 in 2020.

Since the end of last year, the tourism department has been trying hard to bring more visitors to the Valley by organizing tourism promotion programmes. And to this end, the tour and travel operators from Maharashtra were brought to initiate an 'Unlock Kashmir Tourism Campaign'. Similarly, after a long drawn effort by the successive J&K Governments to bring Bollywood back to Kashmir, the exercise is finally paying off. Tinsel town is showing signs of shrugging off its Kashmir scare and finding its lost paradise again.

But would tourists come in spring too just as they did in winter? Depends on how the situation evolves. Covid-19 pandemic remains a dampener though. With the country bracing for a second wave of infection, the situation could go back to square one. But there's one good possibility though. International travel will take a long way to return to normal. This, in a sense, offers tourist places like Kashmir some hope. Indian tourists who can't visit abroad, can visit the Kashmir within the country.

Tourism sector forms 6.8 percent of Kashmir's GDP and employs 2 million people. But the seven month siege following erasure of the region's autonomy followed by Covid-19 pandemic, the sector is in bad shape. A significant number of people associated with it have either been laid off or are in the process of losing their jobs. Here's hoping that this spring and summer, the tourism picks up. This will go a long way to shore up the Valley's battered economy.

O T H E R O P I N O N

One year of the lockdown

Exactly a year ago, on March 24 at 8 pm, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that to battle Covid-19, India would lock itself up. Flights in and out of the country had already been stopped earlier, and now, all movement — except for essential workers — was halted. Citizens were told to stay home, maintain social distancing, avoid all contact with the external world, follow Covid-19 protocols, and aid the nation in helping break — or slow down — the chain of transmission, even as India was to use the period to build up its health infrastructure to cope with the most devastating pandemic in a century. While there were different phases of slowly unlocking the country, for 68 days, there was a lockdown. A year later, there are lessons and cautionary notes which are still relevant.

Based on the scientific evidence available at the time, global trends, an assessment of India's health infrastructure deficits, and the possibility of rapid transmission given the population and its density, a lockdown was necessary. India did well in using the period to ramp up testing and medical management facilities. But, at the same time, the lockdown was brutal, especially for the poor. The sight of migrant workers walking home will remain the abiding image of the lockdown, as will the unprecedented economic contraction. Supply chains were disrupted, demand plummeted, incomes dipped, jobs were lost, and the social welfare initiatives of the government were not enough to tackle the distress. The disease, too, continued to spiral — though India was fortunate in having a low fatality rate.

Hindustan Times



PAGD at a Dead-End

The grouping was destined to fall apart or at least become deactivated as it has now

RIYAZ WANI

The PAGD is in paralysis within months after its formation. The alliance has, more or less, stopped pursuing the goal for which it was created. And the grouping itself is on the brink of coming apart

It has now been months since the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) - now reduced to five parties following Sajad Lone's exit - has met. It didn't even meet to celebrate the winning of a predominant majority of seats in the Valley in recent District Development Council polls. Nor does it look likely that the alliance will meet in near future. What is more, the PAGD hasn't even issued a public statement on the evolving situation. Instead, each party has acted and spoken only as an individual entity. And the divergence among the constituents, particularly between the National Conference and the PDP, the largest parties in the grouping, has only grown by the day.

In hindsight, the grouping seems to have been destined to fall apart or at least become deactivated as it has now. The reasons for it are many but primarily it is about the centre's move to disproportionately raise the cost for the constituents for pursuing a united struggle for the restoration of Article 370. The leaders have been sent to jail, more of them from the People's Democratic Party. One of the leaders has quit the party following his recurrent incarceration. The administration has also reopened the J&K Cricket Association case against Dr Farooq Abdullah, the PAGD president, and attached his property worth over Rs 11 crores. The PDP president Mehbooba Mufti has been summoned by the National Investigation Agency. The cost seems to be directly proportional to pro-Article 370 noise by the alliance: stronger its pitch for the restoration of J&K autonomy, greater the punishment for the leaders.

This state of affairs has been alien to mainstream leaders over the last seventy years. Their politics has largely been about the pursuit of power than of a cause. True, the National Conference and the PDP have always sought strengthening of Kashmir's autonomy but this demand has been more in the nature of a political slogan than a goal they actively pursued and sacrificed for. More often than not, the mainstream politics in J&K - more so, in the Valley - has been a cringing and unedifying spectacle of the

enjoyment of power, albeit largely divested of the space to exercise it. The BJP has now demanded and got the local establishment leaders to become subservient, if not completely identify with its own political stance on Kashmir. It has tried to forcibly hone them to its nationalist straitjacket, thereby rendering them stultifying figures whose statements struggle to carry conviction in Kashmir.

The BJP government has also raised heavy costs for what has essentially been an innocuous Kashmir-centric politics: a demand

Gupkar alliance where his party would only get to contest from the two Assembly seats from where his candidates had won last time. And if the DDC election is anything to go by, even here his candidates would have had to contend with the proxies from the other parties.

The NC, PDP and the other parties would face a similar situation. In fact, many leaders in the NC are sore that by forming the PAGD they have given a new lease of life to the PDP and the PC which had largely lost the public confidence following their alliance with the BJP.

More often than not, the mainstream politics in J&K - more so, in the Valley - has been a cringing and unedifying spectacle of the enjoyment of power, albeit largely divested of the space to exercise it.

by Kashmiri leaders, much of it perfunctory in nature, for the protection of political rights of Kashmiris. And the saffron party knows that the mainstream leaders are unlikely to be ready to sacrifice beyond a point, with a few exceptions, of course. The strategy has paid off. The PAGD is in paralysis within months after its formation. The alliance has, more or less, stopped pursuing the goal for which it was created. And the grouping itself is on the brink of coming apart.

Sure, there are other reasons too for the PAGD to cease to carry out its professed role: the survival and expansion of the individual parties - particularly that of the NC, the PDP and the PC - which depends on the corresponding decline in the footprint of the other parties. For example, the NC can't retain its traditional standing as a dominant party without encroaching into the constituencies of the PDP or the PC. Ditto for the latter two which cannot hope to grow without doing the same to other parties. After exiting the PAGD, Sajad Lone has broken free. He is luring the former PDP and the NC leaders into his party and trying to expand his party's base in north Kashmir. This would have been impossible for him to do being a member of the

And some PDP leaders, on the other hand, think that the NC has gone quiet over the demand for Article 370 after the Enforcement Directorate notice to Farooq Abdullah, with one leader accusing senior Abdullah and the son Omar Abdullah of "depolicizing their narrative". This mutual suspicion and the necessity for survival and growth as individual entities leaves little scope for an alliance that freezes their political standing in line with their last electoral performance.

As things stand, there's thus little that gives the parties in the PAGD a cause to stay united. In fact, there are more reasons for them to strike on their own and pursue individual political ambitions. As for the struggle for Article 370, it can hardly be pursued within the paradigm of the power politics. More so, when such a struggle will not only be a drawn one with little chance of its success but will also call for sacrifices by the leaders and the parties.

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

The author is the Political Editor at Kashmir Observer



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139: a sad reality!

Happiness is a feeling of joy and positivity and is the most valuable thing in the world. On 20th of March, World happiness day is commemorated every year. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly on June 28, 2012. On this day, the countries all over the world are ranked on the basis of happiness or happy inhabitants of that country. On March 20, 2021, Finland was ranked the first for the fourth year.

But, on this day of happiness, a sad thing happened i.e., India was ranked

139th happy country. It's a moment to think that where we are. In our eyes, even if we have everything, still a thing worthwhile and quite valuable is missing which is "Happiness". We live in the world of our needs: furious and stressed. The dust of tension lies all over. No one waits for a minute to know what real nucleus of life is, it is happiness and nothing else.

We need to think upon it.

Let me share my experience that my eye caught and my mind held recently: Whenever, I walk on the road, I look at everyone, but I become abor-

tive to find happiness or even a smile on anyone's face, everyone is with furrows of stress on their forehead.

Happiness is very much important for us. The engine of our lives will run smoothly, if we grease them with happiness and optimism. A research has said that "optimism is associated with exceptional longevity. Women and men with greater optimism tend to live longer than their pessimistic peers". We have a chance to live longer but, we miss it.

Happiness has many powers: If we start our day with a smile, it can

make our day, because sometimes our joy can be the source of our smile, but sometimes, "our smile can be the source of our joy". Our smile can also be a reason for many others to smile.

So, let's be happy, forever, to live beautifully in this beautiful world with a number of beautiful people. And, remember, use your smile to change this world, but, never let this world change your smile. So let's, drive the cars of our life and press the accelerator of happiness!

Hina Jan
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The Career Cult: Move Beyond the Sciences

MOHAMMAD RIZWAN

I said I'm doing Honors in English Literature, as it is. He was suddenly distraught! The wide grin on his face turned into an ugly frown within no time. What followed is the funniest line I've been hearing time and again. "You were a bright student, I remember. Why did you choose this subject? Why didn't you apply for NEET?"

One can not imagine how rapidly humans have progressed in recent times. There is rarely any field where one can get stuck. Be it in medical sciences or transportation or modern machinery, there is rarely any field we have not conquered. Everything is at the fingertips of a person. Whether you need medicines or grocery or your car needs to be repaired, just dial a number or book it on the internet! Everything is so easy. We may have excelled almost in every field but I still feel, rather I have experienced, that we are way behind in one of the most important fields, education.

I was strolling along the narrow, patchy road of my village when I met an elder neighbour after a long time. He was happy to see me. He greeted me with a wide smile. After a general chit-chat about family, health and a few other things, the conversation jumped over to education, a sector towards which our society is one dimensional. He asked me what I was doing nowadays. I said I'm doing Honors in English Literature, as it is. He was suddenly distraught! The wide grin on his face turned into an ugly frown within no time. What followed is the funniest line I've been hearing time and again. "You were a bright student, I remember. Why did you choose this subject? Why didn't you apply for NEET?"

Another instance I remember is a telephonic conversation with one of my cousins. She told me that I had the potential but did not work hard. I asked her how come I did not work hard. I further told her that I am pursuing a degree in English Literature and I have plans to study further and excel in the subject. Her answer was similar to the neighbor's statement. She said, "You did not apply for NEET!"

NEET, National Eligibility cum Entrance Test, is one of the most prominent competitive examinations of the country. It takes a lot of hard work, dedication and grit to qualify this examination. It produces doctors, the saviors, the heroes, who have an immense contribution towards the society. There is no doubt about the fact that qualifying NEET is quite an achievement, but what we forget most of the times is that there are other subjects and competitive examinations to be pursued, which are equally valuable.

A family is not run by a single person. Every member of a family contributes towards its development and growth, and every member holds his own significance and value in the family. Similarly, every profession holds an important significance in this huge family. Doctors hold their own value, so do businessmen, writers, sports-persons, engineers, drivers, teachers and every other pro-



fession of the world.

The reason why I mentioned earlier that our society has a one dimensional approach towards the educational sector is that most of the people here think that if a student doesn't opt to go for this competitive examination after completing schooling, then he or she is not capable of studying at all, let alone finding a "respectable" job. I remember, as kids, when we were asked about our aim in life, most of us would say that "I want to become a doctor". Little did we know that our society will take this too seriously!

The message to the students is that taking the advice of parents and elders is a good thing. They never make bad decisions about your career and life. Their intentions are always pure. But at the same time, you have to take your own self's advice too. You have to ask yourselves these questions- If I take up a particular subject, am I doing justice to myself? Even if I excel in this subject, will I be a happy person or a successful yet unhappy person?

Thousands of young students have fallen prey to this one dimensional approach. Many careers have ended even before taking off! So, a message that I would like to pass to the parents too is that they shouldn't force children to go for a particular course that they're not interested in. This pressure and force often leads to depression and an increase in suicide rate. Save your children from depression. Let them choose a subject they are good at and a subject they love by heart. If one wants to be a doctor let him/her be, a writer, let him/her be, an engineer, let him/her be. Let them be their true selves! I'm sure that this approach will shape their careers and they will not only become great poets, writers, sports-persons, doctors, engineers but good human beings too.

The author is pursuing an Honors in English at Cluster University, Srinagar

On Writing Flawed and Inconsistent Afghan Characters

NADIA HASHIMI

In a Facebook book club for physicians, a member asked for historical fiction recommendations to better understand the history of the US-Afghanistan relations. As an Afghan American writer, the post caught my eye. One person suggested Ken Follett's *Lie Down with Lions*. I was unfamiliar but intrigued, so I downloaded the audiobook.

Published in the 80s, the book took me back in time to my childhood. No, I was not transported to a remote village set against jagged mountains; rather, Follett's tale of espionage and Cold War tensions took me back to our wood-paneled living room in suburban New Jersey, with the television aglow in the corner.

In that room, I'd taken in the only images of Afghanistan that were available at the time. Afghanistan graced the screen so rarely that my father made every effort to record those occasions on VHS tapes. More times than I can count, we watched Rambo thunder across Afghanistan's plains on the back of a black stallion to come to the mujahideen's aid. We had that one MacGyver episode as well, though he used more invention than ammunition. Peter Jennings and the other evening news anchors reported over similar but hazier images of a country swirled in dust, people's faces obscured by clouds of artillery smoke.

In Follett's story, among many cringeworthy moments were his repeated references to the way "all Afghans" dressed or behaved. Just like the suburban television screen of my childhood, the book portrayed Afghans as bearded warriors fighting off the Russians from mountain perches. The women were exotic when they weren't invisible. These narratives relied heavily on stereotypes about tribal (in their gaze, "primitive") cultures. In other words, these stories were not really about Afghans. They were a canvas upon which a white reader or viewer could project their own ideas about Afghans onto the screen.

In the wake of September 11th, the world's collective gazed turned to Afghanistan and, in particular, Afghan women. The image of the burqa was everywhere and it reduced generations of stories into one oppressed narrative. Women were flattened. At the same time, I was surrounded by Afghan women with personalities and histories that breathed life into holidays and parties.



In 2009, I began writing the kinds of stories that I'd once longed to encounter in bookstores and libraries. I set out to reflect a universal point of friction—women struggling for agency within a home, for free will within her own head, for a place within history—but within an Afghan context.

To write these stories with any authenticity is to write with abandon. I write characters who bear traits I've seen in vivo: flawed, inconsistent, forgivable, inspiring, damaged, human. I summon the granular stories told and re-told in our family, the spectrum of glorious and devastating experiences. The time my mischievous uncle swiped the best pieces of meat from the serving dish. The day my aunt walked away from medical school to study the humanities. The bright taste of oranges from Jalalabad in winter. The time several family members were lost in a round of political arrests and murders. The hours hungry women spent cooking delicacies in the month of Ramadan.

But it was not until my books reached an audience that I understood the pitfalls of being a writer of color and pushing against inaccurate narratives about my culture.

At times, my stories have become hooks from which readers hang their

In the wake of September 11th, the world's collective gazed turned to Afghanistan and, in particular, Afghan women. The image of the burqa was everywhere and it reduced generations of stories into one oppressed narrative. Women were flattened. At the same time, I was surrounded by Afghan women with personalities and histories that breathed life into holidays and parties

preconceived notions. In my first novel, a wife of a warlord held a seat in parliament, taking advantage of the female quota requirements and turned into a puppet by her husband. She meets other female parliamentarians, characters I modeled on real women, who are some of the most fiery and brave politicians to walk the earth. I wrote these women into the story deliberately, as they are largely unseen. And yet, in more book club discussions than I can count, people have shaken their heads at how horrible it is that women politicians are controlled by male puppet-masters.

There is no way for a single character to represent a body of people and yet much is extracted from individual characters. (I doubt Paula Hawkins worried about the assumptions people would make about women commuters while she was writing *The Girl on the Train*.)

I have been asked surprising questions. No, my marriage was not arranged. My mother-in-law does not terrorize me. And, no, I have not received threats from angry Afghan men. I don't mind the questions. I glean from them where the gaps are and how I can start to fill them in with another story.

Sparks Like Stars was partly inspired by the surprise that meets me when I talk about my mother graduating from Kabul

University with an engineering degree or when I talk about the American presence in Afghanistan in the 60s and 70s.

In 2009, I came upon a newspaper article about the coup of 1978 and the mystery of where the president and his family's remains were buried. I kept the article pinned to an idea board, returning to it two years ago. In the late 1970s, Kabul hosted visitors from around the world. The home of my parents' youth, the city that thrummed with music and fashion shows.

The details were mesmerizing. In interviews, American foreign service officers stationed in Kabul in the late 70s called it a party post. They hosted cocktail parties with an international crowd. Travel guides for hippies expending their wanderlust energies described how to avoid the camel scam when crossing the desert and gave other priceless bits of advice like, "Get stoned but don't make a public affair of it."

I started plucking away at characters. My first draft of *Sparks Like Stars* had two narrators: Sitara, an Afghan girl who survived a brutal coup, and an American foreign service officer who saw events in Kabul through her American lens. Like the reader in the Facebook group, I'd been wanting to see a book that explored the history of the relationship between the United States and Afghanistan. I wanted to expand the narrative not only of Afghan women, but of the relationship between Americans and Afghanistan. There was much to dissect—colonialism, plundered antiquities, and the creation of the Third World by the Cold War.

Several chapters in, I realized I wasn't just trying to dismantle stereotypes about Afghan women. Rambo epitomized the American savior trope. At a time when the United States has been planning an exit from its longest war, it felt important to revisit the early days of the US-Afghanistan relationship. *Sparks Like Stars* is meant to echo that complex dynamic in miniature form.

Stereotypes aren't dismantled by a single book. But expanding the corpus of Afghan stories and including authentic voices moves us closer to restoring Afghan women to their full height and decolonizes Afghan history.

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Lit Hub

82% of laptop problems are hardware-related: Report

Agencies

More than 82 per cent of laptop distresses are hardware-related compared to just 18 per cent of software related, according to a new study.

According to a new white paper released by Onsitego, a leading brand in after-sales services of devices and appliance the pandemic has led to an uptake

in the use of laptops and also the troubles related to it.

"The over usage of laptops and not being aware of how to correctly maintain them has led to a spike in the number of laptop problems reported by consumers. This white paper gives us interesting insights into some of the most common laptop problems that consumers face today," Kunal Mahipal, CEO, Onsitego said in a statement.

Within hardware, while display and keyboard related problems were expected to be the topmost, surprisingly Wi-Fi connectivity emerged as the highest that stood at 27 per cent of all laptop service requests.

As many as 18 per cent accounted for keyboard and the trackpad related issues followed by display at 15 per cent and battery and charging related glitches at 8 per cent.

All other hindrances, such as audio, bluetooth, exhaust fans, hard disk, over-

heating, physical damage, power button, and webcam, accounted for around just 2 per cent of laptops serviced.

In the software category, the primary concerns are around resource-hungry applications that accounted almost half (50 per cent) of all laptop service requests.

This is followed by whopping 41 per cent reporting their laptop getting hung in the middle of their usage due to inefficient background apps, malware or viruses and

lastly the issues faced due to windows updates stood at a minimal 4 per cent.

But getting a laptop priced above Rs 50,000 can cost anywhere between 40 per cent and 90 per cent of the laptop's price.

The report also finds that typically, customers spending more than Rs 50,000 tend to opt for laptops from Apple, and if opting for laptops below Rs 50,000, they prefer laptops sold by Acer, ASUS, Dell, HP, and Lenovo.

Study links eating processed meat to increased dementia risk

Agencies

You may want to cut down on the intake of processed meat such as bacon which could dramatically increase the risk of getting dementia. A new study found that eating just one rasher of bacon a day could increase your chances of developing the disease by 44 per cent. The findings of the study, titled 'Meat consumption and risk of incident dementia: a cohort study of 493,888 UK Biobank participants', were published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Scientists from the University of Leeds's Nutritional Epidemiology Group used data from 500,000 people, discovering that consuming a 25g serving of processed meat a day, the equivalent to one rasher of bacon, is associated with a 44 per cent increased risk of developing the disease.

However, meat-lovers need not despair, as their findings also showed that eating some unprocessed red meat, such as beef, pork, or veal, could be protective, as people who consumed 50g a day were 19 per cent less likely to develop dementia. The researchers were exploring a potential link between consumption of meat and the development of dementia, a health condition that affects 5 per cent to 8 per cent of over 60s worldwide.

Lead researcher Huifeng Zhang, a PhD student from the University of Leeds' School of Food Science and Nutrition, said, "Worldwide, the prevalence of dementia is increasing



and diet as a modifiable factor could play a role. Our research adds to the growing body of evidence linking processed meat consumption, to increased risk of a range of non-transmissible diseases." The research was supervised by Professor Janet Cade and Professor Laura Hardie, both at Leeds.

The team studied data provided by UK Biobank, a database containing in-depth genetic and health information from half a million UK participants aged 40 to 69, to investigate associations between consuming different types of meat and the risk of developing dementia. The data included how often participants consumed different kinds of meat, with six options from never to once or more daily, collected in 2006-2010 by the

UK Biobank. The study did not specifically assess the impact of a vegetarian or vegan diet on dementia risk, but it included data from people who said they did not eat red meat.

Among the participants, 2,896 cases of dementia emerged over an average of eight years of follow-up. These people were generally older, more economically deprived, less educated, more likely to smoke, less physically active, more likely to have stroke history and family dementia history, and more likely to be carriers of a gene that is highly associated with dementia. More men than women were diagnosed with dementia in the study population. Some people were three to six times more likely to develop dementia due to well-established genetic factors, but the findings suggest the risks from eating

processed meat were the same whether or not a person was genetically predisposed to developing the disease.

Those who consumed higher amounts of processed meat were more likely to be male, less educated, smokers, overweight or obese, had lower intakes of vegetables and fruits and had higher intakes of energy, protein, and fat (including saturated fat). Meat consumption has previously been associated with dementia risk, but this is believed to be the first large-scale study of participants over time to examine a link between specific meat types and amounts, and the risk of developing the disease.

There are around 50 million dementia cases globally, with around 10 million new cases diagnosed every year. Alzheimer's Disease makes up 50 per cent to 70 per cent of cases, and vascular dementia around 25 per cent. Its development and progression are associated with both genetic and environmental factors, including diet and lifestyle.

Zhang said, "Further confirmation is needed, but the direction of effect is linked to current healthy eating guidelines suggesting lower intakes of unprocessed red meat could be beneficial for health."

Professor Cade said, "Anything we can do to explore potential risk factors for dementia may help us to reduce rates of this debilitating condition. This analysis is a first step towards understanding whether what we eat could influence that risk."

Study uncovers language in which babies prefer to talk

Agencies

A study led by the University of California has found that babies who were exposed to two languages had a greater interest in an infant-directed speech that is, an adult speaking like a baby than adult-directed speech.

It can be hard to resist lapsing into an exaggerated, singsong tone when you talk to a cute baby. And that's with good reason. Babies will pay more attention to baby talk than regular speech, regardless of which languages they're used to hearing, according to a study by UCLA's Language Acquisition Lab and 16 other labs around the globe.

Some parents worry that teaching two languages could mean an infant won't learn to speak on time, but the new study shows bilingual babies are developmentally right on track. The peer-reviewed study, published today by Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science, found bilingual babies became interested in a baby talk at the same age as those learning one language.

"Crucially for parents, we found that development of learning and attention is similar in infants, whether they're learning one or two languages," said Megha Sundara, a UCLA linguistics professor and director of the Language Acquisition Lab. "And, of course, learning a language earlier helps you learn it better, so bilingualism is a win-win."

In the study, which took place at 17 labs on four continents, researchers observed 333 bilingual babies and 384 monolingual babies, ranging in age from 6 to 9 months and 12 to 15 months. UCLA's lab was the only one to provide data on bilingual babies who grew up hearing both English and Spanish. Sundara and Victoria Mateu, a UCLA assistant professor of Spanish and Portuguese, observed babies who were 12 to 15 months old.

Each baby would sit on a parent's lap while recordings of an English-speaking mother, using either infant-directed speech or adult-directed speech, played from speakers on the left or the right. Computer tracking measured how long each baby looked in the direction of each sound.

"The longer they looked, the stronger their preference," Mateu said. "Babies tend to pay more attention to the exaggerated sounds of infant-directed speech."

Infants' interest in English baby talk was very fine-tuned, the study

noted. Bilingual parents indicated the percent of time English was spoken at home compared to Spanish. The more English the bilingual babies had been exposed to, the stronger their preference for infant-directed speech compared to adult-directed speech. However, even babies with no exposure to English preferred the English baby talk to the grown-up talk, Mateu said.

Baby talk is found across most languages and cultures, but English has one of the most exaggerated forms, Sundara said.

"Baby talk has a slower rate of



speech across all languages, with more variable pitch, and it's more animated and happy," she said. "It varies mainly in how exaggerated it is."

Led by Krista Byers-Heinlein, a psychology professor at Concordia University in Montreal, the study involved labs in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and Singapore. The study's global reach strengthened the results, Sundara said.

"When you do language research, you want to know that the results aren't just some quirk of the language you're studying," she said.

According to the study, 6- to 9-month-old babies who had mothers with higher levels of education preferred baby talk more than babies whose mothers had less education.

"We suspect that perhaps the mothers with higher education levels spoke more to the babies and used infant-directed speech more often," Mateu said.

This study is one of the first published by the ManyBabies Consortium, a multi-lab group of researchers. Byers-Heinlein believes the unusual international, multilingual collaboration creates a model for future studies that include a similar breadth of languages and cultures.

Flu shot linked to fewer, less severe Covid cases

Agencies

People who received a flu shot last flu season were significantly less likely to test positive for a Covid-19 infection when the pandemic hit, according to a new study.

The study, published in the American Journal of Infection Control, also indicated that those who did test positive for Covid-19 had fewer complications if they

received their flu shot.

"It's particularly relevant for vaccine hesitance, and maybe taking the flu shot this year can ease some angst about the new Covid-19 vaccine," said researcher Hofmann, Associate Professor at the University of Michigan.

For the study, the research team included more than 27,000 patients who were tested for a Covid-19 infection in mid-July of 2020.

Of the nearly 13,000 who got a flu shot in the previous year,

4 per cent tested positive for Covid-19. Of the 14,000 who hadn't gotten a flu shot, nearly 5 per cent tested positive for Covid-19.

The association remained significant after controlling for other variables including ethnicity, race, gender, age, BMI, smoking status and many comorbid conditions.

The researchers found that people who received their flu shot were also significantly less likely to require hospitalisation, although the researchers didn't find

a significant difference in mortality between the two groups.

"It is possible that patients who receive their flu vaccine are also people who are practicing more social distancing and following CDC guidelines. However, it is also plausible that there could be a direct biological effect of the flu vaccine on the immune system relevant for the fight against SARS-CoV-2 virus," the researcher said.

Don't See Rating Downgrade For India: FM Nirmala Sitharaman



Agenceis

Higher spending by the government will not result in a rating downgrade for India, which currently has an investment grade rating, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday.

Replying to a debate on Finance Bill 2021 in the Rajya Sabha, Sitharaman attacked the Congress-led UPA government for mismanaging the economy.

In her Budget speech, the finance minister had pegged India's fiscal deficit at 9.5 per cent in FY21 and 6.8 per cent in FY22. Hit by the coronavirus pandemic, India's gross domestic product (GDP) is likely to contract 8 per cent in FY21 before rebounding to a double-digit growth in FY22, albeit on a lower base.

Sitharaman said that under the Modi government, Indian economy has seen lower inflation, higher GDP growth, record foreign investments and lower fiscal deficit.

The measures taken in response to the 2008 global financial crisis by the UPA led to high inflation and 'taper tantrums', she said.

Comparing the GDP growth between the NDA and UPA governments, she said India's average GDP growth was 7.5 per cent between 2014-2019 as against 6.7 per cent during 2009-2014. Similarly, average inflation fell from 10.3 per cent under five years of UPA government to 4.8 per cent under the first five years of NDA government, she said.

Fiscal deficit has also been contained at 3.65 per cent of the GDP during 2014-19 as compared to 5.3 per cent in the previous five years, she said, adding current account deficit has also improved from (-)3.34 per cent to (-)1.43 per cent.

Foreign exchange reserves, the finance minister said, have grown from USD 303 billion in 2014 to USD 411.9 billion, while NPAs declined to Rs 8.99 lakh crore as of March 2020.

Petrol, Diesel Can't Be Brought Under GST For Next 8-10 Years, BJP MP Tells Parliament

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi on Wednesday said it is not possible to bring petrol and diesel under the GST regime for the next eight to 10 years as it would cause an annual revenue loss of Rs 2 lakh crore to all states. The Centre and states collectively collect over Rs 5 lakh crore tax on petroleum products, Modi told the Rajya Sabha while participating in a discussion on the Finance Bill 2021. The statement assumes significance in view of the rise in petrol price for the past over one year which even touched Rs 100 per litre in some states.

In the first reduction in rates in over a year, petrol price on Wednesday was cut by 18 paise per litre and diesel by 17 paise a litre as international oil prices tumbled to the lowest since early February. Petrol price was cut to Rs 90.99 a litre in Delhi from Rs 91.17 per litre. Diesel now comes for Rs 81.30 a litre in the national capital, down from Rs 81.47 previously. Rates have been reduced across the country and vary from state-to-state depending on the local incidence of taxation (VAT). This is the first reduction in fuel prices in over a year. The prices were last reduced on March 16, 2020.

"It is not possible to bring petrol and diesel under GST regime in the next eight to 10 years because states would not be ready for an annual revenue loss of Rs 2 lakh crore (collectively by all states)," Modi told the House. "If petrol or diesel would be brought under the Goods and Services Tax



(GST) regime then how would the loss of Rs 2 lakh crore revenue to states be recovered. The Centre and states together earn over Rs 5 lakh crore from tax on petroleum products," he said.

He explained that if petroleum products are brought under the GST, 28 per cent tax would be collected on them as that is the highest slab in the tax regime. "Presently, 60 per cent tax is being collected on petroleum products. This would result in shortfall of Rs 2 lakh crore to 2.5 lakh crore (to both Centre and states)," he explained in the House. "If we collect 28 per cent tax on petroleum products, then only Rs 14 would be collected (per litre) against Rs 60 at present," he pointed out. "If petrol or diesel price is Rs 100 (per litre) then the tax component is Rs 60 which includes Rs 35 for Centre and Rs 25 for respective states. Besides out of the Rs 35 tax per litre, 42 per cent

goes to states," Modi added.

Taxes From Petrol, Diesel Matter

He also stated, "It is said that tax collected on petrol, diesel goes into the pocket of government. There is no separate pocket of government. From where the money will come for providing electricity and tap water to all households. The spending of tax collection on welfare of country is being challenged."

Reacting to remarks against the GST regime, he said, "Some people also said that this is Gabbar Singh Tax. No state has opposed the tax structure of GST in any GST Council meeting. You can see the proceedings of the council (to verify that)," he said. He stressed that only the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi had the guts to implement the GST regime in the country.

India Antitrust Watchdog Orders Probe Into Whatsapp's New Privacy Policy

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: India's competition watchdog on Wednesday ordered a probe into a privacy policy update announced by Facebook-owned WhatsApp, saying the messaging service breached antitrust laws.

WhatsApp said in January it was updating its privacy policy to allow it to share some user data with parent Facebook and other companies in the group, prompting a global backlash against the messaging app, including in India, its biggest market, with more than 500 million users.

The antitrust order also comes as WhatsApp sets out to expand its digital payment services to millions of Indians.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) said WhatsApp had violated competition laws "through its

exploitative and exclusionary conduct ... in the garb of policy update."

The 21-page order also asked its investigation unit to conduct the probe and submit a report within 60 days. Such probes typically take several months.

WhatsApp's conduct in sharing users' data with other Facebook firms, in a way that is "neither fully transparent nor based on voluntary and specific user consent", appears unfair to users, the watchdog added.

The CCI said WhatsApp had told the antitrust body that the policy update, which becomes effective in May, raised no competition law concerns.

WhatsApp did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Wednesday.

In India, users concerned about privacy have downloaded rival apps such as Signal and Telegram, according to data from research firms.



Centre Blames Economic Failures On Covid-19 Pandemic: Deepender Singh Hooda In RS



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Participating in a debate on the Finance Bill 2021 in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, Deepender Singh Hooda, the Congress MP from Haryana, targeted the economic policies of the Central government and said the Centre had pinned the blame of economic failures on Covid-19 pandemic.

Hooda alleged the economy has derailed due to the wrong policies of the Central government. Mismanagement during of demonetisation, Goods and Services Tax (GST) and Covid-19 has forced the economy to be put on ventilator support. India was the among the countries with the highest decline in GDP due to Covid-19.

Hooda said, "What was the pace of the economy during the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) rule and what is it now during the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) dispensation? The 10-year average GDP growth during the UPA government was 7.8 per cent. If we were to consider the base year of calculating GDP today, it would be 11 per cent. While the six-year pre-covid period from 2014 to 2020 had witnessed a GDP growth rate of 6.8 per cent. This means that the growth rate has reduced rather than increase."

The son of former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that any economy stands on four legs — consump-

tion and demand, investment, export and government expenditure. Comparing these four indicators, the economy's condition during the UPA and NDA regimes becomes clear.

Hooda further said, "If you compare the 10-year UPA dispensation and six years of NDA rule the industrial investment growth rate at the time of UPA was 14 per cent, today it has come drastically down to only two per cent. The rate of credit and bank loans was 13 per cent at the time of UPA, it has come down now to four per cent. The private consumption growth ie demand, which was 24 per cent at the time of UPA, has now come down to nine per cent. The corporate sales growth rate was 12 per cent at the time of the UPA, today it has halted at just three per cent in the last six years."

The Congress MP said that since demonetisation, the economy started derailing. GST broke the backbone of the economy but mismanagement during the Coronavirus pandemic has led the economy to the intensive care unit.

Hooda said Arvind Subramanian, who was the Chief Economic Advisor to the Modi government, had said in 2020 that the economic slump was not a common situation. "Since the last 30 years, the country has not witnessed such a slowdown. However, the Central government deliberately attempted to blame the economic failures on Covid-19 pandemic."

Fuel Prices Fall On Sharp Decline In Global Rates

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Consumers can heave a sigh of relief as oil marketing companies (OMCs) have finally relented and reduced the retail price of petrol and diesel after keeping them steady for the past 24 days.

This is the first reduction in petrol and diesel prices in 2021.

Petrol price fell by 18 paise per litre and diesel by 17 paise per litre in Delhi on Wednesday. This has brought down the retail price of petrol to Rs 90.99 and diesel to Rs 81.47 a litre, respectively in the capital.

Across the country as well, the petrol and diesel price fell with the quantum varying on the level of local levies on respective states.

In Mumbai and Kolkata, the retail price of petrol fell by 17 paise per litre each and in Chennai by 16 paise per litre on Wednesday. For diesel, the prices fell by 16 paise, 17 paise and 18 paise per litre respectively in Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai.

In Mumbai, petrol is now priced at Rs 97.40 a litre from previous days price of Rs 97.57 and diesel in the city is now priced at Rs 88.42 a litre from the previous price of Rs 88.60 a litre.

Premium petrol, however, continues to remain over Rs 100 a litre in the city as is the case with several cities across the country.

Petrol and diesel prices were last revised upwards on February 27 and ever since then, retail prices remained unchanged even though during the period, crude jumped to over \$70 a barrel only to start

falling and touching close to \$60 a barrel now.

Sources said that oil companies took time to revise petrol and diesel prices downwards as they were covering up for losses incurred on its sale when crude was high and retail prices remained static. Some indications suggest that there was a loss of Rs 4 and Rs 2 per litre on sale of diesel and petrol, respectively earlier that had now been more or less covered.

The current reduction in retail prices has not helped in bringing down fuel prices that have crossed Rs 100 per litre-mark in several parts of the country and continue to remain above the levels even now.

Since the beginning of February crude has gained more than \$7 per barrel that pushed OMCs to increase fuel prices on 14 occasions raising the prices by Rs 4.22 per litre for petrol and by Rs 4.34 a litre for diesel in Delhi.

Crude has now slipped around 10 per cent in the last eight days and is now sitting a tab lower around \$60 a barrel on the back of rising US inventory and concerns on demand squeeze over a new wave of the pandemic.

The petrol and diesel prices have increased 26 times in 2021 with the two auto fuels increasing by Rs 7.46 and Rs 7.60 per litre, respectively so far this year. This is for the first time it has fallen this year.

Officials in public sector oil companies said that retail prices may rise again if crude and product prices increase but for now it will fall over the next few days.



Alfa Suzuki Launches New Scooty Models In Srinagar, Anantnag

SRINAGAR: Alfa Suzuki, Authorized Dealers of Suzuki Motorcycle India Pvt. Ltd. (SMIPL), today launched the NEW ACCESS 125 with Bluetooth® enabled digital console and the NEW BURGMAN STREET with Bluetooth® enabled digital console. The product was unveiled at the Srinagar showroom by Chairman Alfa Group, Fayaz Ahmad Ahangar in presence of Tanvir Ahmad Khan (Branch Head, J&K Bank, New Secretariat Road), Sheikh Mudasar (Advance Section, JK Bank New Secretariat Road), Managing Directors and entire staff of Alfa Suzuki. The products have been launched at Anant-

nag showroom as well.

Commenting on the features of Bluetooth® enabled digital console, the company in the statement said the State-of-the-art technology that lets you sync your mobile phone seamlessly with your vehicle's console, has been developed by SMIPL to provide features such as turn-by-turn navigation, call & SMS alert display, WhatsApp alert, estimated time of arrival alerts, missed call alert and caller id, over speed warning and phone battery level display. The technology has been developed keeping the requirements of today's young customer in mind, who always wants to stay connected but

doesn't want to compromise on his/her safety by using a phone while riding a two-wheeler.

All the customer has to do is download the Suzuki Ride Connect app and connect with their scooter using Bluetooth to access all functions that also include speed warning, last parked location, trip sharing, etc.

The New Access 125 with Bluetooth® enabled digital console and the New Burgman Street with Bluetooth® enabled digital console are now available in brand new colour options and are priced at INR 81030 and INR 87050 (Ex-showroom, Srinagar) respectively.

NEWSMAKERS

Amazon Names Former Exec Adam Selipsky As The New Head of AWS

Agenceis

Amazon has named Salesforce executive Adam Selipsky as the replacement for Andy Jassy, the long-time chief of Amazon Web Services (AWS) and the company's next CEO when founder Jeff Bezos steps down later this year. Selipsky worked at AWS for more than 10 years, raising to the rank of vice president of sales and marketing, before running the startup Tableau, which is now part of Salesforce. Selipsky's hiring was first reported by CNBC, which published a memo Jassy sent to Amazon employees on Wednesday announcing the news.

"Adam brings strong judgment, customer obsession, team building, demand generation, and CEO experience to an already very strong AWS leadership team. And, having been in such a senior role at AWS for 11 years, he knows our culture and business well," Jassy wrote in the memo. Selipsky joined Salesforce when the cloud computing giant acquired Tableau in a monstrous \$15.7 billion



deal in 2019. Selipsky has been part of Salesforce's executive leadership team since as Tableau's acting CEO.

There was speculation as to whether Amazon would promote an existing AWS executive to take over Jassy's role. Eyes were on Matt Garman, who was promoted to the top sales role last year, and Peter DeSantis, the general manager of AWS's EC2 business, as potential candidates.

Ultimately, it looks like Jassy turned to a former colleague — and someone with a pretty stunning track record helping to push a mid-sized software company toward a \$15 billion acquisition — as the top choice for his replacement to run

AWS. Selipsky will rejoin Amazon in May, when he and Jassy will be "transitioning together" into their new roles in the lead-up to Bezos' move to executive chairman of the board.

"With a \$51B revenue run rate that's growing 28% YoY (these were the Q4 2020 numbers we last publicly shared), it's easy to forget that AWS is still in the very early stages of what's possible," Jassy wrote in the memo, referencing the less than 5 percent of global IT spend occurring in the cloud computing market. "We have a lot more to invent for customers, and we have a very strong leadership team and group of builders to go make it happen."

After Smartphones, Smartwatch, Oneplus Gears Up To Launch Office Devices

Agenceis

OnePlus is not settling after the launch of the new smartphone series and the first smartwatch. The brand is now making investments to launch devices in new categories including in the smart office space, a top company executive has said.

"Our teams are currently engaged in finding out which are great products and ecosystem devices that office goers will love to have in their hands or in their office spaces," Navnit Nakra, Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, OnePlus, told IANS in an interview.

When asked if devices for the office space meant launching laptops and other PCs, Nakra said that it was too early for him to give a "specific comment" on that.

"One of the things that we are looking at is how do we build an ecosystem of devices, not just the smartphone and smart TVs," Nakra said, while talking about the new areas in which the company is investing.



"One of the areas that we are investing in is the IOT (Internet of Things) connected devices ecosystem. So this investment is going to be in four areas," he said.

These four areas include "personal IOT" which is the wearables and "smart homes."

"In the smart home category, we have already made an entry into smart TV, but in the coming years, you will see us investing a lot on new products which will bring experience in your home which is more vibrant," Nakra said.

"Third is smart offices. We are looking at what can we do to build better office space, a more connected office space which will improve employee productivity," he said.

The fourth area of focus for OnePlus is smart cars.

"Our founders also indicated that we would love to be in the smart cars journey space in the years to come," Nakra said.

The OnePlus 9 series that the company launched on Tuesday focused a lot on the camera technology.

The company earlier this month

made its three-year partnership with Swedish camera manufacturer Hasselblad official.

The two companies entered into the partnership to co-develop the next generation of smartphone camera systems for future OnePlus flagship devices.

OnePlus also announced its plans to invest more than \$150 million over the next three years towards further camera development and improving the imaging experience.

"The Hasselblad camera for mobile technology which will deliver aesthetic, high quality and unparalleled colour reproduction which will set the stage for future of mobile imaging," Nakra said.

He said that OnePlus took a very "strong bet" on becoming 5G ready and bringing the benefits of advanced technology to Indian users.

OnePlus, which recently announced an investment of Rs 100 crore towards offline expansion in India for 2021, is also focusing a lot on making its devices accessible across the country.

Indus Commissioners" Meet Concludes; Pak Raises Objection To Designs Of Hydropower Projects in J-K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: The two-day meeting between India and Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty concluded here on Wednesday, during which Islamabad raised objections to the designs of Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydropower projects in Jammu and Kashmir.

Sources said Pakistan also sought additional information on hydropower projects in Ladakh sanctioned by India after the nullification of special provisions of Article 370 which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

On its part, India justified its stand on the designs of Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydropower projects.

The meeting took place here after a gap of over two years. The last meeting had taken place in Lahore in August 2018.

The Indian delegation was led by P K Saxena, India's Indus Commissioner,

and his team included officials from the Central Water Commission, the Central Electricity Authority and the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation.

The Pakistani delegation was led by its Indus Commissioner Syed Muhammad Meher Ali Shah. The delegation arrived here on Monday evening.

The waters of the Indus river and its tributaries are crucial to India and Pakistan and serve as a lifeline for millions of people of the two nations.

This year's meeting is the first between the two commissioners after the August 2019 nullification of the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution that gave special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting also assumes significance as this is the first important engagement between India and Pakistan after militaries of the two countries had announced last month

that they would strictly observe a ceasefire along the Line of Control and other sectors.

In 2019, the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was also bifurcated into union territories -- Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

India has since cleared several hydropower projects for the region.

Hydropower projects in Chilling (24 MW), Rongdo (12 MW) and Ratan Nag (10.5 MW) are in Leh; while Mangdum Sangra (19 MW), Kargil Hunderman (25 MW) and Tamasha (12 MW) are in Kargil.

Both Leh and Kargil fall in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Pakistan has sought information on these projects, sources added.

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) warrants the two commissioners to meet at least once a year, alternately in India and Pakistan.

Last year's meeting scheduled to be

held in New Delhi in March was cancelled, a first since the treaty came into being, in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

In July 2020, India had proposed to Pakistan that the meeting for discussing pending issues pertaining to the Indus Waters Treaty be held virtually in view of the coronavirus pandemic, but Pakistan insisted on holding talks at the Attari border checkpoint.

However, India said it was not conducive to hold the meeting at Attari due to the pandemic. With the improvement in the pandemic situation, the meeting was held following all COVID-19-related protocols.

Under the Indus Waters Treaty signed between India and Pakistan in 1960, all the waters of the eastern rivers -- Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi -- amounting to around 33 million acre feet (MAF) annually is allocated to India for unrestricted use.

Dates For Re-Poll In Two DDC Constituencies Of North Kashmir Soon: Election Officer

Press Trust of India

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir State Election Commissioner (SEC) K K Sharma on Wednesday said the dates for re-polls in the two DDC constituencies of Dragnulla and Hajin-A in north Kashmir will be announced shortly.

Sharma was speaking at a review meeting convened here to discuss the re-poll in the two District Development Council (DDC) constituencies, where the counting was earlier kept in abeyance to clear the citizenship issues of two of the contesting candidates in December last year.

The meeting was held at the Nirvachan Bhawan and was attended by the divisional commissioner of Kashmir and the deputy commissioners of Kupwara and Bandipora through video-conferencing and other senior officers of State Election Commission, an official spokesperson said.

"At the very outset, the meeting was briefed about the commission's order,

whereby the poll process for these two constituencies, Dragnulla in Kupwara district and Hajin-A in Bandipora district, has been extended up to March 31. The comments of the participants regarding issues (if any) pertaining to the conduct of re-poll in these two DDC constituencies were also invited and discussed," he said.

He said the divisional commissioner of Kashmir and the deputy commissioners of both the districts invited attention of the SEC towards the prevailing weather conditions in the valley.

The SEC, while appreciating the inputs of participants, asked them to take all the preliminary steps needed for the upcoming re-polls for which the commission would shortly announce dates, the spokesman said.

The maiden DDC elections to 280 seats -- 14 each in 20 districts -- were held in November-December last year and the results declared for 278 seats.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

NIA Tightens

part of the "conspiracy" to raise and transfer militancy funds to Hizbul Mujahideen militants for the procurement of militant hardware and was also a crucial player in sustaining the political-separatist-militant nexus in J&K.

Parra was instrumental in the revival of the PDP in south Kashmir, especially in the militancy-affected Pulwama district.

Besides Parra, the NIA has also named two gun runners -- Shaheen Ahmad Lone and Tafazul Hussain Parimoo -- in connection with the case.

Suspended police officer Singh is currently lodged in Kathua jail at Hiranagar in Jammu division. He was arrested by the police on January 11 last year from the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway while transporting two Hizbul militants -- Naveed Babu and Rafi Ahmad Rather -- and a law school dropout, Irfan Shafi Mir, to Jammu.

After the arrest of Singh, initial investigations were done by the J&K Police before the case was handed over to the NIA. The police had said that the two militants and the lawyer had planned to travel to Pakistan.

The NIA had earlier claimed that its probe has revealed that the accused were part of a deep-rooted conspiracy hatched by the Hizb and Pakistan to commit violent acts and wage war against India.

Mufti had recently skipped an Enforcement Directorate (ED) summons for questioning in connection with a money laundering probe.

Mehbooba Likely

to face questioning in the case. The PDP president did not appear before the agency in Delhi on Monday, saying that she had prior commitments that could not be cancelled. She requested the ED officials to question her in Srinagar and not in Delhi and her request was accepted, the sources said.

The 61-year-old leader, who was released last year after more than a year in detention following the scrapping of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, was served a notice to appear at the ED headquarters in the national capital.

On March 19, the Delhi High Court had refused to stay summons issued to her after she moved the court seeking quashing of the summons in the case.

The ED, which had earlier summoned Mufti on March 15, had not insisted on her personal appearance at that time.

"I write to you in reference to the summons issued to me to be present at your Delhi office on March 22. I have challenged in the Delhi High Court the constitutional vires of Section 50 of the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act), under which these summons are issued," she said in a letter to the ED.

Section 50 of the PMLA empowers the authority, that is, officers of the ED, to summon any person to give evidence or produce records. Persons summoned are bound to answer the questions put to them and to produce documents as required by the ED officers, failing which they can be penalised under the PMLA.

The PDP leader had said, "I state that I am not in a position to attend the summons on 22nd March as I have prior commitments that cannot be cancelled at such short notice".

"If however you insist we must do it sooner, I am ready and willing to be questioned in Srinagar, preferably at my residence or through video conference from Srinagar," Mufti had said in her letter. (PTI)

6 Lakh Yatris

undertake preparations for an expected footfall of 6 lakh yatris this year, an official spokesperson said.

"To ensure secure passage of pilgrims, directions were issued to appropriately ramp up the holding capacities, yatri accommodations, and public utilities across the route from Lakhnapur to the Holy cave and vice-versa; with special attention to arrangements in consideration of weather extremities," he said.

The meeting was also attended by Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor/CEO, SASB, Administrative Secretaries of departments of Public Works (R&B), Industries and Commerce, and Tourism besides Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir & Jammu, concerned Deputy Commissioners and Additional CEO SASB.

According to the official spokesperson, the Chief Secretary directed the Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu to closely monitor the arrangements being put in place in transit camps along the Yatra route particularly at Kathua, Samba, Jammu, Udhampur, Ramban, Anantnag, Srinagar, Baltal, and Chandanwari.

Deputy Commissioners, he said, were directed to enhance the holding-capacity of transit camps under their jurisdictions to accommodate approximately 1.22 lakh yatris including

both the cave-bound pilgrims as well as those on the return journey; on a daily basis.

"The Chief Secretary asked the Divisional Commissioners to ensure availability of basic amenities at these transit camps, besides, ensuring adequate provisions all along the route. They were asked to project additional requirement of resources to the Tourism Department for timely projection and approval," the official spokesperson said.

He further said that to ensure completion of various works and arrangements well in time, it was impressed upon the concerned to initiate the implementation of plans and projects in the 1st week of April 2021.

Gunmen Loot

the gunmen decamped with approximately Rs 2 lakh and one 12-bore rifle of the branch guard.

Police have started investigations and a hunt has been launched to trace them, the official said.

Earlier, on March 16 last, three armed robbers had looted Rs 3.5 lakh from a Grameen Bank branch at Panzinara Srinagar.

Prior to it, on March 12, a Grameen Bank branch at Ogmuna-Kunzer are of Tangmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district was robbed of Rs 2.24 lakh.

Weather To Remain

lashed plains, officials said on Wednesday. Rains in plains and snowfall in higher reaches started on Sunday afternoon and continued for the fourth running day Wednesday.

In last 24 hours till 8:30 am Wednesday, Gulmarg received 15 cms (6 inches) of fresh snowfall, the meteorological department official,

He said the famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded minimum temperature of minus 2.5 degree Celsius against minus 0.9 degree Celsius on the previous night.

Srinagar, he said, received 30.9mm of rainfall during the time while mercury settled at 4.6 degree Celsius, same as recorded on the previous night in the summer capital of the J&K.

Qazigund received highest rainfall in Valley-- 47.2mm in the last 24 hours and recorded a low of 4.0 degree Celsius against 4.6 degree Celsius on the previous night, he said.

Mercury settled at 0.3 degree Celsius against 3.2 degree Celsius on the earlier night at Pahalgam, the famous resort in south Kashmir which also received 26.4mm of rain during the time, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of 2.8 degree Celsius against previous night's 3.6 degree Celsius while it received 32.1mm of rain in the 24 hours, the official said.

The minimum temperature settled at 1.6 degree Celsius in Kupwara against 3.6 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said. The north Kashmir district received rainfall of 34.8mm during the time, he said. There are reports about water logging in some low-lying areas in the Valley. (With GNS inputs)

Banihal Highway

machinery and efforts are on to ensure early restoration of the highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with rest of the country, the officials said.

The highway was closed on Tuesday following snowfall in the high altitude areas and incessant rains in the plains in most parts of Jammu and Kashmir over the past three days.

The Jawahar Tunnel the gateway to the Kashmir valley along the highway also experienced an inch of snowfall on Tuesday morning but the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has cleared the road stretch.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Traffic (National Highway Ramban), Parul Bhardwaj said landslides and shooting of stones from the hillocks overlooking the highway had blocked the road at 14 places between Nashri and Banihal.

Road clearance operation is in progress at all the effected places and we are hopeful of clearing the debris at most of the places by this evening, the officer said.

However, he said a massive landslide spread over 600 metres at Mihard pose a major challenge. A truck is also stranded in the middle and efforts are on to pull it out.

He said there has been a slight improvement in the weather this morning but the skies still remain overcast.

A spokesperson of the Meteorological department said there will be a significant decrease in the amount of rainfall but the system would prevail over Jammu and Kashmir till this evening.

Besides Mihard and Cafetaria Morh, the officials aid the highway is blocked at Chamba Seari, Sita Ram passi, Marog, Battery Cheshma, Anokhi fall, Digidol, Panthiyal, Moum Passi,

Gangroo, Salaad, Sherbibi, Shabanbass and Chamalwas. (PTI)

195 More Test

discharged from various hospitals--23 from Jammu Division and 69 from Kashmir Valley.

So far, 125535 persons have recovered--51415 in Jammu and 74120 in Kashmir. There are 1513 active cases--357 in Jammu division and 1156 in the Valley while 1983 people have died, 732 in Jammu division and 1251 in the Valley. (With GNS inputs)

Tulip Garden

has been a success story with thousands of tourists thronging it every year during the three weeks of its bloom.

However, the garden will be opened after the gap of two years as it remained closed for the visitors due to the coronavirus lockdown last year.

Officials said the Floriculture Department has put in place adequate measures to ensure the implementation of the standard operating procedures in letter and spirit.

No visitor would be allowed to enter the garden without the face masks, the officials said, adding that thermal scanners and sanitisers would be available for them at the garden.

PM Recommends

Tulip festival.

"In addition to the tulips, you will experience the warm hospitality of the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

The tulip garden will be thrown open to public on Thursday.

"Tomorrow, 25th March is special for Jammu and Kashmir. A majestic tulip garden on the foothills of the Zabarwan Mountains will open for visitors. The Garden will see over 15 lakh flowers of more than 64 varieties in bloom," Modi said in another tweet.

The tulip garden is located at the foothills of Zabarwan range with an overview of Dal Lake and is the largest tulip garden in Asia. It is spread over an area of about 30 hectares. The garden was opened in 2007 with the aim to boost floriculture and tourism in Kashmir Valley by the then chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

The garden is built on a sloping ground in a terraced fashion consisting of seven terraces. Apart from tulips, many other species of flowers like hyacinths, daffodils and ranunculus have been added.

The Tulip festival, organised at the onset of spring season in the Valley, is an annual celebration that aims to showcase the range of flowers in the garden as part of tourism efforts by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

BOSE Revises

practices have been revised," reads a notification issued by the BOSE Director Academics, Farooq Ahmad Peer.

BOSE said that as per the new scheme, twenty percent marks out of total 100 have been kept reserved for internal assessment in order to assess students in a diverse manner, at different times and also to observe and examine a broad range of curriculum objectives.

"Henceforth, the theory paper will be of 80 marks only, while 20 marks will be kept for the internal assessment on the analogy of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)," it reads.

BOSE also said that pattern and design of question papers has also been modified and while taking into consideration the parameters viz analytical approach, critical thinking and objectivity for the annual (Regular) examination scheduled to be held in (October-November) 2021 in Kashmir Division, Winter Zone areas of Jammu Division, UT of Ladakh and (Feb-March) 2022 in Summer Zone areas of Jammu Division.

Meanwhile, Peer also said that the examination of reappear, failure candidates on the old pattern of question papers shall continue and shall be held for only two (subsequent examinations) after declaration of Annual (Regular) 2020 results of Winter Zone areas and Annual (Regular) 2021 results in Summer Zone areas of Jammu Division.

"All the Heads of Institutions are informed to kindly direct the concerned teaching staff to check the guidelines of internal assessment for recording, reporting of individual learners throughout the session," Peer said.

LG Launches

is working on the principle of 'minimum government, maximum governance', as envisioned by the prime minister, to make working of the government more accountable, responsive and transparent," Sinha said after launching the e-services at the Civil Secretariat here.

Terming the faceless and paperless services a leap towards 'good governance', the Lt governor said these would reduce human interface,

besides ensuring hassle-free services to the people in a fast and transparent manner.

"The services like provision of online birth and death certificates, corrections in birth/death certificates, licences and NOCs for various trade activities, dairy registration, road cutting permissions, new sewerage connection, registration of pet dogs, registration of pet clinic, bird/pet trade, besides other public services have been made transparent and simplified through online mode," Sinha said.

He impressed upon officers to expedite the provision of the remaining e-services, including online building permission, and explore the possibilities of increasing revenue of ULBs to make them vibrant and self-reliant.

He also directed them to take comprehensive measures for making urban development plans of Jammu and Srinagar a reality at the earliest.

Missing Soldier's

"I would have long died."

The unending mystery and unthinkable search stemmed on August 2, 2020, when Wagay's son, Shakir Manzoor, 24, a rifleman with the 162 Battalion of Indian Army's Territorial Army unit, had come home to celebrate Eid.

Later, driving back in his car to his base camp in Balapora Shopian, he was cut short and allegedly abducted by militants.

Wagay later found Shakir's TaTa Brezza torched in Rambhama area of neighbouring Kulgam district.

"I knew the militants who abducted him," Wagay continued. "I even went to their families but it never helped."

However, the only clue apparently sealing the fake of Wagay's soldier son was an unverified audio surfacing on social media a week after the abduction.

A person, suspected to be a militant, can be heard claiming to have killed the abducted soldier.

"We can understand his family's pain but we can't return his body to them because of coronavirus -- so that a lot of people don't gather for his funeral, in the same way that the army hides and buries the bodies of dead Mujahideen in unmarked graves," the voice said.

Earlier, as contagion enforced another lockdown in the valley, the police started denying bodies of local militants to their families on the ground of "maintaining strict Covid protocol".

In a video appeal, Wagay made fervent appeals to militants to handover the body of his son.

"If he has died, please return his body. That is our right. My son was in the Army. It is your job to fight them (Army). I have no complaints against you if you have killed him, but I will have a complaint if his body is not returned."

Following this, the villagers found Shakir's ripped and blood-stained clothes at three different places in an orchard near his home.

"With that, we lost the hope of Shakir being alive," said Nazir Ahmad, the missing soldier's uncle.

"Our only wish was to see him one last time, but we don't see that happening."

Even Shakir's mother, said Wagay, has donated her gold to faith-healers for the farewell moment.

A day after Shakir's disappearance, army tweeted a statement, saying that they suspected that the soldier had been abducted by militants and his burnt car was found.

Later, on August 28, 2020, Kashmir police chief, IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar said that two militants, Shakoor Parray, and his associate Suhail Bhat, "who were involved in Shakir's abduction", were killed in a joint operation of government forces.

"As of now," Amritpal Singh, SSP Shopian, told Kashmir Observer, "we're interrogating all possible persons who may have any knowledge about Shakir Manzoor. We're doing whatever is possible to crack this case."

Back home, Wagay recalled his son's army stint over incessant smoking drags.

After joining army in 2016, Shakir was posted in Bandipora and Srinagar, before transferred to his home district.

On the fateful day, Wagay had warned him not to visit home frequently, as he had apprehensions that he might be killed.

"But he was fearless," the father said. "He would say he is good to everyone, so there is no need to worry."

Apart from mobilizing shovels and JCBs to hunt his son's grave, Wagay has already made multiple rounds of Srinagar, to demand probe in the unsolved case.

"One question repeatedly haunts me," Wagay, demanding a CBI probe into the case, said.

"My son, a member of Indian army, was abducted and killed and his department made little effort to locate his body. I would've myself located my son's body, if army and police had

supported the way they should."

Driver Held With

resident of the area, a police official said. A hand grenade and 15 rounds of AK rifle were recovered from the vehicle. The driver was arrested and a case has been registered, the official said. (PTI)

Police Officer

registered against him last year, an ACB spokesperson said Wednesday. Khan, he said, was booked by ACB under FIR No.01/2020 under section 7(a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1998 registered in Police station ACB Rajouri.

He further said that the case was charge sheeted after obtaining sanction for launching of prosecution from the competent authority. The case has been listed for hearing on April 28, 2021.

Giving details of the case, the ACB spokesperson said that Khan was booked after a complaint was received from a man alleging that the police officer was demanding Rs 10,000 from him for not presenting the charge sheet against his minor sister.

The complainant, he said had told the ACB that a case stands registered against his family members in police station Mendhar which was charge sheeted in the court against him, his father, mother and wife.

"The Sub Inspector being inquiry officer of the case has kept the supplementary charge sheet pending against his minor sister and was demanding bribe from the complainant for not presenting the charge-sheet against her," the ACB spokesperson said.

Accordingly, he said, a case was registered and a team of ACB had successfully trapped the accused red handed while accepting the bribe amount of Rs.10,000 from the complainant in presence of independent witnesses and trap team members. The accused person was arrested on spot, the bureau spokesperson added.

Pfizer Begins

the company said in a statement late on Tuesday.

According to the company, the findings suggest potential for use in the treatment of Covid-19 as well as potential use to address future coronavirus threats.

"We have designed PF-07321332 as a potential oral therapy that could be prescribed at the first sign of infection, without requiring that patients are hospitalised or in critical care," said Mikael Dolsten, Chief Scientific Officer and President, Worldwide Research, Development and Medical of Pfizer.

"At the same time, Pfizer's intravenous antiviral candidate is a potential novel treatment option for hospitalised patients. Together, the two have the potential to create an end-to-end treatment paradigm that complements vaccination in cases where the disease still occurs," Dolsten added.

Protease inhibitors bind to a viral enzyme (called a protease), preventing the virus from replicating in the cell. Protease inhibitors have been effective at treating other viral pathogens such as HIV and hepatitis C virus, both alone and in combination with other anti-virals, the company said.

Currently marketed therapeutics that target viral proteases are not generally associated with toxicity and as such, this class of molecules may potentially provide well-tolerated treatments against Covid-19, it added.

The Phase 1 trial is a randomised, double-blind, sponsor-open, placebo-controlled, single and multiple dose-escalation study in healthy adults evaluating the safety, tolerability and pharmacokinetics of PF-07321332.

The initiation of this study is supported by preclinical studies that demonstrated the antiviral activity of this potential first-in-class SARS-CoV-2 therapeutic designed specifically to inhibit replication of the SARS-CoV2 virus.

The structure of PF-07321332, together with the pre-clinical data, will be shared in a Covid-19 session of the Spring American Chemical Society meeting on April 6.

The company said that it is also investigating an intravenously administered investigational protease inhibitor, PF-07304814, which is currently in Phase 1b multi-dose trial in hospitalised clinical trial participants with Covid-19. (IANS)

2 Injured In

flames raging from the house.

Meanwhile, police have registered a case under the relevant sections of the law to ascertain the cause of the fire.

Bear Kills

Meanwhile a wildlife official said a cage has been installed in Bandi village to capture the wild animal. (GNS)

Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma Move Up In ICC T20 Rankings

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: India captain Virat Kohli moved up a place to fourth in the ICC T20 rankings for batsmen, while his deputy Rohit Sharma climbed three spots to 14th in the latest list issued on Wednesday.

Kohli, who slammed an unbeaten 80 off 52 balls coming in as an opener in the series against England, is now the highest-ranked from India ahead of K L Rahul.

Rohit's 34-ball 64 in that match has helped him move up three places to 14th in the weekly update which took into account the three-match Afghanistan-Zimbabwe series in Abu Dhabi apart from the last two matches of the India-England series, the ICC stated.

In other gains for India's batsmen, Shreyas Iyer has moved up five places to a career-best 26th position while rookie Suryakumar Yadav and wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant too have made rapid progress.

Yadav, who debuted in the second match of the series but could not garner any points as he did not get to bat, has pushed up from the bottom to 66th position after scores of 57 and 32 while Pant has moved up 11 places to 69th in the rankings.

Seam bowler Bhuvneshwar

Kumar, player of the match in the last game for his spell of two for 15, has moved up 21 places to 24th while Hardik Pandya has advanced 47 places to 78th.

For England, Dawid Malan maintains a healthy lead at the top of the rankings after his 68 in the final match while Jos Buttler has inched up one place to 18th.

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid (up one place to fourth) and fast bowlers Jofra Archer (up 12 places to 22nd) and Mark Wood (up 12 places to 27th) have advanced in the bowlers' list.

In the ODI rankings, Jonny Bairstow is up four places to a career-best seventh position after his knock of 94 in the opening match of the series against India in Pune on Tuesday.

Captain Eoin Morgan has advanced one place to 24th. All-rounder Ben Stokes has moved up from 75th to 64th among bowlers while also leapfrogging compatriot Chris Woakes to third place among all-rounders.

India opener Shikhar Dhawan's match-winning 98 has lifted him two places to 15th and Bhuvneshwar Kumar has gained five places to move into the top 20 in the latest ODI update.

Sri Lanka Lead West Indies By 153 Runs On Day 3 Of 1st Test

Agencies

ANTIGUA: Sri Lanka led the West Indies by 153 runs with six second-innings wickets in hand by stumps on the third day of the first cricket Test. On a day of changing fortunes, Sri Lanka first wrapped up the West Indies first innings for 271 — a lead of 102 over its own first innings of 169. Sri Lanka then reached stumps at 255-4.

Lahiru Thirimanne and Oshada Fernando kept up Sri Lanka's concerted fight back on Tuesday, battling the tourists into a strong position at 170-1. Thirimanne made 76 to follow his 70 in Sri Lanka's first innings and Fernando made 91 in a partnership of 162 for the second wicket from 301 balls.

Kyle Mayers then struck back for the West Indies, dismissing Fernando for his first wicket in tests, then adding the wicket of the out-of-form Dinesh Chandimal (4), both caught by wicketkeeper Joshua Da Silva.

When Kemar Roach bowled Thirimanne, Sri Lanka was 189-4, 87 ahead, after having lost three quick wickets for 19 runs.

Dhananjaya de Silva and Pathum Nissanka then rallied Sri Lanka again, putting on 66 in an unbroken fifth wicket partnership by stumps. De Silva was 46 and Nissanka 21 at close of play.

Sri Lanka is working toward a strong position because the West Indies, who won the toss and bowled, face the task of batting last on a wearing pitch at the Sir Vivian



Richards Stadium.

"I think the wicket is a good one. It's flattened out nicely," Mayers said.

"Obviously they had the upper hand today but the game is still evenly poised.

"We're still in the game — 150-run lead. All we need is two early wickets tomorrow and then we're in with a chance."

Sri Lanka began the day by swiftly wrapping up the West Indies first innings, dismissing top-scorer Rameez Khan for 61.

The West Indies had early success with the new ball, removing Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne (3) when Sri Lanka was 8 in the fifth over.

Thirimanne and Fernando then stuck together for almost 51 overs to erase the first innings deficit and to bat Sri Lanka into a strong position. Fernando reached his second test half century from 84 balls and Thirimanne his seventh from 123 balls.

IND VS ENG, 2ND ODI

England To Be Without Injured Eoin Morgan, Sam Billings Doubtful



Press Trust of India

PUNE: England skipper Eoin Morgan and Sam Billings are doubtful for the second ODI against India in Pune on Friday after sustaining injuries in the series-opener, dealing a fresh blow to the side's floundering campaign.

The visitors suffered the setbacks in their 66-run defeat after the skipper split the webbing between his right thumb and index finger that required four stitches. In another incident, Billings injured his collarbone following an awkward dive to stop a boundary.

"We're going to wait 48 for

hours and see how it is...give as much time as needed to hopefully be available for Friday," Morgan said at the post-match interaction.

Morgan, who scored 22 as England were bowled out for 251 in pursuit of India's 318, said his batting would not be 100 per cent given the injury and fielding too is a concern with a split webbing.

Billings, who had dislocated his left shoulder to miss their triumphant campaign in the 2019 World Cup, too batted in the stiff run chase, and scored 18.

"I haven't spoken with Sam about his batting so I don't know in his instance... In mine, it's never go-

ing to be at 100 per cent but it's not that I can't hold a bat," Morgan said.

Down 0-1, the world champions face a must-win situation in the second of the three ODIs here on Friday.

Going forward, Morgan said, they would give the majority of their players opportunities which could mean openings for Matt Parkinson, Reece Topley and uncapped Liam Livingstone.

"ODI cricket has been the vehicle to grow our squad and try and improve beyond our best XI on the field so there will be opportunities for guys coming in," Morgan said.

Shreyas Iyer Out Of England ODIs, Likely To Miss IPL's First Half Too

Press Trust of India

PUNE: India batsman and Delhi Capitals skipper Shreyas Iyer was on Wednesday ruled out of the ongoing ODI series against England and left in serious doubt for the first half of the IPL starting next month after dislocating his left shoulder in the opening game here.

The incident happened in the eighth over of the England innings when Shreyas dived on a drive hit by Jonny Bairstow off pacer Shardul Thakur.

The 26-year-old looked in tremendous pain as he left the field clutching his shoulder.

"It is unlikely he will play first part of IPL," a BCCI source told PTI.

On Tuesday, the BCCI had stated, "Shreyas Iyer subluxated (partially dislocated) his left shoulder in the 8th over while fielding. He has been taken for further scans."

He captains Delhi Capitals in the



IPL, which begins on April 9.

The Mumbaiaiker had perished for just 6 while batting.

Shreyas had led Delhi Capitals to the final in the previous edition of the league.

It could take as much as six

weeks to recover from shoulder dislocation and much longer in case a surgery is required.

In his absence, the DC captaincy could be handed to either Rishabh Pant, Australian Steve Smith or senior off-spinner R Ashwin.

'Got Dad's Bag To Dressing Room To Keep Him Close,' Reveals Krunal Pandya

Press Trust of India

PUNE: India all-rounder Krunal Pandya had his late father Himanshu's travel bag in the dressing room as he tried to keep him close ahead of his outstanding ODI debut in which he smashed the fastest 50 by a debutant.

Celebrating his 30th birthday on Wednesday, Krunal and his younger brother and star all-rounder Hardik Pandya spoke about the close relationship they shared with the Senior Pandya, who died of a heart attack in January.

"So basically the thing is, he passed away on 16th morning and I was playing Syed Mushtaq Ali on that day. He had a habit of keeping his clothes ready in the night, his shoes, his pant, his shirt, hat as well.

"So what I did was just before the game, I got his bag from Baroda here, and I thought, I know he is not with us, but those clothes, which he was supposed to wear in that game, I thought I'll bring that and keep in the dressing room," Krunal revealed on BCCI's official website.

Apart from his 58-run knock, Krunal also picked up a wicket in the game, against England, which India won by 66 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. He broke down while speaking to the host broadcaster after the match and was comforted by his brother.

"Obviously, I worked so hard to be here...not just in cricket, but in terms of everything, taking care

of my diet to fitness, to everything and again this is all dedicated to the old man...his blessings are there with us, and obviously it was very emotional for you and me, both of us, and again getting a cap from you," Krunal told Hardik.

Kruna has gone through a lot in the past few months. After being dropped from the Indian T20 team, he was caught in a spat with all-rounder Deepak Hooda before losing his father, who had played a key role in making him a cricketer.

"...my focus has always been about how I can be the best version of myself, how I can improve, not just as a cricketer, but how can I improve as a human being as well.

"...again somewhere down the line, I just feel his (late father's) blessings are there, just feel more secure...this is for him," said Krunal.

Hardik, on his part, revealed that Krunal's body language showed his love for their late father.

"It shows in your body language as well, but not many people know, our father is actually with us in the dressing room, Krunal has been carrying...our father passed away at 4 o'clock in the morning, and he was someone who used to always keep his stuff ready for the next day.

"Krunal has been carrying the bag which has his (stuff)," revealed Hardik.

Krunal, a left-handed batsman, and a slow-left arm orthodox bowler, who has played 18 T20s, has been also playing for five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians.

Teenager Shafali Verma Loves Attacking Game, Reveals What Works For Her

Press Trust of India

LUCKNOW: Aggressive batting comes naturally to her, declared world's number one T20I batswoman Shafali Verma on Tuesday after powering India to an easy nine-wicket win over South Africa in the third and final match in Lucknow.

The 17-year-old, who regained the number one spot in the ICC T20I batswomen rankings on Tuesday, was named player of the series after knocks of 23, 47 and 60.

"I always practise (power-hitting) and work hard on my batting. Ever since I started holding a bat, I have loved to play attackingly. That's how it works for me," the big-hitting Shafali said after the match.

Asked about regaining the number one spot in the ICC T20I rankings, she simply said, "I just try to do well and win matches for my team."

Her 60 on Tuesday came from just 30 balls and was studded with seven fours and five sixes.

India, however, lost the three-match T20I series 1-2. They had also lost the preceding five-match ODI series 1-4.

India captain Smriti Mandhana credited the third match win to team effort.

"It was a good show overall. The bowlers did exceptionally well, and Shafali then just stole the show. This victory belongs to the bowlers," Mandhana, who carried her bat with an unbeaten 48 off 28 balls, said.

Asked if toss, which India won on Tuesday, was too important, she said, "Definitely not. We were pretty much in the game yesterday (second match) till the very end.

"Yes, toss is important but can't use that as an excuse. We lagged behind in the first two games, so I'm proud that we bounced back strong tonight. After losing the series, it needs a lot of motivation to play like we did tonight."

She said Tuesday's win was important for their future assignments.

South Africa captain Sune Luus said it was a "magical" tour as they could beat India on home turf.

"I don't think anyone expected us to take two series wins home. So it's a special moment for us irrespective of how we fared tonight. The management and players can be extremely proud. It's been a magical tour," she said.

"It's important for youngsters to get opportunities. We aren't always going to have our senior players around. So it's important for these players to learn while they're there."

SHOOTING WORLD CUP

After Winning Gold, Chinky Yadav Says, 'Sometimes, I Feel Pressure'

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: She is an Olympic quota holder but the occasional thought about whether she would compete in the Tokyo Games leaves Chinky Yadav worried, thanks to the incredible depth of talent in Indian shooting.

While a quota definitely puts a shooter at an advantage, it need not necessarily mean a ticket to the Olympics for everyone. As per the selection policy of National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), few shooters are picked based on their scores in trials and competitions leading up to the showpiece.

"Sometimes I think about Olympic selection and I feel under pressure, but I also tell myself that whatever happens I will see, I will try my best," Yadav said.

The Olympics will be held from July 23 to August 8.

On Wednesday, Yadav strengthened her case for selection with a gold medal in the women's 25m pistol ahead of Rahi Sarnobat and Manu Bhaker in the ISSF World Cup.

"I hope I am picked in the team."

Working with a psychologist has helped Yadav immensely.

By her own admission, she was under the pump and was sweating, as she got locked in a tussle with the experienced Sarnobat for the gold.

The 23-year-old, though, held her nerves to prevail in a shoot-off.

"Besides my coaches, we also have a psychologist ma'am working with us and she supports us a lot.



"The mental thoughts are controlled through meditation."

The shooter from Bhopal, who began her tryst with the sport when she was 12, secured an Olympic quota at the 14th Asian Championships in Doha in 2019.

Speaking about the Wednesday's final, she said, "I have trained in advance for tie shoots in final, I just had to do my best, not think who is in competition with me and which level they are in.

"Also, whenever I shot badly I forget that and look for a fresh start, I am very happy to win my first individual senior world cup medal.

"I have been told by the coaches and psychologist that I have got to trust in my own abilities."

Yadav, who switched to 25m pistol in 2013 after starting with 10m, ad-

mitted that she was under pressure.

"I was under a lot of pressure, I was sweating, there was vibration in my body, but I focussed on my technique, and to control the vibration I focussed on my breathing sequence. Pressure is there in every competition but it is more when we expect too much."

Asked about the beginning of her journey, she said, "I started in 2012, my father lives in a sports campus in Bhopal, 21 to 25 sports are played in that academy and I came to know that shooting is also there.

"In 2013, I moved to 25m and within one year, I was in the squad and from next year I started participating in competitions. So I have been a part of the junior team for a few years and then when I graduated to senior I had a one year break, during which I did training."

'I Cried After Seeing Footage Of Our Loss In World Cup Qualifiers,' Reveals India Football Coach

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: Indian football team head coach Igor Stimac revealed that he was in tears after watching the footage of his side's defeat to Oman despite leading till the 82nd minute of their opening World Cup Qualifier in 2019.

India were leading 1-0 through a 24th minute strike from talismanic Sunil Chhetri in the first match of the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers against Oman in Guwahati in September 2019, but the Gulf country scored two late goals to emerge winners.

"When I looked back at earlier matches, I cried a few times. That first match (against Oman) was crucial, that match was going to determine whether we are going to fight for first two positions in group (and qualify for next round)," Stimac said at a virtual press conference.

"As it happened, with bad luck or inexperience (of players) in such important games, we fell down and that was something I always cry about.

"I felt sorry, not for myself because I have faced similar situations during my career, but for the players," he said ahead of In-



dia's international friendly against Oman here on Thursday.

Stimac said that there is no "good quality" players currently playing in the I-League who could be picked for the national team. All the players in the 27-member squad are from the teams of the Indian Super League which has become the top-tier event in the country.

"At the moment there is no such player (in I-League) who has quality to be able to join the national team. There is nothing to hide about it. All the best players from I-League are supposed to become part of ISL because they are all followed by ISL clubs scouting.

"Venkatesh from my staff is following all the players of the I-League. But the door is open and according to the feedback from the I-League scouting system we are going to act," he added.

Stimac said the team was starting from the scratch after disruption by COVID-19 pandemic and added that he would not expect much from them in the two matches. India play UAE in the second friendly on Monday.

"We were planning a lot of things last year like change in scheduling of season, more games, Super Cup etc but the pandemic has destroyed everything. The

team also has to start from the scratch though the players have played in ISL. International matches are altogether different.

"We wanted to give them the experience of playing stronger teams, that will give them more confidence and fearlessness in future. I have told them there should not be any pressure on them."

Talking about Oman, Stimac said, "I have seen their match against Jordan. They are a really physical side, well organised and really patient. We also have worked hard and we expect a good game tomorrow."

Oman are coming into Thursday's match after playing out a 0-0 draw against Jordan on March 20.

Senior player and key defender Sandesh Jhingjan said the respect other Asian teams have for the current Indian side was not there 10-15 years back.

"We are also a strong team now. That is why countries like Oman and UAE are agreeing to play with us in international friendlies because they can learn from us also, just like we learn from them.

"The respect other strong teams of the continent showed to us was not there in the Indian team 10-15 years back."

I HAVE SEEN THEIR MATCH AGAINST JORDAN. They are a really physical side, well organised and really patient. We also have worked hard and we expect a good game tomorrow."

Uproar in Rajya Sabha over Centre's Delhi Bill; AAP says it will move SC



Agenceis

Rajya Sabha proceedings witnessed two brief, back-to-back adjournments as opposition members trooped in the well of the House raising slogans to protest against the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

Soon after the House returned the Finance Bill, 2021, Leader of Opposition and Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge opposed the GNCTD (Amendment) Bill, saying the proposed legislation was unconstitutional and demanded that it be referred to a select committee for scrutiny.

Opposing the bill, AAP MP Sanjay Singh said the BJP government at the Centre has brought the bill as the party had lost the Delhi assembly elections twice. He said that by opposing the bill he was seeking "justice" for the two crore people of Delhi.

Later, opposition members trooped into the well and started raising slogans against the government.

As the protesting members reached the well and House marshals arrived, Kharge warned that what happened in the Bihar assembly on Tuesday should not be repeated.

Kharge was referring to the

chaos that erupted in the Bihar assembly on Tuesday when police was called inside to assist the marshals in evicting unruly opposition members protesting against the Bihar Special Armed Police Bill, 2021.

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy said the amendments to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act were in no way undemocratic. The Chair called Abhishek Manu Singhvi of the Congress to speak on the bill, but he demanded that the House be first brought in order.

As the uproar and slogan shouting continued, the House was adjourned twice for 10 minutes each.

The bill, which was passed in Lok Sabha on Monday, seeks to make it clear that the "government" in Delhi means the "Lieutenant Governor".

The bill also makes it mandatory for the Delhi government to take the opinion of the L-G before any executive action.

The AAP, which is in power in Delhi, said it will move the Supreme Court if the GNCTD bill is passed by Parliament.

"If the GNCT Amendment Bill is passed by Rajya Sabha today, we will go to the Supreme Court," party's Rajya Sabha MP N.D. Gupta said.

CBSE Launches Competency Based Assessment Framework Aligned With NEP For Classes 6 to 10

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Wednesday launched a competency-based assessment framework for classes 6-10 for three subjects—English (reading), Science, and Maths.

The framework is a part of the CBSE Competency Based Education Project that aims to replace the existing rote learning model as directed in the new National Education Policy (NEP) over the next 2-3 years.

"The new National Education policy 2020 envisages a significant shift in the education ecosystem in India. It aims at preparing students for the 21st century and lays emphasis on competency-based education rather than an education which tests rote learning.

"The CBSE has had a collaboration with British Council and three UK agencies, Cambridge, NARIC and Alphaplus who are helping CBSE in attaining this objective. The work has already started, and significant progress has been made and we do look forward to this co-operation and working with British Council in the future," CBSE Chairman Manoj Ahuja said.

The framework is the basis for a larger project exercise currently underway where 40 assessment designers, 180 test item writers and 360 master trainer mentors are being trained in using this framework to create model question bank and collection of ideal lesson plans.



In the first phase selected Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, UT Chandigarh and private schools across the country will participate in the programme which will be rolled out to all 25,000 CBSE schools in India by 2024.

Barbara Wickham OBE, Director India, British Council, said "Education and research collaboration is central to the India-UK relationship. The reformed assessment framework will support high quality teaching for both an improved learning experience and outcomes for all students in CBSE schools".

"Our extensive work with government agencies in India over the past few decades and our links across the whole UK education network, meant we were able to propose a framework that will not only bring international assessment standards to Indian schools, but accompany it with an implementation roadmap tailored for India. We are committed to working closely with the CBSE and Indian school system stakeholders in the last mile delivery of the project," she said. — PTI

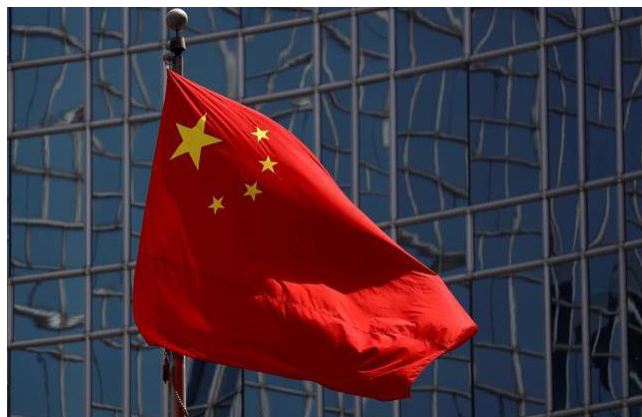
Aware of China Developing Infrastructure In Border Regions Opposite India: Govt

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: The government on Wednesday said it was aware that China is developing infrastructure in the border regions opposite India in Tibet and Xinjiang autonomous regions, and that it keeps constant watch on all developments having a bearing on country's security and takes all the necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Replying to a written question in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said India is also focusing on improving infrastructure in the border regions to facilitate economic development as also to meet the country's strategic and security requirements.

"The government is aware that China is developing infrastructure in the border regions opposite India in Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions. The government continues to keep constant watch



on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all the necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

The minister also said that in the last few years, the government has increased the budgetary allocation for construction of roads and bridges in the border areas.

This, he said, has helped pro-

vide connectivity to the local population and better logistical support to the armed forces.

"Government gives careful and special attention to improvement of infrastructure for the development of border areas, in order to facilitate the economic development of these areas as also to meet India's strategic and security requirements," he added. — PTI

Centre Allays Concerns on Covishield; Says Both COVID-19 Vaccines In India Effective Against UK and Brazilian Variants

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Covishield is safe and there is "no signal of concern" regarding it as of now, the Centre asserted on Wednesday amid reports of possible side-effects of the Oxford-AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine and its suspension in some European countries.

The AEFI committee which closely keeps track and records adverse events following immunisations has "concluded that thrombosis events due to Covishield in India is not a problem".

"There is no signal whatsoever for this concern. Covishield is safe, please proceed with its scale-up and uptake. We want to assure that there is no risk of blood clotting-related complications that were suspected in some nations with Covishield," NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul said in response to a query at a press conference.

ICMR Director General Dr Balram Bhargava said that both Covishield and Covaxin are effective against the UK and the



effective against the UK and the Brazilian variants.

He was asked if the vaccines that are being used right now in India are effective against the three new variants of concern—the UK variant, South African variant and the Brazilian variant.

"It is well established by research studies in published literature that the vaccines available in our country—both Covishield and Covaxin—are effective against the UK and the

Brazilian variants.

"The research work regarding the South African variant is ongoing at the moment," he added.

Paul urged the people not to doubt the efficacy of the vaccines.

"Please don't spread doubt. As of today, these vaccines work on the good old virus as well as the new variants," he said.

He appealed to people to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour and use vaccination as a tool to battle this second peak. — PTI

Indian National Sentenced To 2 Years For Deleting Company's 1200 Users Accounts

Agenceis

An Indian national has been sentenced by a US court in California to two years in prison, who after being fired by his company accessed its server and deleted over 1,200 Microsoft user accounts, according to a statement.

Deepanshu Kher was arrested when he flew from India to the United States on January 11, 2021, unaware of the outstanding warrant for his arrest.

This act of sabotage was destructive for this company, said Acting US Attorney Randy Grossman on Tuesday.

In pronouncing the sentence, US District Court Judge Marilyn Huff noted that Kher perpetrated a significant and sophisticated attack on the company, an attack which was planned and clearly intended as revenge.

In addition to the two years in custody, Judge Huff sentenced Kher to three years' supervised release and restitution to the Company of



\$567,084, the amount that the Company paid to fix the problems which Kher caused. According to court documents, Kher was employed by an information technology consulting firm from 2017 through May 2018. In 2017,

the consulting firm was hired by the Carlsbad Company to assist with its migration to a Microsoft Office 365 (MS O365) environment. In response, the consulting firm sent its employee, Kher, to the company's Carlsbad head-

BJP's Promise To Poll-Bound Kerala: Law On 'Love Jihad'

Agenceis

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: An array of promises from legislations for Sabarimala and against 'Love Jihad', employment for at least one person from each family and free laptop to high school students, among others, have been listed in the poll manifesto of the BJP-led NDA, released by Union Minister Prakash Javadekar here on Wednesday.

At a press meet, Javadekar claimed the BJP manifesto is progressive, dynamic and development oriented and Kerala was awaiting such a manifesto.

Attacking the Left-ruled state government, Javadekar said there was an attempt to hijack Prime Minister Narendra Modi's projects and use it in Kerala with minute changes and present them before the people in a new form.

"Our manifesto is progressive, dynamic, aspirational and developmental oriented. Kerala was waiting for such a manifesto."

"As to the key points, the manifesto guarantees employment to at least one from each family,



terrorism-free Kerala, hunger-free Kerala, Sabarimala legislation (to protect the traditions of the hill shrine), free laptop to high school students, Love jihad legislation," Javadekar said.

He said the landless SC/ST community members will get five acres for agriculture purposes. The manifesto also promised six cooking gas cylinders free to all BPL families.

"Pinarayi government has started hijacking central government schemes by making little modifications and taking credit," the union minister alleged. — PTI

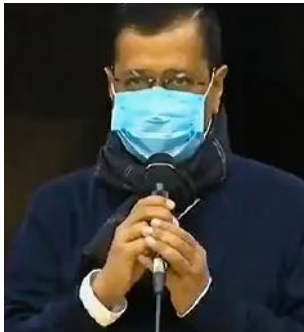
Delhi Cabinet Approves Nameless Scheme For Doorstep Delivery Of Ration

Agenceis

The Delhi Cabinet Wednesday approved the doorstep delivery of a ration scheme to be rolled out without any name after objections by the Centre of its naming as Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana.

"The original name of the scheme, Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana, which was expected to be rolled out on March 25, will not have any name due to the obstruction by the Centre. Under the new scheme, wheat flour, atta, rice, and sugar will be delivered to homes in packed bags," an official statement by the Delhi government said.

Following the objections raised by Centre, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had announced on Saturday, "This scheme will have no name. The central government sends the ration which gets distributed through the ration shops and now we will send the ration to the homes of the individuals. We do not want any kind of credit for this scheme and that is why the name



of the scheme will be removed."

"No mention of Mukhyamantri will be there. We have called a cabinet meeting in the coming week where this idea will be passed. This will not be any new scheme and this will not have any name. After the cabinet nod, we will send the decision to the central government and I am very hopeful that this time they will approve our decision," he had said.

Now, taking ration at subsidised rates from a Public Distribution System (PDS) shop will become optional.

quarters to assist with the migration.

The company was dissatisfied with Kher's work and relayed their dissatisfaction to the consulting firm soon after Kher's arrival. In January 2018, the consulting firm pulled Kher from the

the attack affected the bulk of the company's employees and completely shut down the company for two days.

As the company's Vice President of Information Technology (IT) ex-

IN PRONOUNCING THE SENTENCE, US District Court Judge Marilyn Huff noted that Kher perpetrated a significant and sophisticated attack on the company, an attack which was planned and clearly intended as revenge. In addition to the two years in custody, Judge Huff sentenced Kher to three years' supervised release and restitution to the Company of \$567,084, the amount that the Company paid to fix the problems which Kher caused.

company's headquarters.

A few months later, on May 4, 2018, the firm fired Kher, and a month after that, in June 2018, Kher returned to Delhi, India. On August 8, 2018, two months after his return to India, Kher hacked into the Carlsbad Company's server and deleted over 1,200 of its 1,500 MS O365 user accounts.

Federal prosecutors alleged that

plained, the impact was felt inside and outside the company.

Employees' accounts were deleted they could not access their email, their contacts lists, their meeting calendars, their documents, corporate directories, video and audio conferences, and Virtual Teams environment necessary for them to perform their jobs, prosecutors said.

NEWS MAKERS

Give 3-day Notice To Arnab In Case Of His Arrest: HC to Police

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Mumbai Police to give the advance notice of three days to Republic TV's editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami if he wanted to arrest him in the Television Rating Point (TRP) scam case.

A bench of Justices SS Shinde and Manish Pitale also dismissed the submission of state counsel Deepak Thakre that Goswami had to face the investigation and could not claim any special status.

The bench noted the police had been investigating the case for three months now and was yet to name Goswami as an accused in the case.

Goswami is named as a suspect in the charge sheet, and therefore, the "sword" of impending arrest is left hanging over his head, it said.

Goswami's counsel Ashok Mundargi had argued that the criminal law in the country did not provide for the police to name someone merely as a suspect and not name him or her as an accused in the charge sheet.



He had said the probe by the police against Goswami and other employees of ARG Outlier Media, which runs all Republic TV channels, was mala fide.

In the charge sheet, the police had named Goswami and all owners, managers, and all persons associated with Republic TV or ARG media under the category of "suspects", Mundargi had said.

Without naming specific employees (in

the charge sheet) but saying that anyone associated with Republic TV or ARG media is a suspect gave very wide scope to the police to continue to "harass" the petitioners, even when there was no evidence against them. Mundargi said the police had reopened a 2018 (Anvay Naik) suicide case in which Goswami had been named as an accused and arrested him last year.

Goswami was released on bail by the Supreme Court, Mundargi said. The high court took note of this submission while granting relief to Goswami.

"This interim order is granted in the peculiar facts and circumstances of this case, keeping in view the serious mala fide alleged by the Petitioners (Goswami and ARG media) against respondents (state government and the Mumbai police) and also keeping in view earlier actions taken by Respondent-State and its officials against the Petitioner No.2 (Goswami).

"If during the course of the investigation, you come across something and you want to take coercive action against petitioner number 2, then you will give 72 hours prior notice (to Goswami)," the bench said.

The HC, however, said Mundargi's request

for a stay on the investigation could not be granted as there was "no clarity on who was the accused and who was not".

Citing the material on record, the HC felt that the police did not have anything substantial against Goswami in the case.

The HC also accepted the Maharashtra government's statement that the probe against Republic TV and other employees of ARG Outlier Media will be completed within 12 weeks. The court was hearing a bunch of pleas filed by Goswami and ARG media challenging the probe and seeking several reliefs in the TRP scam case.

On Wednesday, the HC admitted the pleas and issued notices to the state and the Mumbai Police.

The bench said it will consider in the hearings, if the prayers made in the plea for quashing of the FIR, and a transfer of probe to the CBI could be entertained given that the petitioners were only suspects and not accused, "and if the police could continue investigating the case without naming Goswami and the others as accused".

The HC will hear the matter on June 28.

12-Year-Old Kerala Boy Dies Aping Hair-Straightening Act In Social Media

Press Trust of India

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A 12-year-old boy died of burns he sustained while reportedly trying to imitate a hair-straightening act shown in the social media, police said on Wednesday.

The deceased was Sivanarayanan of Venganoor near here.

The seventh standard school student on Tuesday reportedly applied kerosene to his hair and tried to straighten it with a lit matchstick, the police said.

Videos of people straightening hair using spirit and fire had gone viral in the social media. The boy, said to be a social media addict, was taken to hospital. He died today, the police said.



Only his grandmother was at home when he tried the act in the bathroom, they said. — PTI