

KASHMIR OBSERVER

24th year OF PUBLICATION

Tuesday 06 April | 22 Shaban | 1442 Hijri | Vol:24 | Issue: 80 | Pages:12 | Price: ₹3

www.kashmirobserver.net • twitter.com / kashmirobserver • facebook.com/kashmirobserver • Postal Regn: L/159/KO/SK/2014-2016



P3 CITY

SRINAGAR ADMIN WARNS PASSENGERS, DRIVERS AS COVID SOPs GO FOR A TOSS

Public transport in Srinagar and elsewhere in Kashmir is posing a serious threat to passengers as Covid-Sops are going for a toss forcing the authorities to issue a...

THINK

WHY NATIONALISM IS A THREAT TO MULTILATERALISM

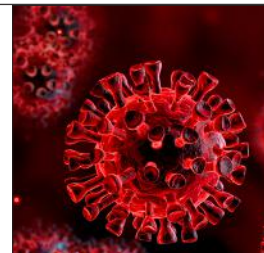
Loving your country is considered a virtue, and for a patriot, love for the country should not have any limit. Blind love has its own pitfalls, and there is no convincing argument except emotional ones to justify that....



P5 STATE

COVID-19 SPREADING AGGRESSIVELY AS PEOPLE TURN COMPLACENT: DAK

Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) Monday said hospitals in Kashmir are witnessing a surge in severe cases of Covid-19 infection. "A few weeks ago...



Quote!

The past has no power over the present moment
—Eckhart Tolle

NEWS DIGEST

Explosives Seized In Kupwara: Army

SRINAGAR: Army on Monday claimed to have seized 15 sticks of plastic explosives in Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, averting a tragedy. On receiving information that explosives might be exchanged near Jama Masjid of Tangdhar, a search was initiated by the Army bomb disposal team which led to seizure of explosives supposedly being transhipped to the hinterland, an Army spokesperson said. "In a major success to security forces ● More On P10

SSB Man Falls From Building, Dies

SRINAGAR: A Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) trooper died on Monday after falling from a building in Dignibal area of Ganderbal district. Jitendra Kumar of SSB 13 Battalion SSB was critically injured when he fell down from the fifth floor of a building in Dignibal area on Monday, an official said. The injured paramilitary man was removed by his colleagues to ● More On P10

IED Recovered, Defused In Khanyar

SRINAGAR: An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was on Monday recovered and defused by police in Khanyar area of Srinagar City, officials said. A top official said that a suspicious steel box fitted with a wire was found in Khanyar locality on Monday evening. "An IED was found in the steel box, which was defused later," he said. Notably, the traffic was stopped in the area, soon after the box was found on the road. Officials said that after ● More On P10

Militant Associate Held In Sopore: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested a militant associate of The Resistance Front (TRF) from Sopore town of Baramulla district. Ishaan-ul-Haq Khanday of Faisalabad Sopore was arrested by a joint team of police, army's 22 RR and CRPF 179 at a check point at Model Town crossing, Sopore, a police spokesperson said Monday. The checkpoint, he said was established on the basis of specific information. ● More On P10

Grenade Found Along LoC In Poonch

SRINAGAR: An old grenade was recovered by army and police at Chapriyan Sawjian near Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch, officials said on Monday. They said the device is being destroyed by a bomb disposal squad. SSP Poonch Dr Vinod Kumar confirmed to local news agency GNS the recovery of the grenade. SHO Bashir Kohli said a case has been registered in this regard.

HC Takes Note Of Dal Lake Degradation

Disbands All Panels, Asks LAWDA To Stop Drains Flowing Into Water Body

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has directed Vice Chairman LAWDA to draw a complete scheme for the management and the development of the Dal Lake as well as the area around it even as it disbanded various committees formed previously.

Hearing a Public Interest Litigation, a division bench of Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul also directed the Vice Chairman to survey



and prepare a list of all the drains that are flowing into the Lake and take immediate steps stop it. "Notwithstanding the submissions made by the respective parties, we find

that the various Committees which have been formed earlier are not of much use in the present and that when a development authority (LAWDA) has especially been ● More On P10

Seized Vehicles To Be Released Against Rs 50K Fine Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has ordered that vehicles seized for carrying illegal construction material along Dal Lake or its adjoining areas shall be released against Rs 50000 fine in the first instance and Rs one lakh for repeating the offence. If the offence is repeated third time, the vehicle shall not be released until completion of trial. ● More On P10

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

'We Wake Up To See Our Courtyards Gone': Kashmir's Puzzling Homelessness

Malik Nisar

SHRIPORA (BARAMULLA): Sitting on the edge of his crumbling courtyard, Ashraf is looking at the troubled terrain dotted with decimated dwellings. The crushed scene reminds one of a war movie, where an outsider steps in a lane filled with the bombarded houses and devastated landscape.

But there's no war going on in Shripora village of Baramulla.



And yet, "we often wake up to see our courtyards gone," says

Ashraf, a post-graduate student working as a plumber.

"Since the land is crumbling in the middle of the night, it

has impacted us socially, economically, mentally."

Broken houses, torn sheds and ruined gardens only make this uplifting hamlet a shelled village of Line of Control. But even as the far northern zone has thawed with the fresh Indo-Pak 'peace pact', the land beneath the villagers' feet is relentlessly slipping in Shripora. And this very fact is creating an existential crisis for the distressed country dwellers.

I met Ashraf on a sunny spring day after trekking miles uphill. The sun beats down on rundown rooftops, as I walk through the gravel roads of the hilly hamlet. Children play hide and seek behind wrecked walls. Men and women collect bricks of their broken houses. Some elders nap near their wastelands. "Landslides have caused mayhem here," Ashraf continues in his glum voice.

Health Dept Gears Up To Battle Coronavirus

Leaves Of Doctors, Medical Staff Cancelled

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Amid surge in covid-19 cases, Director Health Services Kashmir has cancelled leaves granted or under consideration to doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and other officials, except maternity or that taken in view of extreme medical exigencies. "It is enjoined upon all the Chief Medical Officers/Medical Superintendents and other Territorial Offices falling within the jurisdiction of this Directorate that amid upsurge of the covid-19

pandemic, all the leaves either sanctioned or under consideration at Directorate level or at respective offices of CMOs and other DDOs in respect of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and other official of this Department are hereby cancelled forthwith except Maternity Leave and Leave taken in view of extreme medical exigencies," reads a circular issued by the DSK Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Rather. "Besides, all the Chief Medical Officers/Medical Superintendents and other ● More On P10

89 Travellers Among 442 Covid-19 Cases

Observer Monitoring Desk

At least 89 travellers were among 442 new cases of coronavirus reported in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, while the deadly infection also claimed two more lives, taking the total ● More On P10

Gujarati Tourist Dies Of Covid-19

A 60-year-old tourist from Gujarat died due to Covid-19 at a hospital here, officials said on Monday. They said that the tourist was admitted on 2nd April at CD Hospital after testing positive. While he ● More On P10

Two Budgam Woman Held Over Nowgam Attack

Agencies

SRINAGAR: At least two young women have been arrested by police from central Kashmir's Budgam district in connection with last week's attack on the house of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader in Nowgam area of this capital city that left a policeman dead. 22-year-old Tabasum Maqbool and 23-year-old Anjum Younis, both residents of Kanihama in Budgam were arrested by police in connection with a case FIR number 27/2021 under sections 307, 302, 392 of IPC and 7/27 of Arms Act, registered at the police station Nowgam in connection ● More On P10

NO RATION WITHOUT VACCINATION

Bandipora Authorities Faces Flak, Withdraw Controversial Order

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Authorities in the Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir withdrew within hours a controversial order making it mandatory for persons above 45 to get themselves vaccinated against COVID-19 to collect their government ration. An order issued by the Assistant Director, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Bandipora, earlier in the day had asked consumers above 45 to get themselves vaccinated against COVID-19 or forego their ration. "Please remember that without producing covid-19 vaccination certificate, ration will not be issued in any case," the order said. However, it was withdrawn within hours. "The public notice...wherein it was inadvertently made mandatory for persons aged 45 and above to vaccinate themselves against COVID-19 for the collection of ration, is hereby withdrawn ab initio," the assistant ● More On P10



Ex-GOC 15 Corps Bats For Indo, Pak Talks



Agencies

SRINAGAR: Former Army General and senior defense expert Syed Ata Hasnain on Monday said that dialogue was the only way out between the two neighbouring nations for creation of a conducive and peaceful atmosphere for the people. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event, ● More On P10

Fresh Snowfall In Gulmarg

3 Day Rain Spell Begins in Kashmir Valley

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The higher reaches of Kashmir Valley including Gulmarg received light snowfall while rains lashed plains, officials said on Monday.

The weatherman has already issued an advisory for moderate to heavy rains or snowfall in the Valley for three days with main activity on Tuesday and Wednesday.

A meteorological department official said that Srinagar received 1.1mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours till 08:30 a.m. He said that the mercury settled at 7.2 degree Celsius, the same as recorded on the previous night which is above 0.8 degree Celsius normal for this time of the year in the summer capital of J&K. Qazigund received 0.6mm of rain during the time and it recorded ● More On P10

CJ Orders Virtual Hearing Of Cases

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has put its order regarding resumption of physical hearing in abeyance amid surge in covid-19 cases.

As per an order by Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal, the hearing of cases in the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir as well as in the District and Subordinate Courts and Tribunals shall be conducted through ● More On P10

NCW Creates Separate Cell For J&K, Ladakh

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The National Commission for Women has created a separate cell to deal with issues in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

In a statement, it said the special cell will deal with complaints received from the two Union territories and will also look into the development activities related to women of these regions. ● More On P10

FREE 24X7



CRITICAL CARE AMBULANCE SERVICE IN SRINAGAR

FOR ASSISTANCE CALL

9484-100-200; 0194-240-4000



Kashmiri American Society of Healthcare, Medical Education and Research (KASHMER)

Plants help reduce toxic mercury from our environment: Study

Agencies

Plants absorb a vast amount of toxic mercury gas in the atmosphere and help reducing the pollutant worldwide by depositing the element into soils, said researchers.

The process is similar to the absorption of carbon dioxide emissions by plants, said the team from University of Massachusetts Lowell, in the US.

Hundreds of tons of mercury each year are emitted into the atmosphere as a gas by burning coal, mining and other industrial and natural processes.

When the plants shed leaves or die, the mercury is transferred to soils where large amounts also make their way into watersheds, threatening wildlife and people who eat contaminated fish, the researchers explained, in the study published journal Nature Reviews - Earth & Environment.

Exposure to high levels of mercury over long periods can lead to neurological and cardiovascular problems in humans, according to Daniel Obrist, Professor at UMass Lowell.

There is no safe level of mercury for humans, according to the World Health Organization. Exposure to the hazardous element



can lead to irritability, speech and visual impairment, hypospermia, kidney failure and Alzheimer's disease, among others.

For the study, the team collected 200 published studies with data on mercury levels in vegetation from more than 400 locations around the world.

They found about 88 per cent of the mercury found in plants originates from plants' leaves absorbing gaseous mercury from the atmosphere.

Globally, vegetation can take up more than 1,300 tonnes of mercury each year, accounting for 60 to 90 per cent of it being deposited over land, according to Jun Zhou, Research Associate at UMass Lowell.

The study represents the largest comprehensive review of the uptake of mercury in vegetation and its impact on mercury cycling around the world. The work moves scientists toward a greater understanding of how mercury cycling works, Zhou said.

Office Of The Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam Kashmir

NOTICE



Where as a joint application has been recieved from owner. Shri : Danish Bashir S/o: Bashir Ahmad Mir R/o: kadlabal Pampore Pulwama as Transferor) & Shri. Umar



Majeed Bhat S/o Abdul Majeed Bhat R/o 25,Zewan Pantha Chowk as Transferee) for transfer of Maxi cab(Taveera) Carriage route permit No.1291/JK04/CC/ Budgam vehicle No. JK04C-5428 As well as HPA Cancellation with M/S Sargam Trading corp. B/U Nowgam. Now it is therefore notified for general information that objections, if any to the proposed transfer of the said route permit/vehicle shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 07 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper .

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM. 40
Dated 02/04/2021

Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir

mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

I want to renew my Fertilizer License bearing no CAOBL/2017-2018 /1316 under name and style "Limra Agro Centre" at Watergam Payeen. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Chief Agriculture Officer Baramulla within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Rumaisa Mohammad

amr

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER KASHMIR

NOTICE

Where as an application for transfer of ownership has been received from M/S Friends Gas Service Address Lal Mandi Srinagar (Transferor) of Car bearing registration No. JK01AJ- 8493 chasis No: 12226 Engine No: 13162 Model 2019 in favour of Sunil Gandotra S/O Ganshyam Gandotra R/o Greater Kalash Jammu (Chawchi Jammu) Lane No: 22 Near Shumroks School (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 200
Dated: 05/04/2021 Regional Transport Office, Kashmir

Sd/-

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER PAHALGAM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, PAHALGAM

Ph: 01936-243049
Email: coepdapahalgam@gmail.com

Subject :- Cancellation of building permission issued in favour of Sh. Mohammad Khalil Wadoo S/O GH Mohammad Wadoo R/O Rainawari, Srinagar and Sh Farooq Ahmad Wani S/O Ab Gani Wani R/O Traal for construction of two number Guest Houses and kitchen situated at Laripora Pahalgam.

Reference :- This office Building permission order No. 89 / BOCA of 2006 dated 28-6-2006 issued vide No. CEO/PDA/ BOCA/2138-44 dated 28-6-2006.

ORDER NO 118/PDA of 2021
Dated 05/04/2021

- Whereas Sh. Mohammad Khalil Wadoo S/O GH Mohammad Wadoo R/O Rainawari, Srinagar and Sh Farooq Ahmad Wani S/O Ab Gani Wani R/O Traal have been granted permission for construction of two number Guest Houses and kitchen situated at Laripora Pahalgam in the year 2006 vide order No.89/BOCA of 2006 dated 28-6-2006 on a parcel of land measuring 09 kanals and 05 Marlas comprising khasra No. 87 min and 1637/500 of Laripora Pahalgam Tehsil Pahalgam District Anantnag.
- Whereas as per the condition No. 9 of the BOCA permission the validity the permission was three years from date of issuance of the permission.
- Whereas as per the Master Plan Pahalgam 2005-25 the area was marked as planning sub zone A-14 (Channa Haji area of Laripora village.
- Whereas the Guest Houses and kitchen for which permission was issued were not constructed by the parties.
- Whereas in the year 2010 this office received a representation from one Sh. Krishan Kumar Amila seeking extension of building permission dated 28-6-2006. The contents of the application reveals that the party has sold the land to Sh.K.K. Amila, Shmt Usha Amila Sh. Arjun Amila and Sh. Amit Amila.
- Whereas during processing the case for BOCA an FIR was lodged in the Police Station VOK Srinagar vide FIR No. 27/2008 regarding land use policy of the then Master Plan 2005-25 as the site was located in an ecologically fragile area to benefit blue eyed persons whiles village sites were shown as non-permissible areas in the Master Plan and the applicant was not allowed to raise the said structures.
- Whereas the Master Plan of Pahalgam has been revised in the backdrop of the Hon'ble High Court orders passed in case OWP(PIL) 484/2010 and the site has been declared as non-permissible as per the revised Master Plan Pahalgam 2014-32 where constructional activities are not allowed to prevent the area from Environmental degradation.
- Whereas The Hon'ble High of J&K vide order dated 31-3-2021 while hearing the status of FIR No. 27/2008 has directed the respondents to initiate proceedings in the matter in accordance with the law.

Acting upon the above observations and in compliance to the directions of the Hon'ble High Court dated 31-3-2021, the permission accorded vide order No. 89 / BOCA of 2006 dated 28-6-2006 issued vide No. CEO/ PDA/ BOCA/2138-44 dated 28-6-2006 is cancelled forthwith and no such claim in future shall be entertained.

Chief Executive Officer,
PDA , Pahalgam.

NO:-CEO/PDA/BOCA/61-65 DATED:- 05-04-2021

DIPK-NB-83/21

SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, SOURA

Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical

Sub : Cancellation of E-NIT.

Ref. E-NIT NO. 68 OF 2020-21 Dated 16-03-2021

The above referred NIT for the work "Annual Contract for the operation of lifts in Main Hospital of SKIMS, Soura for the year 2021-22." invited vide this office no: SIMS 139 Ex539/20-21-2708-17 Dt. 16-03-2021 is hereby cancelled due to no response.

No: SIMS 139 Ex 539/20-26-6235-36
Dated 01/04/2021

Executive Engineer
Mechanical,
SKIMS

Office of the Headmaster Govt Middle School Dangerpora Zone Sumbal

NOTICE

It is informed through this notice to Mtr Hina Samoon Tr M/S Dangerpora who is absconding since march 2021 till date and has no resumed her duties back. She had applied for leave from 01-03-20 to 31-12-20 which has no been sanctioned yet. She is informed through this notice to resume her duties immediately without any fail otherwise strict action under service rules shall be taken against her

ajj r

Headmaster
M/S Dangerpora

Public Notice

I have lost my 12th class pass School leaving and character certificates of year 2018-19, now I am applying for their duplicates in this regard if anybody have any kind of objection may file the same to Principal Government boys higher secondary school Sopore with in the period of Seven days from the date of publication of this notice.

Asif Manzoor
S/o: Manzoor Ahmad Dand
R/o: Baghat Sopore

GMS

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENIGNEER ESTATES DIVISION, SRINAGAR.

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

E-TENDER NIT NO. 3/XEN/EDS/2021-22 OF 04/2021

Executive Engineer Estates Division Srinagar on behalf of Lt. Governor of Union Territory J&K invites tenders by E-tendering on Item rate basis from approved and eligible Registered Civil Contractors with Union Territory J&K /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. (Amt In Rs)	Time of Completion	Class of Contractor	Major Head of Account
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Conversion of Verandah into Glass Room and Other Allied Works in DMQ-6 at M.A Road Srinagar.	10.02 lacs	600/-	20 Days	BEE/CEE/DEE	4059- Plan

Position of AAA:

Position of funds:

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	
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	05.04.2021 from 10.00 AM.
3	Bid submission Start Date	05.04.2021 from 10.00 AM.
4	Bid Submission End Date	10.04.2021 upto 3.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	10.04.2021 at 3.05 PM.

In the office of Executive Engineer Estates Division, Srinagar.

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan under Major Head-0216/Revenue (others) in favour of Executive Engineer Estates Division, Srinagar (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 Estates Division, Srinagar (tender receiving authority).
- 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)
- The 1st lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of advertised cost as performance security in shape of CDR/ FDR within 02 Days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of work/DLP is over.
- 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 Estates Division, Srinagar (tender receiving authority).
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids.
- Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.
- 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.
- 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.
- The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No bid will be accepted in physical form.
- Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the technical bid.
- Note:- Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.**
- The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.
- Scanned copy of cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer Estates Division, Srinagar (The date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date) pledged to Executive Engineer Estates Division, Srinagar must be uploaded with the documents of the bid. The original Treasury Challan (cost of tender document), and other relevant bid documents shall be obtained from the lowest bidder before the fixation of contract.
- Bidders are advised not to make any change in BOQ (Bill of Quantities) contents. In no case they should attempt to create similar BOQ manually.
- Price escalation and Taxes:- The rate quoted by the bidder shall be deemed to include price escalation and all taxes upto completion of the work. Deduction on account of taxes shall be made from the bills of the contractor on gross amount of the bill as per the rates prevailing at the time of recovery.
- Bidders are advised to use "My Documents" area in their user on Estates e-Tendering portal to store such documents as are required.
- The tender / bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirements as laid down in NIT.
- All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form) and detailed NIT issued by this office time to time.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer,
Estates Division, Sgr.

DIPK-141/21

No: - E-Tender/NIT/EDS/48-57/2021-22 /T-1

Dated: -03-04-2021

Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division J&K Lakes & Waterways Development Authority,

Dockyard Complex Ishber Nishat
Northern Foreshore Road Srinagar – 191121
Tel: 01942462881 email: xenmechlda@gmail.com

Gist of e-tender

NIT No: MD/LDA/TS /2021-22/01/e-tendering

Dated:- 02.04.2021

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of UT of Jammu and Kashmir state, e-tenders, valid for 180 days, are invited from the Registered Transport/Travel agencies for providing of vehicles on Hiring as and when required to J&K Lakes and Waterways Development Authority Srinagar -

Name of Work	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Validity of contract
1	2	3
Providing of vehicles on Hiring as and when required to J&K Lakes and Waterways Development Authority Srinagar	500	1 year

- Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 01.04.2021 (17.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 02.04.2021 (18.00 hrs).
- Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 02.04.2021 (10.00 hrs) to 23.04.2021 (16:00hrs) in two (02) covers.
- Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 24.04.2021 at 14.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division . LDA Srinagar.

DIPK-NB-72/21

Executive Engineer,
Mechanical Division , LDA
Srinagar

No: MD/LDA/TS- /20-29

Dt: 02.04.2021

Srinagar Admin Warns Passengers, Drivers As Covid SOPs Go For A Toss

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Public transport in Srinagar and elsewhere in Kashmir is posing a serious threat to passengers as Covid-SoPs are going for a toss forcing the authorities to issue a serious warning for passengers and drivers. The Srinagar administration has also warned of slapping a fine on the passengers and drivers, who are found violating the Covid-guidelines.

A number of passengers who frequently travel in public vehicles said that one among 10 passengers use face mask during travel.

“Simply, Covid guidelines are going for a big toss in Kashmir. People are least bothered about Covid resurgence in Valley, especially Srinagar which is worst hit. This is strange. People are travelling without face masks and there is no monitoring at all,” said Shazia Bashir, who travels regularly to her office in Srinagar from Pampore area. Other frequent travellers echoed similar views and demanded a monitoring mechanism by the transport department or the district administration.

Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Kashmir, Ikram-Ullah Tak said, “we have already deputed our squads to check the Covid -19 Sops violation and fines have also been imposed on the violators.”

He further said the District

Administration Srinagar has already constituted the teams in which “our teams are also part of it and jointly with the magistrates we are doing routine checks to make sure the Covid-19 sops are adhered while using the public Transport.”

He said that in coming days, the drive for the strict enforcement of the Covid-19 SoPs in public transport will be intensified and those found violating will be dealt with strictly.

Interestingly, Covid guidelines read: “Individuals must maintain a base distance of six feet (2 Gaz ki Dori) in public places”. However, this is hardly seen on ground.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Dr. Syed Haneef Balkhi said that the Covid-19 SoPs and guidelines are already in place and they have been repeatedly asking people associated with trade or transport, to adhere to the guidelines, and before that people are being penalised for violating the Covid-19 guidelines.

“I appeal people to show a responsible approach and follow Covid-19 guidelines in spirit,” he said. “We conduct random sampling and inspection also in and around the city. People found violating the Covid-19 guidelines are being fined, wearing of masks and maintaining of physical distance at public places is what is need of the hour,” he said—(KNO)



Citing an uptick in Covid cases, the government ordered the closure of schools in the valley for the time being. pic/ Abid Bhat-KO

Woman, Son Charred To Death In Nocturnal Fire

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A 40-year-old woman and her son were charred to death in a deadly blaze at Haftchinar area of Srinagar on Monday.

Officials said that at least six residential houses were gutted during intervening night of Sunday-Monday in Haftchinar area of Srinagar, which falls under the jurisdiction of Shergari Police Station.

“Fire broke out in a residential house of one Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh, son of Mohammad Ramzan Sheikh of Dogerpati Haftchinar, which engulfed into another residential houses during intervening night of Sunday-Monday.”

In the incident, Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh's wife identified as Ajmeera (40), her son Mohammad Abbass Sheikh (6), died on the spot.

The duo were taken to the Srinagar's SMHS hospital where they were declared brought dead.

Medical Superintendent SMHS, Dr. Nazir Choudhary said that the duo were declared brought dead at the hospital. Haftchinar residents demand adequate compensation for fire victims

Meanwhile residents of Haftchinar locality in Solina area of the city demanded adequate compensation for the family of deceased mother-son duo who were charred to death and to those who lost their shelter in devastating blaze last night.

Residents appealed to the district administration to announce compensation for the fire victims who they said lives under open sky after their houses destroyed in massive blaze.

The residents said the late response of fire and emergency department led to the loss of two precious

lives besides property worth lakhs of rupees destroyed in blaze.

They said six structures were razed to ashes after fire broke out at the house of one Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh of Dogerpati, Haftchinar area in Solina last night in which his son and wife lost their lives.

“They (fire victims) lost everything to devastating blaze. The fire apparently erupted due to the short circuit at 11pm last night. Now we appeal to the administration to announce compensation for them so that they are able to rebuild their houses,” Abdul Rashid, a local resident said.

The residents also sought compensation for the family of a mother son duo who lost their lives in the incident. Pertinent to mention that a forty years old woman and her minor son were charred to death after the house they were living in caught fire. (KNO)

Info Dept Officials Inspect Newspaper Offices In Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In an unprecedented move teams from the Information & Public Relations Department of the J&K government visited newspaper offices in Srinagar on Monday for physical verification of the office infrastructure and other details as submitted by the publications from time to time.

Two Assistant Directors visited offices and sought details related to publication and printing of the newspapers and also the authenticity of

manpower available with the newspapers.

Letters about the inspection were, according to many editors, mailed by the Information and Public Relations Department well in advance.

According to Joint Director Information & Public Relations Haris Handoo, “the exercise is being carried out to check office infrastructure and staff employed by the newspapers & publications. This would enable the department to support genuine publications who are running their newspapers professionally”.

Phone/Fax; 01954-222256 | Email: comcsopore@gmail.com

Office of the Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council Sopore

NO:MC/SPR23-25 Dated:-05-04-2021

Quotation Notice

For and on behalf of Municipal Council Sopore , sealed tenders affixed with revenue stamps worth Rs. 5/- Rupees (five) only are invited for supplying the below mentioned items from the Registered Dealers / Government Suppliers. The tender should reach this office by or before 07/04/2021, in case of any strike or Holiday on that day same shall be received on the next working day. The rates should be quoted inclusive of all taxes/duties/transportation/logo charges if any. The tenders will be opened on the same day at 3.00 P.M. by the competent authority in presence of the tenderers who desire to be present. The tender opening authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without giving any reasons.

S.No	Name of the Item	Quantity.
1.	Net Based Tree Guard Specification Total Height 58" Box Length : 42" Side length 18" Leg length “ 14” T: 4"	100 No.
	Total Weight not less than 20Kg. The tree guard should be fixed with a T of size 4” at the bottom.	
	The rates should be quoted along with the fixation charges in cement concrete.	

1) Only Registered / Authorized / Reputed dealers shall submit their Tenders for Supply of the Items.
2) The rates quoted must be with F.O.R to Municipal Council Sopore Stores and inclusive of all taxes and charges Necessary Taxes applicable under rules shall be deducted at Source from the supplier's bills and remitted to the Sales Tax Department
3) The tenderer shall be responsible to provide the warranty period as mentioned on the items, where the warranty is not mentioned the warranty shall be minimum of A months from the date of the supply
4) The warranty shall be onsite warranty/ replacement.
5) The Tender Opening Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
6) The intending Tenderer shall enclose copy of GST registration. In case of Failure his Tender shall not merit any consideration.

**Chief Executive Officer
Municipal Council Sopore**

gms

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Revenue Department Civil Secretariat, J&K Jammu

PUBLIC NOTICE

No:PS/AS/REV/Misc/2021 Dated:05.04.2021

Subject: Facilitating Registrations for General Public.

In order to facilitate the registration of documents, the number of registration slots are being increased from 25 to 42 per day for each Sub-Registrar Office (SRO) with effect from 06.04.2021.

Through the medium of this notice, those who have booked their slots for registration from 06.04.2021 onwards are notified that they can re-schedule the booking dates by contacting their jurisdictional Sub Registrar Offices by or before **10.04.2021**. No re-scheduling request will be accepted thereafter as the remaining slots will be opened for fresh Registrations from **11.04.2021**.

For reference, the contact details of the SROs that have heavy load are as under:

S NO	SRO	Name	Contact No.	Mail id
1	Jammu North	Mr. Farukh Qazi	9419157491	srojamunnorth@gmail.com
2	Jammu South	Mr. Surinder Bhagat	9419196955	subregistrarjammusouth@gmail.com
3	Jammu South I	Mr. Abhishake Abrol	9419664077	abhishake.abrol@gmail.com
4	Jammu South II	Mr. Khalid Hussain	9419668528	khalidwafa775@gmail.com
5	Srinagar Khaas	Mr. Sandeep Singh Bali	9419067456	balisandeep@rediffmail.com
6	Budgam	Mr. Raies Ahmad Bhat	6005711598	acnazoolsgr@gmail.com
7	Kathua	Mr. Devinder Paul	9419115796	acr-budgam@jk.gov.in
8	Sopore	Mr. Parvaiz Sajad Ganai	7006709330	acrkathua@gmail.com
9	Ganderbal	Mr. Abdul Baseer Ahmad	9419505025	subregistrarsopore@gmail.com
10.	Anantnag I	Mr. Ghulam Hassan Sheikh	9419342881	subregistrargbl@gmail.com
				sroanantnag@gmail.com

Further the citizens are advised to contact the office of IGR at 0191-2572728 and mail id: igrjnk@gmail.com or visit the departmental website at www.igr.jk.gov.in for any facilitation/assistance.

**Sd/- Additional Secretary
To The Government**

DIPK-161/21

DIAL-EMMA

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI
CALENDAR
22 SHABAN
1442

PRAYERS

FAJR	4: 47
ZUHR	12:34
ASR	5:06
Magrib	6:58
ISHA	8:21

This Day In History

- 402 - Battle at Pollentia: Roman army under Stilicho beats Visigoths
- 1320 - The Scots reaffirm their independence by signing the Declaration of Arbroath
- 1327 - Italian poet Petrarch 1st sets eyes on his beloved Laura
- 1362 - Tard-Venus robber bands strike at Brignais, France
- 1385 - John, Master of the Order of Aviz, is made King John I of Portugal
- 1516 A Willaert installed as singer of cardinal Ippolito I d'Este
- 1664 - France & Saxony sign alliance
- 1672 - France declares war on Netherlands
- 1722 - Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia, ends tax on men with beards
- 1859 - US recognizes Liberal government in Mexico's War of Reform
- 1869 - 1st plastic, Celluloid, patented
- 1896 - 1st modern Olympic games open in Athens Greece [3/25 OS] American, James Connolly, wins 1st Olympic gold medal in mod history
- 1905 - Germany receives invitation from Sultan of Morocco to an international conference to discuss matters relating to Morocco
- 1906 - 1st animated cartoon copyrighted
- 1912 - Electric starter 1st appeared in cars
- 1916 - German parliament approves unrestricted submarine warfare
- 1917 - US declares war on Germany, enters World War I
- 1919 - Bavaria proclaims itself a soviet republic
- 1919 - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi orders a General Strike
- 1924 - 4 planes leave Seattle on 1st successful around-the-world flight
- 1924 - Italy fascists receives 65% of vote of parliament
- 1930 - 1st transcontinental glider tour completed
- 1934 - 418 Lutheran ministers arrested in Germany
- 1936 - Tornado, kills 203 & injuring 1,800 in Gainesville Georgia
- 1939 - Great Britain & Poland sign military pact
- 1939 - US & UK agree on joint control of Canton & Enderbury Is (Pacific)
- 1941 - Italian forces holding Addis Ababa surrender to British & Ethiopian forces
- 1943 - British & US armies link up in Africa during WW II
- 1943 - British offensive at Wadi Akarit, South Tunisia
- 1955 - Yemen: failed coup by Abdullah Self el-Islam
- 1957 - USSR performs nuclear test (atmospheric tests) David Niven
- 1964 - Egypt & Belgium restore diplomatic relations
- 1965 - Intelsat 1 ("Early Bird") 1st commercial geosynchronous communications satellite launched
- 1968 - Gas and gunpowder explosions at sporting goods store, downtown Richmond, Indiana, kills 41 and injures more than 150
- 1972 - Egypt drops diplomatic relations with Jordan
- 1973 - Indian troops invade Sikkim
- 1973 - Pioneer 11 launched toward Jupiter & Saturn
- 1973 - US launches Pioneer 11 to Jupiter & Saturn
- 1973 - Launch of Pioneer 11 spacecraft.
- 1981 - Yugoslav government sends troops to Kosovo
- 1982 - Largest crowd ever to see a baseball game in Minn 52,279
- 1984 - 11th Space Shuttle Mission (41-C)-Challenger 5 is launched
- 1984 - 1st time 11 people in space
- 1985 - Sudan suspends constitution after coup under general Swarredahab
- 1992 - Microsoft announced Windows 3.1, upgrading Windows 3.0
- 1992 - Serbian troops begin siege of Sarajevo
- 1992 - Voting begins on choice of Elvis postage stamps

From KO Archives

Leisure a no longer a pleasure for Kashmir Youth

Observer News Service

SSRINAGAR: The youth in Kashmir are today severely handicapped when it comes to spending leisure time in an enriching and meaningful way, a Kashmir Observer report has found out.

The older generation had a better time in its youth than today's younger lot, who despite the myriad diversions are disposal, feels anxious and impatient at what it describes as severely shrinking space for recreation.

Evidently television, internet cafes and snooker clubs are no match for the colourful fairs at Badamwari, the acrobatics of an Afsar khan at Edges or the antics of magicians in open grounds of which only memories exist in the minds of elders.

What the youth today seem to be missing is the kind of active participation their parents and grandparents had by being associated with dramatic clubs, literary societies or sports bodies.

The first ingredients of living satisfying life – the manner of spending leisure time- appears to be a gift that youth in Kashmir today have lost or never acquired in first place.

(Kashmir Observer, 06 April, 2005)

از دعوات انگریزیکٹیو مجسٹریٹ دیجیو ایل (نائب تحصیلدار است ناگ) با اجلاس زیر مباحث صاحب۔

درخواست منجانب: مقصود احمد میر ولد میرا بھائی بھیر سار کا دیو کا کوئی شرط نہایت ناگ نبض اجرائی تاریخ پیدائش منقبت نام میر محمد سابق ولد مقصود احمد میر۔

استخبارت برادر کاغذی ہر خاص و عام۔

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل کا سال مذکورہ بالا نے دعالت بذات ایک درخواست حلقی بیان پیش کیا ہے سال کے پھر کا تاریخ پیدائش 19/01/2014 ہے اس ضمن میں منقبت پیدائش نکلنے کا خواہ ہے لہذا منقبت مذکورہ کا اجرا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی بھی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ ایک ہفتہ کے اندر اور دوران دفتر اوقات میں پیش کرے بصورت دیگر کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

انگریزیکٹیو مجسٹریٹ دیجیو ایل mja

از دعوات انگریزیکٹیو مجسٹریٹ دیجیو ایل (نائب تحصیلدار است ناگ) با اجلاس زیر مباحث صاحب۔

درخواست منجانب: نکلیں احمد ذار ولد میرا بھائی بھیر سار کا دیو کا کوئی شرط نہایت ناگ نبض اجرائی تاریخ پیدائش منقبت نام محمد سابق ولد مقصود احمد میر۔

استخبارت برادر کاغذی ہر خاص و عام۔

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل کا سال مذکورہ بالا نے دعالت بذات ایک درخواست حلقی بیان پیش کیا ہے سال کے پھر کا تاریخ پیدائش 19/08/2014 ہے اس ضمن میں منقبت پیدائش نکلنے کا خواہ ہے لہذا منقبت مذکورہ کا اجرا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی بھی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ ایک ہفتہ کے اندر اور دوران دفتر اوقات میں پیش کرے بصورت دیگر کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

انگریزیکٹیو مجسٹریٹ دیجیو ایل mja

از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار است ناگ با اجلاس زیر مباحث صاحب

درخواست منجانب: طارق احمد صوفی ولد میرا بھائی بھیر سار کا دیو کا کوئی شرط نہایت ناگ نبض اجرائی تاریخ پیدائش منقبت نام محمد سابق ولد مقصود احمد میر۔

استخبارت برادر کاغذی ہر خاص و عام۔

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل کا ایک درخواست نبض حصول میر منقبت پیش کیا ہے حسب رپورٹ پناوری حلقہ سے سائل کا والد سید محمد صوفی مورخہ 16/01/2020 کو فوت ہو چکا ہے اور موتی کے دارن ان بڑیل ہیں۔

نام صاحب کنیدہ ولدیت	عمر	رشتہ ہر امتوتی	پیشہ
طارق احمد پھر محمد صوفی	35 سال	پر موتی	مازمت
افرت اختر دختر۔۔۔	30 سال	بخت موتی	شادی شدہ گھریلو کام
شیرین دختر۔۔۔۔۔	42 سال	۔۔۔	شادی شدہ ملازمت

اس کے علاوہ اور کوئی فرد کنیدہ میں موجود نہیں ہے لہذا اگر کسی شخص یا اثاثہ کو مذکورہ منقبت اجرا کرنے میں کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہوگا تو ایک ہفتہ کے اندر اور دفتر بازہ میں پیش کریں بعد گزرنے کے معاذ کو رپا یا مرض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

تحریر الصدر نائب تحصیلدار است ناگ mja

نام کی درستی

ہر خاص و عام کو برادر استخبارت مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ غلطی سے میں میرے بیٹے کی تاریخ پیدائش منقبت میں SINGH ہے اب اس کی درستی کرانی مطلب ہے اس ضمن میں اگر کسی شخص یا اثاثہ کو کوئی بھی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ ایک ہفتہ کے اندر اور دفتر بازہ میں پیش کریں بعد گزرنے کے معاذ کو رپا یا مرض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

استخبارت برادر کاغذی ہر خاص و عام۔ Akmpreep Singh ولد سائل ایس ایچ پورہ mja

Pak Court Jails 5 Hafiz Saeed Aides In Terror-Funding Case

Press Trust of India

LAHORE: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced five leaders of Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) to nine years of imprisonment each in a terror financing case.

Three of them — Umar Bahadar, Nasarullah and Samiullah — have been convicted for the first time since the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore pronounced its ver-

dict some time ago in the terror financing cases registered by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police. The other two — JuD spokesperson Yahya Mujahid and senior leader Prof Zafar Iqbal — had already been convicted for many years in other terror financing cases.

ATC Lahore Judge Ejaz Ahmad Buttar on Saturday handed down nine-year imprisonment to each five of them. — PTI

Pakistan Judge, Family Members Shot Dead

Agenceis

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan anti-terrorism court judge, his wife and two children were killed after unidentified gunmen opened fire at his vehicle in Swabi district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police sources said.

The judge was on his way to the national capital Islamabad when the militants ambushed him and killed him with his family members near an interchange at the

motorway on Sunday, the sources told Xinhua news agency.

Two policemen, including the judge's driver, were wounded in the attack, the sources added.

"The judge, his 10-year-old son, wife and six-year-old daughter were killed on the spot, and the policemen are also in a very critical condition," the sources said.

The attackers fled the scene before police arrived.

No group or individual has claimed the attack yet.

Two Rockets Hit Near Iraq Airbase Hosting US Soldiers



Agenceis

BAGHDAD: Two rockets hit near an Iraqi airbase hosting US soldiers north of Baghdad on Sunday, three days ahead of a new "strategic dialogue" with Washington, a security source said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the strike at Balad airbase, which caused no casualties or property damage, but the US routinely blames Iran-linked Iraqi factions for such attacks on its troops and diplomats.

Sunday's was the 14th attack against American interests -- including troops, the Baghdad embassy or Iraqi supply convoys to foreign forces -- since US President Joe Biden took office in January.

Two Americans and an Iraqi civilian have been killed in the attacks.

An Iraqi civilian working for a firm maintaining US fighter jets for the Iraq airforce was also wounded in one attack.

The operations are sometimes claimed by obscure groups experts say are smokecreens for Iranian-backed organisations long present in Iraq.

Qais al-Khazali, a senior pro-Iran figure in the state-sponsored Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary force, recently declared that the "resistance" was carrying out attacks and would step them up "unless the US withdraws all its combat forces from across Iraq".

- Balancing interests -

The latest attack came as Washington prepares to launch a strategic dialogue with the government of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi, who has regularly received

threats from pro-Iran factions.

Kadhemi faces the delicate task of balancing the interests of neighbouring Iran and the US, arch-rivals who are both deeply involved in Iraqi politics.

Washington on Wednesday extended by several months a sanctions exemption allowing Iraq to import electricity from Iran during the ferociously hot summers when air-conditioning sends demand spiking.

The US, which led a coalition from 2014 to oust the Islamic State group from its self-declared "caliphate" in northern Iraq and Syria, still has some 2,500 troops in Iraq.

Since the defeat of their shared enemy, Washington and pro-Iranian factions have exchanged both threats and fire.

In February, the US carried out a raid against pro-Iranian Iraqi fighters in Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported 22 of them had died, while the Pentagon reported just one death.

Joe Biden's administration has stressed that the action was meant as a warning and to avoid further escalation of tensions between Tehran and Washington.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Washington wanted to "send a very strong signal that we're not going to tolerate attacks on our people and our Iraqi partners".

But both sides are wary after a previous escalation in January 2020, sparked by the US assassination of top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, took the arch-enemies to the brink of war.

Saudi Arabia's Scramble For An Exit Strategy In Yemen



Agenceis

The Saudi Arabia-led alliance's military intervention in Yemen has not only failed in its objective to rout the Houthi rebels, but the kingdom finds itself in a position in which it might be forced to capitulate. Saudi Arabia has failed its primary objectives of defeating the Houthis and re-establishing the internationally recognised government in Yemen.

"The Houthis have proven to be a formidable fighting force. Saudi Arabia does not have a comparable ground game that can match their adversaries", Nader Hashemi, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver, told Al Jazeera.

This reality is far from what Saudi Arabia had initially anticipated when it entered into the war via Operation Decisive Storm in March 2015.

"Saudi Arabia thought it would win this war via a bombing campaign, and it would all be over in a few weeks. We have now entered the seventh year of this war with no clear end in sight," Hashemi said.

In fact, the Houthis have been on the advance ever since, and Saudi Arabia is in a position where it is implausible to become the war's victor. The Houthis control the capital Sanaa and large parts of Yemen's northwest.

The city of Marib, which is of pivotal strategic importance as it functions as the country's oil and gas production hub and possesses crucial infrastructure, is also constantly under attack.

stantly under attack.

Besides these territorial gains, the Houthis have also repeatedly shown they can attack infrastructure in Saudi territory with drones.

The conflict's status quo puts the latest Saudi call for peace into perspective. It is not driven by the desire to create lasting peace but rather by the attempt to define an exit strategy from a conflict that has turned into a quagmire for the kingdom.

The proposal the Saudis suggest envisages a nationwide ceasefire under the supervision of the United Nations, according to Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud.

During the ceasefire, negotiations should facilitate a political solution. As a token of goodwill, Saudi Arabia offered to lift its blockade of Sanaa airport and allow imports of fuel and food via the critical port of Hodeidah on the Red Sea.

However, Houthi rebels are well aware of their current position and leverage. As it stands, Saudi Arabia and its allies could potentially be forced to withdraw without the Houthis having to make any concessions. Hence, their initial rejection of the proposal did not come as a surprise, particularly as it offered "nothing new".

The latter is an accurate statement, according to Steven Hurst, department head of history, politics and philosophy at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

"The peace plan they have put forward now is a revised version of one they advanced in 2020 rather

than anything new," said Hurst.

Nonetheless, the Houthis' chief negotiator, Mohammed Abdul-salam, stated his willingness for further talks with Riyadh, Washington, and Muscat to facilitate a peace agreement.

The Houthis' strong military position is not the only conundrum for Saudi Arabia, however.

The United States, Saudi Arabia's most important ally for more than half a century, also played a pivotal role since March 2015 when then-President Barack Obama authorised US forces to provide logistical and intelligence support to the Saudis, Hurst said.

"The US provided the Saudis with weaponry, intelligence -- including assisting with target selection -- and logistics such as mid-air refuelling of Saudi planes, though the latter was ended in late 2018," he noted.

Donald Trump presented Saudi Arabia with carte blanche for its operation in Yemen during his presidency. "Nothing was done about Yemen during the reign of Donald Trump," according to Hashemi.

This primarily because of Trump's proclivity for cultivating close ties with Saudi Arabia and its de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), Hurst told Al Jazeera.

"That desire in turn reflected a range of factors including Trump's well-established admiration for 'strong-man' rulers, the Saudi willingness to go along with Trump's one-sided approach to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and a mutual antipathy toward Iran."

Bangladesh Imposes 7-Day Nationwide Lockdown Amidst Spike In COVID-19 Cases

Agenceis

Bangladesh on Monday clamped a week-long nationwide lockdown, suspending public transport and shutting markets to combat the surge in coronavirus cases in the country, amidst demonstrations by small business owners against the move.

According to a government circular issued on Sunday, the directives will remain in effect from 6am of April 5 till 12 midnight of April 11, the Dhaka Tribune reported. People have been asked not to move out from their homes from 6 pm to 6 am, the report said.

The decision was taken in light of the current situation in the country where the rate of infections and deaths have increased in recent weeks. The government has said that they are increasing the number of COVID-19-designated hospitals and ICU beds to deal with the rising number of patients, it said.

Bangladesh has registered 7,087 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 637,364, in the last 24 hours until Sunday which is the highest number of infections since the start of the pandemic, the United News of Bangladesh reported.

Besides, the deaths due to coronavirus rose to 9,266 with 53 news fatalities during this period. The mortality rate fell to 1.45 on Sunday from Saturday's 1.46 per cent.

All public transport services (roads, river, railway and domestic flights) were suspended and only emergency services remained operational.

However, all government/non-

government/autonomous offices, courts and private offices will be able to facilitate the commute of their employees to work using their own transport on a limited scale.

Thousands of people left Dhaka on Sunday fearing getting trapped during the lockdown. Most of the people who left were unemployed or in poverty.

Many shop owners and employees have, however, taken to the streets protesting the government's decision to shut down all shopping malls and markets during the weeklong lockdown, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

Several hundred traders staged their demonstrations in Dhaka's New Market area blocking the road.

This the second time lockdown has been imposed in Bangladesh. The country earlier imposed a 66-day lockdown from March 26 to May 30 last year when a nationwide holiday was also enforced.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged people to help curb the spread of the virus in a speech in Parliament.

"I know everyone will face difficulties. Despite this, I say lives should be given preference over everything," Hasina said Sunday.

Hasina has sought everyone's cooperation to combat the ongoing second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.

Speaking on the new strain of coronavirus in the country, the premier said: "The damage done by the new virus variant is hard to detect right away. One's condition worsens suddenly. For this, we have to be careful."

Pakistan PM Imran Khan Blames 'Vulgarity' For Rise In Rape, Sexual Violence Cases



Agenceis

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has blamed "fahashi" (vulgarity) for rise in rape and sexual violence instead of the deteriorating law and order situation in the country.

As he took calls from the people on Sunday, Khan -- when asked by a caller what the government plans to do in the light of rising incidents of rape and sexual violence, especially against children -- said that there are some fights that governments and legislation alone cannot win and that the society must join in the fight. He said it was important for societies to protect themselves against "fahashi" (vulgarity), reported Geo News.

The prime minister said incidents of rape and sexual violence that make their way to the media are just one per cent of the actual horrific crimes of such nature that take place.

Khan said when he went to the UK, during the '70s to play cricket, the "sex, drugs and rock n roll" culture was taking off. He said nowadays, divorce rates "have gone up by as much as 70 per cent due to vulgarity in that society".

He said the whole concept of pardah (or covering up, or modesty) in Islam has a purpose to it which is to "keep temptation in check". The Pakistan prime minister said there are many people in society who "cannot keep their

willpower in check". "Iska kuch tou effect aana thha na (It had to manifest itself in some way)," he added.

Taking cue of the situation, he defended the Turkish drama Ertugrul showing in Pakistan. The prime minister said one of the reasons he brought the show to the Pakistani screens was because not only does it has an entertainment value, it doesn't contain any content which can be considered controversial or immoral, reported Geo News.

He concluded by reiterating that incidences of rape and sexual violence are "spreading like cancer" in the society. Official statistics in Pakistan have revealed that at least 11 rape incidents are reported in the country every day, with over 22,000 cases reported to the police in the last six years.

However, only 77 of the accused have been convicted which comprises 0.3 per cent of the total figure, reported Geo News. These statistics were obtained from the Police, Law, and Justice Commission of Pakistan, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the Women's Foundation, and provincial welfare agencies.

Moreover, in February, in an insensitive move, the Forensics Department of Khyber Medical College University proposed a plan to charge rape victims Pakistani Rs 25,000 for medical examination and Rs 5,000 for an autopsy for the local residents of Peshawar.

NEWSMAKERS

Singapore Blogger Crowdfunds \$99,000 To Pay PM Damages in Defamation Case

SINGAPORE: A Singaporean blogger said on Monday he had raised \$5133,000 (\$98,840) via crowdfunding on social media to cover damages he was ordered to pay Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in a defamation case filed by the city-state's leader.

Lee had sued Leong Sze Hian, a financial advisor, after he shared on Facebook an online news article that linked the premier to a financial scandal at Malaysia's state fund IMDB.

Lee's lawyers have said such links were "false and baseless". Leong had deleted the November 2018 Facebook post within three days of sharing it, complying with a government request.



The Singapore high court on March 24 ordered him to pay Lee \$133,000.

"I am very happy, very grateful," he told Reuters on Monday.

Leong made the announcement on Facebook late on Sunday, when he posted: "It is finished. All paid for." As the head of a government that has pledged zero tolerance of

corruption, Lee, 69, is no stranger to seeking to protect his reputation via legal channels.

Senior figures in the ruling People's Action Party, including Lee's late father and the founder of modern-day Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, have previously sued foreign media, political opponents and online commentators for defamation.

Nasa's Ingenuity helicopter dropped on Mars' surface ahead of flight

Agenceis

Nasa's Ingenuity mini-helicopter has been dropped on the surface of Mars in preparation for its first flight, the US space agency said.

The ultra-light aircraft had been fixed to the belly of the Perseverance rover, which touched down on the Red Planet on February 18.

"MarsHelicopter touchdown confirmed!" Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted on Saturday.

"Its 293 million mile (471 million kilometer) journey aboard @NASAPersevere ended with the final drop of 4 inches (10 centimeter) from the rover's belly to the surface of Mars today. Next milestone? Survive the night."

A photograph accompanying the

tweet showed Perseverance had driven clear of the helicopter and its "air-field" after dropping to the surface.

Ingenuity had been feeding off the Perseverance's power system but will now have to use its own battery to run a vital heater to protect its unshielded electrical components from freezing and cracking during the bitter Martian night.

"This heater keeps the interior at about 7°C through the bitter cold of the Martian night, where temperatures can drop to as low as -90°C," Bob Balaram, Mars Helicopter Project chief engineer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, wrote in an update on Friday.

"That comfortably protects key components such as the battery and some of the sensitive electronics from harm at very cold temperatures."

Over the next couple of days, the



Ingenuity team will check that the helicopter's solar panels are working properly and recharging its battery before testing its motors and sensors ahead of its first flight, Balaram said.

Ingenuity is expected to make its first flight attempt no earlier than April 11, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted.

Ingenuity will be attempting to fly in an atmosphere that is 1% the density of Earth's, which makes achieving lift harder -- but will be assisted by gravity that is one-third of our planet's.

The first flight will involve climbing at a rate of about 3 feet per second to a height of 10 feet, hovering there for 30 seconds, then descending back to the surface.

Ingenuity will be taking high-resolution photography as it flies. Up to five flights of gradual difficulty are planned over the month.

The 1.8-kilogram rotorcraft cost Nasa around \$85 million to develop and is considered a proof of concept that could revolutionize space exploration. Future aircraft could cover ground much quicker than rovers, and explore more rugged terrain.

Girl 'Raped' Inside Vehicle In Kulgam, Two Arrested

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Monday arrested two persons who are allegedly involved in raping a girl inside the vehicle (truck) in South Kashmir's Kulgam district.

A police official said that on receipt of specific information that a girl (name withheld) was being raped by two persons inside a vehicle bearing registration number JK18A-6426 near FCI Mirbazar area of Kulgam.

He said, soon after receiving the information police rushed towards the spot and subsequently rescued the girl besides arresting the two persons.

He said that the vehicle used for the commission of the crime has also been seized.

The accused persons have been identified as Hafiz Farooq Parry son of Farooq Ahmad Par-



ray and Ubaid Ayoub Raina son of Muhammad Ayoub, both the residents of Gadihama Kulgam.

He added a case under FIR No. 63/2021 U/S 376, 109 IPC has been registered at Police Station Qazigund and investigations have been taken up.

Moreover, after fulfilling all medico-legal formalities the girl was handed over to her legal heirs. (KDC)

Pillion Rider Killed In Awantipora Road Accident

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A 19-year-old girl was killed after a truck hit a scooter in Nambal crossing area of Awantipora in south-Kashmir's Pulwama district.

An official said that a Srinagar-bound truck bearing Registration Number JK-14G 0740 driven by one Mohammed Hanief son of Mohammed Fisha Gojar, a resident of Udhampur, hit a scooter, bearing Registration Number JK-13D 7883, driven by one Suhail

Ahmad son of Asadullah Khan, a resident of Bohu Awantipora, near Nambal crossing.

The mishap, according to the official, resulted in on-spot death of pillion rider identified as Muskan Manzoor (19) daughter of Manzoor Ahmad Dar, a resident of Dogripura.

"The trucker has been arrested and the truck seized", the official said adding that "An FIR number 39/2021 under section 304-A has been registered and further investigations taken up."

Chargesheet Filed Against Punjab Resident For Duping Hundreds Of Employees

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Crime Branch Kashmir on Monday produced charge sheet against a Punjab based man who by "deceitful means" grabbed lakhs of rupees from three hundred employees of Nexus Software Company in 2009.

The crime branch had registered the case twelve years ago under FIR (No. 31/2009) under section 420 RPC against Sachan Wadwa Arora son of Subhash Arora of Subhash Nagar Defence Colony Ludhiana Punjab.

The charge sheet was produced before Court of Special Mobile Magistrate 13th Finance Commission Srinagar, Crime Branch said in a statement.

"The Crime Branch Kashmir had received a communication from the Employees of Nexus Software alleging therein that Pinnacle India Company have deceitful means grabbed lakhs of rupees from three hundred employees which obtained as se-

curity from them on assurance to earn 12,000 per month, but despite the data editing work the necessary wages were not paid nor the amount obtained as security deposit was returned to them."

Subsequently, the case was lodged in Police Station Crime Branch Kashmir.

"During the course of investigation, it was found that the accused Sachan Wadwa Arora son of Subhash Arora of Subhash Nagar Defence Colony Ludhiana Punjab self styled Managing Director of a non existing Company Pinnacle India has grabbed lakhs of rupees from the youth of Kashmir Valley and cheated by giving them false assurance that he (Sachan Wadwa Arora) will provide them job for preparing data editing on monthly salary of Rs 12,000 to each youth on depositing 10,000 as security deposit, but neither the salary was paid to them nor the security amount returned to them."

Ganderbal Village Without Electricity For Past 15 Days

Agenceis

GANDERBAL: Power Development Department (PDD) has failed to repair the damaged transformer of Herprang village of Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir forcing the villagers to reel under darkness.

Residents of Herprang village said that the transformer in their area developed technical snag some 15 days ago, but the authorities have failed to repair it since then plunging the entire village in darkness.

The residents further added that the department is forcing them to face hardships as without electricity they are being asked

to pay the charges for the same. "How can we pay the power free when we didn't get electricity from almost 15 days," they said.

"PDD has failed to repair the faulty transformer in the area since past 15 days," said Ishfaq Ahmad, a resident of Bhat Mohallah, of Herprang area.

The locals appealed the PDD higher ups to look into the matter and redress their genuine grievances at the earliest so that the people here could heave a sigh of relief.

Meanwhile, PDD officials assured that they will ensure restoration of electricity supply to the area at an earliest—(KNO)

Cultural Programmes On COVID Appropriate Behaviour Organised In Hiranagar

Observer News Service

KATHUA: Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR) Monday organised a series of Cultural programmes at different locations in Hiranagar Sub Division.

The Cultural troupes of DIPR presented solo cultural performances on the theme of Covid-19 doa & don'ts at Panchayat Koothal, Panchayat Bhaiya and at BDO office Hiranagar.

Cultural Performances in Hindi and Dogri language like "Do Gazz Doori, Mask hai Zaroori", Swachhta se hi hum aage badenge, Carona ki bimari se bachnege", "Assein

Sarein ki Samjhana hai, Assain Carona ithon Nassana Hai" got thunderous applause from the gatherings.

Block Development Officer, Hiranagar, Sheetal, while speaking on the occasion said, the role of PRIs is vital in helping administration to curb the spread of Covid-19. She said initiatives to spread the message like taking measures and following Covid appropriate behavior in local language will have more impact on the people. She said the block administration will extend full cooperation to DIPR in organizing such events in other parts of Hiranagar.

CUK Approves Establishment Of Centre For Legal Aid, Various Other Centres

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: The Executive Council (EC) of the Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Monday approved the establishment of Centre for PIL and Legal Aid, Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Interdisciplinary Research chair and Centre for Biodiversity and Taxonomical Studies in the varsity.

In the Centre for PIL and Legal Aid, the law students would provide legal aid to poor and marginalised sections of the society in consultation with the lawyers in different Bar Councils of the Valley, while as Mahatma Gandhi Centre, would conduct interdisciplinary research, in the School of Social Sciences. The Council also approved the construction of boundary wall around the periphery of additional 96 kanals of land at Watlar in Lar block here and the conduct of Geo-Technical investigation, topographical survey of the same. The EC also approved the construction of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank branch at the designated Tulumulla campus, under BOT model. The members also discussed various agenda items threadbare and took important decisions.

Addressing the Council Members, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir apprised them about the functioning of the university and the impediments faced in infrastructure development. He said that following the lockdown due to the outbreak of Covid-19 last year, the university took lead and started online teaching-learning process, ensuring that the stu-



dents cover their syllabi within the stipulated time. He said that during Covid, the Examination and Evaluation Wing (EEW) of the university took the examination to the doorsteps of the students and established centers in almost every district of the Jammu and Kashmir. "The university was the first to conduct the offline examinations by strictly following the SoPs," he said adding, the results of the students were also declared immediately, in order to save their precious time. CUK VC said the university has till date successfully maintained the academic and examination calendars despite several challenges.

Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir also apprised the members about the universities' journey from rented accommodations in Srinagar district to Ganderbal, stating that at present the varsity is functioning from four different campuses in Ganderbal district, including its designated campus at Tulumulla. He said the varsity has faced numerous difficulties in constructing its own campus at Tulumulla due to low load bearing capacity of the soil. CUK VC further said that the additional land, recently transferred by the J&K Government, would be utilized for construction of hostels for students, and residential accommodation for the staff.

Covid-19 Spreading Aggressively As People Turn Complacent: DAK

Observer News Service

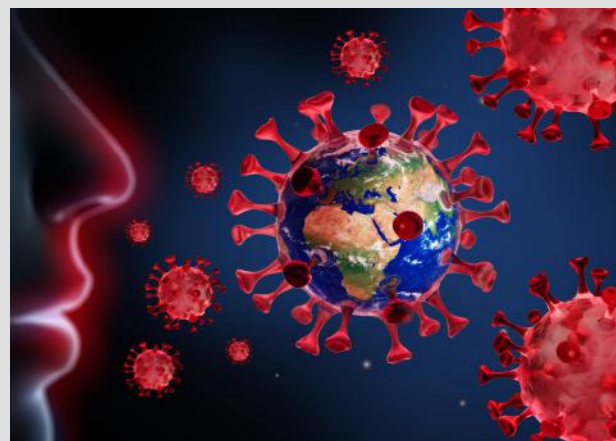
SRINAGAR: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) Monday said hospitals in Kashmir are witnessing a surge in severe cases of Covid-19 infection.

"A few weeks ago, we had drop in the number of severe cases, but over the last few days hospitals are seeing increase in number of seriously-ill Covid-19 patients, much like we saw last spring," said DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan, in a statement.

"Patients in large numbers are coming to hospitals with severe bilateral pneumonia requiring oxygen, some needing intensive care and the support of ventilators to help them survive the respiratory distress. Our beds are full, oxygen points are occupied and we don't have space in intensive care units."

"Patients are coming with bad lungs when it is difficult to salvage them. Not only the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, but young people are coming with severe disease and some of them are dying," DAK President said.

"The rising number of cases over the past two weeks is now



starting to reflect in rising number of hospitalisations," he said.

"The number is expected to rise further in coming days as there are still massive numbers of people in the population who are susceptible to the virus.

"The virus has once again become dangerous and is behaving aggressively which gives us to understand whether a mutated strain has sneaked into the valley because of huge tourist influx or we are dealing with an indigenous mutant," Dr said.

Another reason for resurgence of cases in the valley is because of public complacency,

he said. "People no longer regard pandemic as a risk and have thrown caution to the wind," he told.

He said many people don't wear masks and they don't care for social distancing. Huge gatherings are seen in gardens and public functions.

"Accelerated transmission of Covid-19 within the next few weeks would not be surprising considering the lackadaisical approach by most people towards the pandemic," Dr Nisar.

"People must continue to adhere to health guidelines to avoid catastrophic slipup."

Massive Fire Guts 25 Shanties Of Rohingyas In Jammu



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Around two dozen huts of Rohingya refugees were gutted in a massive midnight fire in Jammu in the early hours of Monday, officials said.

Officials said that the fire started at Kabaar and within no time engulfed the jhuggies of close periphery in Marauti Mohallah Jammu. The fire raged for more than two hours and when the flames doused off, it had destroyed all the shelters of the Rohingya. The number of shanties is put 25 put it could be more, they said.

Under international human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or

degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. The fire, the cause of which is not known, comes as Supreme Court has reserved verdict on a plea against the deportation of the Muslim Rohingya to Myanmar where they, according to their lawyer advocate Prashant Bhushan, can be "killed or subjected to torture."

"Fire started at around 0100 hours and could douse at 0315 hours. Three fire tenders were pressed into service," Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Jammu, Chandan Kohli said. "No injury or loss of life has been reported," he said, adding, "Fire started from kabaar and within no time engulfed the jhuggies of close periphery. Rest situation normal," he added. (GNS)

Dir Agri Pitches 'Innovative Farming' For High Returns

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Director Agriculture Production & Farmers Welfare, Jammu, KK Sharma Monday said that all out efforts are being made to provide direct marketing platforms to farmers for high returns.

He was speaking during a field visit to Misriwala zone to take stock of the field activities being undertaken by the department and on field interaction with the farmers.

While inspecting the Hi Tech Poly GreenHouse spread over an area of 2000 sq Meter at village ShamaChak established under CA-PEX, he asked for area expansion under protected cultivation of high value vegetable crops to attract the

Mirwaiz Competes 20 Months Under House Detention: APHC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Monday said that it's chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq completed 20 months in house detention today.

In a statement, APHC said that Mirwaiz was placed under house arrest on August 4, 2019. "APHC has been repeatedly demanding the release of Mirwaiz who is arbitrarily detained at his home, his basic human and civil rights and liberties being suspended by the state."

The statements said as the holy month of Ramadan draws near, it once again asks the authorities to release the Mirwaiz and all the political prisoners and youth who are "arbitrarily detained" in various jails and "detention centres" across J&K and in various states of India.

The statements said that as is the centuries old tradition, Mirwaiz Umar as the chief cleric of J&K has religious obligations to



fulfil, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. "So until he is released from house detention, he cannot carry them out. We urge the authorities to release him and all other prisoners without delay and allow the people of Kashmir to observe the holy month of Ramadan with their loved ones and without creating obstacles and hurting the sentiments of Muslims by keeping the Mirwaiz under detention."

Canines Injure 16 In Two Days In Lolab

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: Six more people including two women and a middle-aged man were injured in fresh attacks by dogs at Dardapora Lolab and its adjoining areas in Kupwara district, officials said on Monday.

In last two days, at least sixteen people, mostly children, were injured by the dogs in these areas and one among them Ashiq Rasool (minor) son of Ghulam Rasool Sheikh of Dardapora Kupwara, was referred to SMHS hospital Srinagar for specialised treatment.

They said that the pack of dogs attacked people at Dardapora, Muqam, Tulipora and Chandy areas Monday, leaving six persons injured.

All the injured were shifted to Sub-District Hospital Sogam where from one of them, Arfat Showkat Ganie, was shifted to District Hospital Kupwara for advanced treatment.

"In all six people with dog

bites were received at the hospital today and one of them was referred to district hospital Kupwara," an official at the SDH Sogam said.

A relative of the minor boy who was injured in the attack yesterday and referred to SMHS hospital Srinagar said that he has been advised plastic surgery in case there was no improvement for two months.

Meanwhile, the locals said that first a dog turned rabid and later bit others as a result of which there is pack of dogs attacking and wounding people. "These dogs have unleashed terror and people are scared to venture out," the local residents said.

"Although we have complained many times to the authorities no action has been taken," the locals said, adding, "Despite all these attacks in last two days alone, the authorities have taken no steps to control the menace." (CNS)

2V A 'Big Joke', Nothing Happening On Ground: Congress

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: J&K PCC chief Ghulam Ahmed Mir Monday alleged the J&K government's much talked about "Back to Village program" as a big joke stating tall claims have been made by the government that remained confined to papers only while nothing happened on ground.

Mir announced a 45-day long program under the title—"Congress Chali Panchayat Ki Aur" under which meetings will be held in every panchayat and village across the UT. "Let me tell you that former J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik announced B2V-1 met people and perhaps took away the papers along with him to Goa. After him, the former LG J&K, GC Murmu announced B2V-2, he did same what Malik did. Now recently, LG Manoj Sinha launched B2V-3 and meetings were held in various parts of Kashmir and

Jammu with tall claims of changing the map of villages and panchayats," Mir told reporters at party office Srinagar. He said that Congress has the feedback from ground that nothing has happened in all three phases of B2V campaigns in the past three years.

"Claims of moving mountains have proved hollow. There is no outcome of B2-V campaigns," he claimed. Mir said that Congress leaders will visit each panchayat under the program titled—"Congress Chali Panchayat Ki Aur" to find out what actually has been done by the J&K Government.

"The campaign will last for 45 days under which there will be meetings in every village of J&K where at least 30 to 50 people would participate including Sarpanchs and Panchs," he said. "At the end, we will submit a report of achievements upto, to present government."—(KNO)

Two Drug Peddlers Arrested In Anantnag

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: Jammu and Kashmir Police in Anantnag apprehended notorious drug peddlers in Lal Chowk area of the district. A police spokesperson said that the police established a naka and apprehended Imtiyaz Ahmad Ganai, a resident of Poshkeeri with 50 bottles of welcyrex (contraband substance).

On further investigation the joint teams of Police Bijbehara and Anantnag town raided the house of Sajad Ahmad Bhat, son of Abdul Khaliq Bhat, a resident of Moomun Arwani in the presence of Executive Magistrate wherein 330 bottles of welcyrex (contraband substance) were recovered and seized.

Singla Calls For Integrating Mushk Buduj FPO With E-Commerce Platforms

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Piyush Singla Monday directed for effective marketing of Mushk Buduj variety of rice besides integrating the Mushk Buduj FPO with e-Commerce platforms.

The DC stressed for production of mushroom cultures at local level and generating awareness among the prospective entrepreneurs about the economic potential of mushroom cultivation.

The DC also passed directions to the concerned to explore modalities for profitable utilisation of walnut industry byproducts viz hulls and shells.

KASHMIR OBSERVER

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of the
Kashmir Observer LLP

Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001

Printed at: KT Press Pvt. Ltd, Rangreth Ind Area, Srinagar.

RNI Registration No: 69503/98

Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16

Editor-in-Chief : Sajjad Haider

Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja

Switchboard: (0194) 2106304

Editorial: (0194) 2502327

Email editorial: editor@kashmirobserver.net

K O V I E W

A good step

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday announced that all schools for students up to Class 9 will remain closed for two weeks from April 5 in view of the rising number of coronavirus infections in the union territory. Similarly, physical classes for students from classes 10 to 12 will also be suspended for a week. Earlier, the administration had asked all district magistrates to take a call on the continuation of physical classes in schools amid a spike in COVID-19 cases.

Closing the schools is a good decision. In recent past, several schools across the Valley had witnessed cases of infection. Ironically, the government had decided to reopen schools at a time when the coronavirus pandemic is once again spreading through J&K like a wild fire and the number of deaths is rising. So, how did government expect there would be no infections in schools.

Reopening schools runs the grave risk of exposing children to the infection. Schools lack the adequate infrastructure to protect the children. It would also be impossible to make the students follow the safety precautions. This is therefore not the conducive time to reopen schools. Government should wait for the contagion to be reigned in before children can go back to school.

If we evaluate the situation objectively, the government's decision to start schools was premature. On ground the exercise was not only not going to serve its desired purpose but also disrupt the ongoing online classes and leave a majority of students without education. Considering the pandemic is not going to go away any time soon and we might even see fresh spurt in the cases, the government should wait for a month or so before allowing the schools to reopen.

It is true that schools had been closed since mid-March last year when Coronavirus was declared a pandemic around the world. This was barely fifteen days after the schools had reopened following seven month closure in the wake of the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019. This had already taken a massive toll on the education in Kashmir. More so, in Kashmir where the schools have now been closed for nearly two years. Education has been the worst victim of the lingering political turmoil and now that of the pandemic. A virulent third wave of the Covid-19 has made the education a tricky trade-off between re-opening schools and the health of children. But given the existing situation, it is important that the schools remain closed for now.

O T H E R O P I N O N

Commission & omission

In a large and lively democracy, the Election Commission has a job both delicate and difficult: To be scrupulous and visibly so about following processes and protocols which have firmed up, over the decades, its reputation for fairness.

In a large and lively democracy, the Election Commission has a job both delicate and difficult: To be scrupulous and visibly so about following processes and protocols which have firmed up, over the decades, its reputation for fairness. It may be, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said in a poll speech, that when players blame the umpire, it means they are afraid of impending defeat. And yet, the EC must not only answer questions that are raised by those who are competing in the arena, it must also transparently abide by the high standards it has set for itself. In this context, it has done well to take immediate action after an EVM was found in a BJP vehicle in Assam — four officials were suspended, a re-poll ordered. But in another instance, its decision has invited doubts that continue to linger. By promptly relaxing the ban it imposed on Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for open threat-making against an opponent from 48 hours to 24, the EC has taken an unusual step without giving a convincing explanation. That Sarma is himself a candidate in the poll was known to the EC before it slapped him with the penalty, and merely his apology could surely not be enough to bring on what amounts to a near reversal of its own decision and what could look like leniency to the party that rules at the Centre.

In West Bengal, a close contest is playing out between Trinamool Congress and BJP, the incumbent in the state is being challenged by the incumbent at the Centre, the prime minister leading the charge. Amid soaring political temperatures, there are accusations and counter-accusations. Much like the BJP's star campaigners, Mamata Banerjee has a penchant for the dramatic, she is adept at striking the exaggerated poll pose. The EC's strong rebuke to her — it has called her allegations of disruption of polling at a booth in Nandigram as "factually incorrect" and "devoid of substance", and suggested she could be guilty of "misdemeanour" — carries moral and institutional weight precisely because it is seen to be coming from an even-handed place.

That's why it is also on the EC to take note of a disquieting pattern in the poll playbook: Ahead of elections, in the states and in the Lok Sabha, central agencies, from the ED to CBI to I-T, knock on the doors of the Opposition leaders in the states they control. A report in this newspaper has stitched together several instances, across states — from Maharashtra to West Bengal, from Chhattisgarh to Tamil Nadu. It's nobody's case that the law should suspend its course once the model code of conduct kicks in, but many of these cases are dusted up and weaponised just in time during the campaign. The EC must be vigilant, it must take note. In times when non-elected institutions seem unable to hold firm against political pressures, much depends on the poll monitor stepping up to its own formidable record of independence. The EC has set a high bar for itself, it has its task cut out.

The Indian Express

Indian Agriculture: Maladies and Remedies

A more holistic and pragmatic approach needs to be adopted by the policy makers to make Indian agriculture sector more competitive and profitable



ASAD MIRZA

Since Independence agriculture sector has remained the main source of national income and occupation in India. In 1947, 72 per cent of the total working population was engaged in agricultural sector, but still a majority of India's poor (some 770 million people or about 70 per cent) inhabit the rural areas.

Though due to the high growth rates of the industrial and services sectors, the share of agricultural share in India's economy has progressively declined to less than 15%, yet its importance in India's economic and social development can't be denied.

On road to self-sufficiency

The Green revolution of 1960s witnessed a drastic increase in total agricultural production, particularly wheat and rice. The second phase of the Green revolution further boosted it in 1980s, which was accelerated further by the liberalisation policy of the late 1990s.

However, the results of the Green revolution were not uniform over the entire country. It particularly resulted in enhanced cultivation and production of wheat and rice in the northern states, and other cash crops such as cotton and onion in the western and southern states. But it neglected the cultivation of pulses and other cereals.

Though, India is considered to be a global agricultural powerhouse, yet the sector suffers from serious maladies. According a World Bank report of 2010, India is the world's largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and has the world's largest cattle herd (buffaloes), as well as the largest area under wheat, rice and cotton. It is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, farmed fish, sheep & goat meat, fruit, vegetables and tea. But in spite of this the Indian farmer remains poor, though he contributes a lot to the economy.

As per experts' opinion the factors which contribute to the poor performance of the Indian agricultural sector are multi-dimensional, such as: poor access to reliable and timely market information to the farmers, absence of supply and demand forecasting, poorly structured and inefficient supply chains, inadequate cold storage facilities and shortage of proper food processing units, large intermediation between the farmers and the consumers, besides regional disparities are some of the major causes of the losses for the farmers.

The WB report lists that one of the biggest issues facing the agricultural sector in India is low yield: India's farm yield is 30-50% lower than that of developed nations. Average farm size, poor infrastructure, low use of farm technologies and better farming techniques, decrease in soil fertility due to over fertilisation and sustained pesticide use, are leading contributors to low agricultural productivity.

Thus, measures to increase productivity will

Besides resolving the regional disparities in crop patterns, the government also needs to promote cultivation and change in eating habits of the populace. One route to this could be propagating the inclusion of millets and other high nutritious cereals, in the eating habits of the populace.

need increasing yields, diversification to higher value crops, and developing value chains to reduce marketing costs.

The sharp rise in food-grain production during India's Green revolution of the 1970s enabled the country to achieve self-sufficiency in food-grains and stave off the threat of famine. Agricultural intensification in the 1970s to 1980s saw an increased demand for rural labour that raised rural wages and, together with declining food prices, reduced rural poverty. However agricultural growth in the 1990s and 2000s slowed down, averaging about 3.5% per annum, and cereal yields have increased by only 1.4% per annum in the 2000s. The slow-down in agricultural growth has become a major cause for concern. India's rice yields are one-third of China's and about half of those in Vietnam and Indonesia. The same is true for most other agricultural commodities.

Reforming the sector

What we need is a pragmatic, realistic and holistic approach to be adopted by the policy makers to address the maladies faced by the Indian agriculturists. Besides resolving the regional disparities in crop patterns, the government also needs to promote cultivation and change in eating habits of the populace. One route to this could be propagating the inclusion of millets and other high nutritious cereals, in the eating habits of the populace. This besides increasing the earning potential of the farmers in the drought prone or less irrigated areas will also result in making better use of the cultivable area across the country.

Further action in this regard could be taken by the government by supporting and collaborating with international institutions like International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), which are engaged in popularising the cultivation and use of highly nutritious crops like millet and sorghum.

Icrisat, as per its mandate strives to be the

change catalyst through a partnership approach to help rural communities develop their own solutions and engages with them to bring the vision to reality. Its inclusive approach ensures participation of women and youth, a must in finding sustainable and profitable solutions, besides contributing to several of the UN SDGs.

As Icrisat's research area focuses on the drylands, it has an extra specialisation on crops that survive in these harsh climates, such as Chickpea and Groundnut, besides nutri-cereals like Sorghum, Pearl millet and Finger millet. Most of these crops besides being highly nutritious are also good for the planet as they have a low water footprint, lowers the carbon footprint, are good for the soils, use fewer chemicals, etc. Further they are good for the small farmer as they survive in the harshest climates, have multiple uses, have potential to significantly increase yield and cater to an untapped usage and demand.

Last month, the UN General Assembly unanimously declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets, the resolution for which was sponsored by India. PM Modi while endorsing this announcement expressed gratitude to all the nations, which initiated and co-sponsored this resolution. In a tweet, he said that India is honoured to be at the forefront of popularising Millets, whose consumption furthers nutrition, food security and welfare of farmers.

Both the cultivation and usage of these cereals and grain legumes could be achieved by focused efforts initially to popularise these smart foods to bring them into mainstream food habits. The strategy adopted to achieve this should involve and ensure that small farmers and rural communities benefit by receiving on-farm support, connecting farmers to value chains, linking smart food with health activities on the ground, and advocacy for policy support, research and development.

Policy makers will thus need to initiate and accomplish policy actions and public programmes to shift the agricultural sector away from the existing policy and institutional regime that appears to be no longer viable and build a solid foundation for a much more productive, internationally competitive, and diversified agricultural sector in the country. In addition, we'll have to promote increased cultivation of those crops, which besides being nutritious and profitable are also able to counter the environmental challenges.

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

Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. Earlier he was associated with BBC Urdu Service and Khaleej Times of Dubai. He writes on Indian Muslims, education, international, interfaith and current affairs.

Email: asad.mirza.nd@gmail.com



OBSERVER MAIL

All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, spaceand accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

MAIL YOUR LETTERS

P.O. Box # 337, G.P.O, Srinagar-190001
email: editpage.ko@gmail.com

Tulips and Covid

The inauguration of tulip garden is being celebrated on big scale this year, the event is to be held on 3 and 4th April, it is a starry affair as several famous Bollywood and local singers are expected to perform there. The event will be commenced in the afternoon on both the days, it is shocking that this event is being conducted with such pomp during a time when cases are surging again. Jammu and Kashmir recorded 515 new cases on 2 April and this number is alarming, the absence of restrictions and uptick in tourism

being blamed for it. These remarks by experts have stirred a debate on whether tourism should be halted or not. While it is important to boost tourism in the valley, it shouldn't come at a cost of human lives, some amount of restrictions are necessary from preventing shutting down of tourism altogether. While allowing tourist flocking is still understandable, organising such a mega event is baffling and inexplicable. Even if the authorities deemed it necessary to organise such a mega event it should have been conducted over a period of several days,

limiting the number of people on each day would have enabled the government have some control over the situation and minimise the risk of people contracting covid. By being so callous with regard to covid protocols at a time when there is a terrifying up-tick of covid cases the government is steering the state towards a disaster. The expected performances of singers like Badshah and Mika Singh have created a buzz already and there is an expected footfall of 400 people. The government has emphasised that all Sop's will be strictly followed

but doing merely that doesn't solve the problem that the government is itself creating. A conglomeration of such a hug, crowd means that there will suspension of aerosols in the air and that makes it a high risk zone even if all the precautions are taken which is quite unlikely. At time when government should caution people against attending unnecessary social events, it is amusing to see it itself organising one.

....
Samina rahim
Saminar@rediffmail

Why nationalism is a threat to multilateralism

Collective intelligence and astute leadership required to counter isolationist forces

ASHOK SWAIN

There is a very thin line between being a patriot and displaying love and pride for your land and becoming a nationalist and carrying the notion of your country's pre-eminence and its culture over others

Loving your country is considered a virtue, and for a patriot, love for the country should not have any limit. Blind love has its own pitfalls, and there is no convincing argument except emotional ones to justify that. However, patriotism has been in the past and still continues to be used by political and social entrepreneurs to build nation-states.

In regular intervals in recent history, the 'patriotic' passive love by countrymen is not even seen as enough. There are calls for the love for the country to be enthusiastically displayed. That sometimes is accompanied by hatred towards the country's perceived enemy, both outside and within.

There is a very thin line between being a patriot and displaying love and pride for your land and becoming a nationalist and carrying the notion of your country's pre-eminence and its culture over others. Though commentators try to give a positive pitch to patriotism compared to nationalism, there is only a subtle difference. It is easy to interchange depending upon the whims and expediency of someone at the top.

By creating false pride and a notion of superiority, nationalist leaders often claim to unify their nations, but the creation of "us" vs. "them" attitude also leads to prejudices and intolerances against not only other countries but also people and political parties opposing them. People and groups who oppose these nationalist leaders are not seen as policy critics or political opposition but as antinational forces.

Nationalists take pride in hurting others, people of other countries, and also anyone who is branded as "them". Politicians continue to lie and distort history to create an illusion of superiority among "their" people. The ambition of nationalist forces to regain that illusory glory of the past results in justifying the control of media, dominating the judiciary and dismantling the rule of law.

Facts lose relevance, and emotions take the pre-eminent position. Any opposition at home is crushed, and the ego of a powerful majority group that is pro-one party gets regularly massaged. Nationalists believe they have the right to dominate others as they are superior. Thus, nationalism often leads to militarism and conflicts with other countries, and in its crude form, it can also lead to ethnic cleansing and genocide inside the country.

With the idea of being unique and superior to others, nationalists don't see themselves as responsible members of the community of nations. Short-term selfish gains and show of power become the main driver of the foreign policy. Moral obligations, long-term stability, and commitment to international agreements are easily superseded by the so-called national interest seen through narrow lenses. Nationalism as a political strategy goes against the idea of globalism and multilateralism.

Rise of populism



Populists have been rising to power advocating economic nationalism, which asks for protectionist policies and promoting political nationalism through xenophobic rhetoric. They frame the national interest outside global peace and inclusive development in this interconnected interdependent world. The nationalist view looks at international institutions with scepticism and rejects the importance of global cooperation. With its 'superiority' mindset, nationalists advocate isolationism as the best and safest way of achieving lost glory.

Unfortunately, the world is now swamped with nationalist forces. Particularly, when confronted with challenges like a once-in-a-century pandemic, it has lost its way for survival against an unprecedented climate change, passing through the third wave of large-scale human migration and facing the worse economic recession since World War II. There is a need for multilateralism more than ever, but unfortunately, it has lost its way.

The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, on November 9, 2018 told the Security Council that the world needs to strengthen international relations and join hands to combat complex global threats. He stressed that the rising nationalism has put multilateralism under severe stress and threatened its seven decades of achievements in saving lives and generating economic and social progress. Even there has been a defeat of nationalist ad-

ministration in the US, the threat of nationalism to multilateralism is still severe. Vaccine nationalism has almost been a norm. Nationalism has also stopped the Security Council from taking a distinct position on the coup in Myanmar, civil war in Tigray, and considering global climate change as a security threat.

The rise of nationalism has pushed the countries to take unilateral positions and actions, and it has also guided them not to adhere to rules and norms of multilateralism. While the world is coming under increasing pressure from a lingering pandemic, climate change, economic recession, and migration issues, an effective multilateralism only, not unilateral or bilateral approach, can provide a powerful platform to tackle global and local challenges that appear to grow in scale and complexity.

Multilateralism is critical to maintaining international legal order, and a "go-alone" approach of nationalists is not sustainable to global peace and security. Multilateralism is not an end in itself, but it is a necessary means to collective peace and collaborative progress. Collective intelligence and astute leadership needs to be developed to counter isolationist, nationalist forces.

The world must reconfirm multilateralism's primacy to steer the global idea of commons.

Gulf News

What To Eat Before And After Your COVID-19 Vaccine To Lessen Side Effects

Eat and drink these foods and beverages, and you'll give your immune system the best chance to respond well and recover quickly.

JILL NEIMARK

By May 1, all Americans will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. Five states (Alaska, Arizona, Mississippi, Utah and West Virginia) have already opened vaccines to all adults over 16, with others planning to follow.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, side effects of the vaccines can include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, as well as possible fever, headache, tiredness, nausea, chills and muscle pain. These symptoms are actually a good sign that your body is building immunity, and they will usually pass in a few days (if they do not, call your doctor), the CDC advises.

But there are small steps you can take to lessen those side effects, and many of them have to do with your diet.

Helpful foods and beverages for dealing with vaccine side effects

Obviously, it's not fun feeling under the weather for a few days, which is especially possible after your second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. "Budget for adequate rest and sleep when taking the vaccine, and maybe going easy on exercise," advises Dr. Ronald Hoffman, a New York City integrative physician. Beyond that, he said, there are some simple do's and don'ts in terms of food and drink.

Do: Try ginger tea for nausea

Ginger has a reputation as an excellent and safe traditional remedy for gastrointestinal complaints. Ginger tea is easy to make, and a simple recipe can be found here.

Don't: Fast or do anything "drastic like juicing or detox"

"The development of immunity depends on the body 'reading' instructions from the vaccine and synthesizing antibodies and white blood cells, which requires adequate protein in the diet," Hoffman said.

Do: Hydrate with healthy fluids

From water to tea to your favorite flavored sparkling water, drink up. The fever a vaccine may induce can lead to dehydration.



Do: Eat a healthy, Mediterranean-style diet

Try to start eating especially healthy a few weeks ahead of your appointment for a vaccine. A Mediterranean-style diet is known to have anti-inflammatory effects, but it'll take a few weeks to kick in.

"Preconditioning your body for a few weeks beforehand makes more sense than just being abstemious in the immediate aftermath of the shot," Hoffman said.

The diet emphasizes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, healthy Omega-3 and monounsaturated fats (like those in olive oil), fish, poultry, beans and eggs. Dairy and red meat are limited. One study found that individuals over 65 years of age who ate five or more servings of fruit and vegetables per day had a stronger immune response to a pneumococcal vaccine than peers who ate two servings or fewer.

Do: Consider eating a low glycemic index diet for at least a few days after the vaccine

A low glycemic index diet will keep your blood sugar steady. Research centered around diabetes has shown that lower glucose levels tend to be anti-inflammatory. In general, foods that keep blood sugar at healthy levels include green vegetables, most beans, whole grains and multigrain breads, fruits like berries and apples, and of course healthy lean proteins, eggs and nuts.

Do: Turn to that favorite remedy of all time, chicken soup

A nice healing broth with many well-cooked veggies is easy to digest and nourishing.

Do: Fine-tune your gut health to increase your immune response

Across the human population, immune response to vaccines varies. Some of this depends on age — as

we get older, our immunity wanes. Some of it depends on individual variation. And some of it depends on the type of vaccine you receive.

An important aspect of vaccine response, and of immunity in general, is a healthy gut microbiome, said Dr. Todd Born, a naturopathic physician and certified nutrition specialist in Washington. Not only are vaccine responses variable, but Born said that a healthy gut microbiome has been shown in scientific studies to increase immune response to vaccines.

"A diverse and healthy microbial community in the gut will influence the immune system directly," Born told HuffPost.

Born recommends a high-fiber diet and fermented foods, and to "start two weeks before the vaccine and continue for a minimum of two weeks after."

"Fiber-rich diets encourage the growth of beneficial bacteria that support the immune response," he explained. And fermented foods — from yogurt and kefir to kimchi and sauerkraut — can help enhance the gut microbes that support immune response.

Studies have actually shown that some common probiotic organisms, such as *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, can improve the antibody response to vaccines. This and other healthy *Lactobacilli* can be found in products in your supermarket — these include kefir, yogurt, and some fermented beverages.

Born also likes a homemade "immune support" soup, which he often recommends to patients during cold and flu season. He recommended adding chopped onion and garlic, grated ginger, juice from half a lemon, fresh minced parsley and one grated carrot to a quart of miso, chicken or mushroom broth. Simmer for 15 minutes and add the parsley and lemon juice at the end.

While you sip that nourishing soup and let your immune system do its work, play some uplifting music and make a gratitude list. Thirty years of research has shown that stress, depression and loneliness can impair the immune system's response to vaccines.

So, nourish your body with healthy food and drink, stay hydrated, rest well and be of good cheer. You'll be giving your immune system the best chance to respond well to the vaccine and to recover quickly.

Huffpost

‘Drinking beetroot juice can result in healthy ageing’

Agencies

The findings of a recent study suggest that drinking beetroot juice promotes a mix of mouth bacteria that are associated with healthier brain function and blood vessels.

The findings of the study were published in the journal 'Redox Biology'.

Beetroot - and other foods including lettuce, spinach, and celery - are rich in inorganic nitrate, and many oral bacteria play a role in turning nitrate into nitric oxide, which helps to regulate blood vessels and neurotransmission (chemical messages in the brain).

Older people tend to have lower nitric oxide production, and this is associated with poorer vascular (blood vessel) and cognitive (brain) health.

In the new study, by the University of Exeter, 26 healthy older people took part in two ten-day supplementation periods: one with nitrate-rich beetroot juice and another with nitrate-free placebo juice, which they drank twice a day.

The results showed higher levels of bacteria associated with good vascular and cognitive health, and lower levels of bacteria linked to disease and inflammation.

Systolic blood pressure dropped on average by five points (mmHg) after drinking the beetroot juice.

"We are really excited about these findings, which have important implications for healthy ageing," said lead author Professor Anni Vanhatalo, of the University of Exeter.

"Previous studies have compared the oral bacteria of young and older people, and healthy people compared to those with diseases, but ours is the first to test nitrate-rich diet in this way," added Vanhatalo.

Vanhatalo further noted, "Our findings suggest that adding nitrate-rich foods to the diet - in this case via beetroot juice - for just ten days can substantially alter the oral microbiome (mix of bacteria) for the better. Maintaining this healthy oral microbiome in the long term might slow down the negative vascular and cognitive changes associated with ageing."



The researchers ran tests to identify clusters or "modules" of oral bacteria that tend to thrive together in similar conditions. A module (Prevotella-Veillonella) that has been associated with inflammation was reduced after nitrate supplementation, including a decrease of Clostridium difficile

(which can infect the bowel and cause diarrhoea).

Professor Vanhatalo stressed that more research is needed to confirm the findings and see whether similar effects are found in other groups.

"Our participants were healthy, active older people with generally good blood pressure," she said. "Dietary nitrate reduced their blood pressure on average, and we are keen to find out whether the same would happen in other age groups and among people in poorer health."

"We are working with colleagues in the University of Exeter Medical School to investigate interactions between the oral bacteria and cognition to better understand how diet could be used to delay cognitive decline in older age," Vanhatalo added.

Much research has been conducted into the benefits of a healthy gut microbiome, but far less is known about the oral microbial community, which plays a crucial role in "activating" the nitrate from a vegetable-rich diet.

Here's how harmful chemicals in plastic up risk of postpartum depression

Agencies

Women exposed to endocrine-disrupting chemicals commonly found in plastics during pregnancy are at a higher risk of experiencing postpartum depression, suggested a new study. The findings of the study were published in the Endocrine Society's Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism. The study also found that these harmful chemicals may influence hormonal shifts during pregnancy.

Postpartum depression is a serious and common psychiatric disorder that affects up to 1 in 5 childbearing women. The cause of postpartum depression is not well understood, but hormonal changes during pregnancy have been found to be an important factor.

Harmful chemicals such as bisphenols and phthalates that are found in plastics and personal care products are known to affect sex hormones.

"We found that phthalate exposure was associated with lower progesterone levels during pregnancy and a greater likelihood of developing postpartum depression," said study author Melanie Jacobson, Ph.D., M.P.H. of the NYU Langone Medical Center in New York, N.Y.

Jacobson added, "This re-



We found that phthalate exposure was associated with lower progesterone levels during pregnancy and a greater likelihood of developing postpartum depression

search is important because phthalates are so prevalent in the environment that they are detectable in nearly all pregnant women in the United States. If these chemicals can affect prenatal hormone levels and subsequently postpartum depression, reducing exposure to these types of chemicals could be a plausible avenue for preventing postpartum depression."

The researchers measured the levels of bisphenols and phthalates in urine samples and sex hormones in blood samples from 139 pregnant women. They assessed these women at four months postpartum using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) and found women with higher levels of phthalates in their urine were more likely to develop postpartum depression.

The women also had lower levels of progesterone, a hormone that plays an important role in the menstrual cycle, in maintaining the early stages of pregnancy and in modulating mood.

"These results need to be interpreted with caution as this is the first study to examine these chemicals in relation to postpartum depression and our sample size was small," Jacobson concluded.

Low-calorie diet, exercise may improve survival for leukemia adolescents: Study

Agencies

According to a new study, overweight children and adolescents receiving chemotherapy for treatment of leukemia are less successful battling the disease compared to their lean peers.

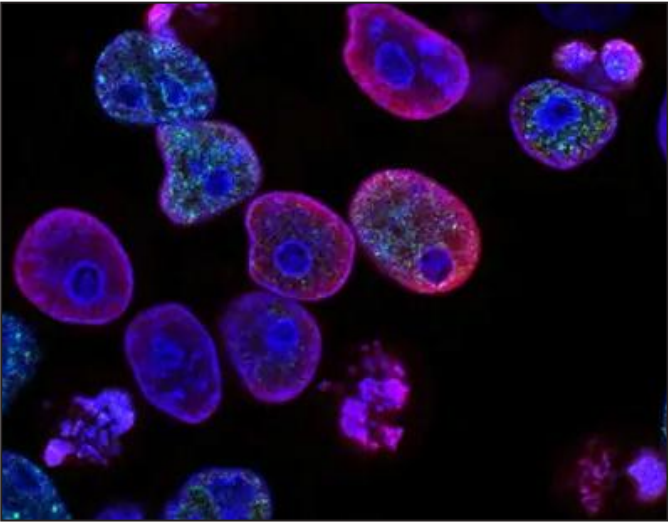
In some cancers, including leukemia in children and adolescents, obesity can negatively affect survival outcomes. Obese young people with leukemia are 50 per cent more likely to relapse after treatment than their lean counterparts.

Now, a study led by researchers at UCLA and Children's Hospital Los Angeles has shown that a combination of modest dietary changes and exercise can dramatically improve survival outcomes for those with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the most common childhood cancer.

The findings of the study were published in the American Society of Hematology's journal Blood Advances.

The researchers found that patients who reduced their calorie intake by 10 per cent or more and adopted a moderate exercise program immediately after their diagnosis had, on average, 70 per cent less chance of having lingering leukemia cells after a month of chemotherapy than those who did not go on the diet-and-exercise regimen.

Lingering cancer cells in the bone marrow, which are



more likely to be found in overweight individuals, are associated with worse survival and a higher risk of relapse, often leading to more intense treatments like bone marrow transplants and immunotherapy.

"We tested a very mild diet because this was our first time trying it, and the first month of treatment is already so difficult for patients and families," said senior author Dr Steven Mittelman, chief of pediatric endocrinology at UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital and a member of the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Mittelman added, "But even with these mild changes in diet and exercise, the intervention was extremely effective in reducing the chance of having detectable leukemia in

insulin sensitivity and an increase in the beneficial hormone adiponectin, which is involved in regulating glucose and breaking down fatty acids.

Most importantly, the researchers found a 70 per cent decrease in the chance of having lingering leukemia cells in the bone marrow -- known medically as a minimal residual disease -- when compared with a historical control group.

"We hoped the intervention would improve outcomes, but we had no idea it would be so effective," Mittelman said.

Mittelman noted, "We can't really add more toxic chemotherapies to the intense initial treatment phase, but this is an intervention that likely has no negative side effects. In fact, we hope it may even reduce toxicities caused by chemotherapy."

"This is the first trial to test a diet-and-exercise intervention to improve treatment outcomes from a childhood cancer," said principal investigator and lead author Dr Etan Orgel, Director of the Medical Supportive Care Service in the Cancer and Blood Disease Institute at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

"This is an exciting proof-of-concept, which may have great implications for other cancers as well," added Orgel.

Next steps include further testing of the approach in a multicenter randomised trial, which will be launched later this year, the researchers said.

‘People with severe gum infection have increased blood pressure’

Agencies

According to a study published in Hypertension, an American Heart Association journal, people, with severe gum infection called periodontitis, may have more chances of higher blood pressure compared to individuals who had healthy gums.

Previous studies have found an association between hypertension and periodontitis, however, research confirming the details of this association is scarce. Periodontitis is an infection of the gum tissues that hold teeth in place that can lead to progressive inflammation, bone or tooth loss.

Prevention and treatment of periodontitis are cost-effective and can lead to the reduction of systemic markers of inflammation as well as improvement in the function of the endothelium (thin membrane lining the inside of the heart and blood vessels).

"Patients with gum disease often present with elevated blood pressure, especially when there is active gingival inflammation or bleeding of the gums," said lead study author Eva Munoz Aguilera, D.D.S., M.Clin.Dent., senior researcher at UCL Eastman Dental Institute in London, United Kingdom.

"Elevated blood pressure is usually asymptomatic, and many individuals may be unaware that they are at increased risk of cardiovascular complications. We aimed to investigate the association between severe periodontitis and high blood pressure in healthy adults without a confirmed diagnosis of hypertension," Aguilera added.

The study included 250 adults with generalised, severe



periodontitis (50 per cent of teeth measured with gum infection) and a control group of 250 adults who did not have severe gum disease, all of whom were otherwise healthy and had no other chronic health conditions.

The median age of the participants was 35 years and 52.6 per cent were female. The research was completed in collaboration with the department of dentistry at the Universitat

Internacional de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain.

All participants underwent comprehensive periodontal examinations including detailed measures of gum disease severity, such as full-mouth dental plaque, bleeding of the gums, and the depth of the infected gum pockets.

Blood pressure assessments were measured three times for each participant to ensure accuracy. Fasting blood samples were also collected and analyzed for high levels of white blood cells and high sensitivity C-reactive protein (hsCRP), as both are markers of increased inflammation in the body.

Additional information analysed as confounders included family history of cardiovascular disease, age, body mass index, gender, ethnicity, smoking, and physical activity levels.

Government of India

Ministry of Food Processing Industries

Panchsheel Bhawan, August Kranti Marg, New Delhi-110049

Reference No: M-I/6/2020-(FME)(Part-I)

Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) invites applications from eligible and interested candidates for the following positions on contract basis to work in the National Programme Management Unit under the PMFME Scheme:

Sl. No	Name of the Position	No. of Vacancy
1	Lead Project Manager (State Programme)	1
2	Lead Project Manager (Knowledge Management)	1
3	Lead Project Manager (Capacity Building)	1
4	Lead Project Manager (Planning)	1
5	Lead Project Manager (Branding & Marketing)	1
6	Manager (State Programme)	1
7	Manager (Knowledge Management)	1
8	Manager (Capacity Building)	1
9	Manager (Planning)	1
10	Manager (Branding & Marketing)	1
11	Manager (MIS)	1
12	Manager(Financial & Micro Credit)	1
13	Manager (Monitoring & Evaluation)	1
14	Food Technologist	2
15	Communication Manager	2
16	Joint Secretary/ Director (Retired from GOI)	1
17	Pay & Accounts Officer (Retired from GOI)	1
18	Young Professional-Administration	1

The details such as eligibility, experience and selection procedure can be seen on the MoFPI website <https://mofpi.nic.in/>, and <https://www.visionjobs.in/mofpi/>

DAVP/ 16101/11/0001/2122

57% Indian Businesses Experience Unexpected Downtime In 2020 Due To Data Loss



Agenceis

With a majority of businesses shifting to on-line work options due to the coronavirus pandemic, organisations now have additional aspects to factor in – data loss, data protection and privacy. And, many are failing.

A global survey by security firm Acronis found that 57 percent of Indian organisations experienced unexpected downtime due to data loss in 2020, the Hindu BusinessLine reported.

Notably, this is despite 70 percent of Indian companies running as many as 10, and the remaining 30 percent running more than 10 simultaneous solutions to meet their cybersecurity and data protection requirements, the Cyber Protection Week survey found.

The survey had 4,400 respondents from 22 countries, including India. As per the survey report, investing in more solutions did not deliver more protection but in many cases "created greater complexity and less visibility for the IT team."

Rustom Hirananeck, General Manager – South Asia at Acronis said the survey "clearly illustrates that using separate tools to address individual types of exposures is complicated, inefficient, and costly."

He added: "These findings confirm our belief that the smarter approach is cyber protection, which unifies data protection, cybersecurity, and end-

point management in one."

Among the big challenges the report said is "significant gap in awareness" among users of what security capabilities are available.

The survey found 35 percent of IT users and 11 percent of IT professionals did not know if their data was modified without their knowledge. The numbers globally are more dismal – standing at 63 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

Further, 10 percent of IT users were unaware if their anti-malware solution bars zero-day threats, compared to 43 percent globally – even while 53 percent claim they have it.

Among professionals, 20 percent Indian IT pros did not know if their organisation is subject to data privacy regulations compared to 13 percent globally – this signals "tremendous risk of major fines for potential compliance violations in 2021," the survey report noted.

For users too, around 98 percent in India spent more time on their devices in 2020 of which 85 percent took "extra steps" to secure those devices. Further, 35 percent of Indian users and 41 percent global users said they did not update their device at least for a week, even after being notified of a patch.

For backups, 98 percent claim to do it of which 40 percent claim to do it daily – despite this 90 percent reported "irretrievable loss of data at least once."

India Gold Lenders Cut Tenor, Seek More Collateral As Prices Plunge

Agenceis

Indian firms that lend against gold are cutting tenors and seeking more collateral to protect against the plunge in prices of the precious metal.

Market leader Muthoot Finance Ltd. has been offering discounts on interest rates and other incentives to borrowers who chose to repay monthly or more frequently. Rival Muthoot Mini Financiers Ltd. is mostly lending for 90 days now versus 270 previously, and most large firms are disbursing amounts well below regulatory limits, which was 75 per cent of the metal's value for shadow lenders and 90 per cent for traditional banks through March 31.

Gold loans had boomed over the past year as small businesses tried to revive themselves from lockdowns by pledging family jewelry that's a staple of almost all Indian households. Muthoot Finance, for instance, saw such lending increase 25 per cent over the period and the company holds 146 tons of gold, higher than the official reserves of Singapore and Sweden.

"People are sentimental about their jewelry," said George Muthoot Alexander, managing director at Muthoot Finance. "They will never want to default despite a fall in gold prices as they intend to get back their pledged ornaments."

Gold posted its first quarterly drop in more than two years amid improving expectations for the global economy and fading demand from exchange-traded funds. The metal has fallen more than 9 per cent in 2021 as investors trade their havens for assets

that will benefit from the economic recovery. Prices in India trade near one-year lows.

The biggest concern though is that a fresh wave of infections in India could scuttle business plans and force even the most diligent repayers to default.

"We are reviewing our portfolio and mark-to-market levels daily to see if further steps are needed," said Mathew Muthootu, managing director of Muthootu Mini Financiers.

What Bloomberg Intelligence says:

Muthoot Finance and Mananapuram Finance's gold-loan assets under management may dip 1.5 per cent-2 per cent January-March due to the sharp slide of gold prices. But their low loan-to-value ratios could protect asset quality, and gold-loan AUM may rebound on a gradual economic recovery despite fierce competition in the segment from banks.

-- Rena Kwok, credit analyst

India's market for gold lending will expand by at least 34 per cent to 4.6 trillion rupees (\$61 billion) in the two years to March 2022, according to an estimate by KPMG. The segment's bad-loan ratio is about 1 per cent compared with 7.5 per cent for the entire banking sector.

"While there is a gold price fall and among the normal risk parameters the security would have reduced, the economy is opening up and it is a not crisis situation," said World Gold Council India Managing Director P R Somasundaram. "People are keen to take loans because every business is coming back and small businesses do depend on gold loans for quick access to capital."

Biden Economic Adviser Says Job Growth Goal Of Infrastructure Plan

Agenceis

President Joe Biden's top economic adviser said on Sunday that the goal of the administration's infrastructure proposal is investment that will foster job growth in both the short- and long-term.

"What our plan says is, 'let's keep the economy going, let's see more job creation' – that's a really good thing for the economy," White House economic adviser Brian Deese said on "Fox News Sunday."

"But let's also think for the longer term, about where those investments that we can make that will really drive, not just more job



growth but better job growth, not just job growth in the short term but job growth for long term, by investing in our infrastructure, by investing in our research and development, in a way that we haven't since the 1960s," he said.

Personal Details Of 6.1 Million People From India Hacked

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Personal details of about 533 million Facebook users globally, including 6.1 million from India, were allegedly leaked online and posted for free on hacking forums, according to a cybersecurity executive.

The leaked details allegedly include names, phone numbers and other details of users of Facebook, a social media giant that had 2.80 billion monthly active users (MUAs) as of December 31, 2020.

All 533,000,000 Facebook records were just leaked for free. This means that if you have a Facebook account, it is extremely likely the phone number used for the account was leaked," Alon Gal, co-founder and chief technical officer of cybersecurity firm Hudson Rock, has said in a tweet flagging the issue.

A list of countries that was shared in the tweet, showed that information of 6.1 million users from India, 32.3 million from the US, 11.5 million from the UK and 7.3 million from Australia, was part of the leaked data.

When contacted, a Facebook company spokesperson said:



"This is old data that was previously reported on in 2019. We found and fixed this issue in August 2019".

Gal said in early 2020, a vulnerability - which enabled seeing the phone number linked to every Facebook account - was exploited, creating a database containing the information of 533 million users across all countries.

He added that details include phone number, Facebook ID and full name and "bad actors will certainly use the information for social engineering, scamming,

hacking and marketing".

In the past too, Facebook has faced challenges around data security. In March 2018, Facebook data of over 5.62 lakh Indians was allegedly compromised as UK-based Cambridge Analytica had accessed information of about 87 million users globally.

India is among the biggest markets for Facebook and its group companies, WhatsApp and Instagram.

According to government data, India has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 41 crore Facebook users, and 21 crore users of Instagram.

SBI Hikes Home Loan Rate to 6.95%

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has revised its home loan rate to 6.95 per cent effective April 1. With the revision, the lowest rate of 6.70 per cent regime for limited period ended in March 31.

During the limited period, the bank offered home loan starting from 6.70 per cent for loans up to Rs 75 lakh and 6.75 per cent for loans in the range of Rs 75 lakh-Rs 5 crore. As per information posted on its website, the new rate effective April 1 is 6.95 per cent.

Compared to teaser rate for the limited period, the new rate is 25 basis points higher at 6.95 per cent.



The hike in minimum home loan rate by SBI is likely to prompt other lenders to follow suit. The bank will also levy a consolidated processing fee on home loans. This will be 0.40 per cent of the loan amount and

goods and services tax (GST) subject to a minimum of Rs 10,000 and maximum of Rs 30,000 plus GST.

Last month, SBI had in waived off home loan processing fees till March 31 to cash in on festive fervour.

Congress Seeks Probe Into Rafale Deal After French Media Claim Bribes Were Paid

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Monday demanded an independent probe into the Rs 60,000 crore Rafale jet deal after a section of the French media citing the national anti-graft agency claimed 1 million Euro commissions in the same.

Addressing reporters here, Congress media head Randeep Surjewala also asked the government whether or not it was in order that a ban be placed on Rafale makers Dassault for paying bribes and also a case registered.

"India's biggest defence deal of 36 Rafale fighter aircraft from France's Dassault Aviation is a sordid saga of loss to public exchequer, squandering of national interests and violation of Defence Procurement Procedure. The devastating sensational revelations in the last evening report of French News portal Mediapart.fr have now revealed the existence of middleman, payment of commission and red flags raised by the French Anti-Corruption Agency – AFA." Surjewala cited the news report that

alleged payment of 1.1 million euro bribes to Indian firm Defsys Solutions and said the French anti-corruption bureau had asked Dassault tough questions on the payments.

"Dassault balance sheet said the money was a gift to the client. But when confronted, Dassault told the French anti-corruption agency that it paid an Indian firm that was engaged to prepare 59 models of Rafale. No answers were forthcoming when the French officials asked Dassault why would it engage an Indian firm to make models when it was manufacturing the jet itself?"

Noting that Defsys Solutions, India, is actually a company undertaking assembly of flight simulators and optional and electronic systems, Surjewala asked the PM whether he would invoke integrity clause of the DPP to black list Rafale as provided by the rules.

"Defence Procurement Procedure as also the stated Indian government policy envisages that there will be an 'Integrity Clause' in every defence purchase contract. There can be no

middleman or payment of commission or bribe. Any evidence of middleman or commission or bribery has serious penal consequences of banning of the supplier defence company, cancellation of contract, registration of FIR and imposition of heavy financial penalties on the defence supplier company. Will this happen now?" asked Congress.

What is this about

10th April, 2015 – Prime Minister Narendra Modi announces purchase of 36 Rafale aircraft off the shelf during his visit to France.

23rd September, 2016 – Modi government signs a formal agreement with France to buy 36 Rafale aircraft for US\$ 8.7 billion or €7.8 billion, i.e., Rs 60,000 crore.

An investigation conducted by French anti-corruption agency – AFA has now revealed that after signing of the deal in 2016, Dassault, the manufacturer of Rafale has paid 1.1 million euro to a middleman Defsys Solutions, India. Amount shown as expenditure by Dassault as "gifts to clients".

India, UAE And Israel's Trilateral Trade Could Reach \$110 Billion By 2030: Diplomats

Agenceis

Tapping into the mutual strengths of India, Israel and the UAE could propel the trilateral trade between the countries to a high of USD 110 billion by 2030, top diplomats and members of the business community have said.

The comments were made at an event organised by the International Federation of Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce (IFIICC) on Sunday to discuss the ongoing business collaborations being pursued through IFIICC's leadership across sectors.

"The international business potential backed by Israeli innovation, UAE's visionary leadership and strategic partnership of both nations with India could be USD 110 billion by 2030," Ambassador Ilan Sztulman Starosta,

Chairman of Israeli Manufacturers Council at Manufacturers Association of Israel (MAI) participated in the event virtually from Tel Aviv.

Tuttnauer stressed that "international business through the UAE in collaboration with India using Israeli innovation will be the future".

IFIICC was launched on December 14 last year and is looking to set up offices globally, drawing the support of the Indian diaspora, the largest in the world.

"Innovation and collaboration can help usher in a new, post-pandemic era of sustainable economic growth," Merzi Sodawaterwala, Founder and Chairperson of IFIICC, said.

Kamal Vachani, Honorary President of IFIICC for the UAE and Group Director & Partner of Al Maya Group, noted that



Head of the Israeli mission in Dubai, said in a press release issued by IFIICC.

Echoing similar sentiments, Ambassador of the UAE to India and Founding Patron of IFIICC, Dr Ahmed Abdul Rahman AlBanna, said, "UAE and India's bilateral trade is projected to grow from USD 60 billion in 2020 to USD 100 billion by 2030. UAE is a gateway to the world and this trilateral with India and Israel could benefit the world."

Dr Aman Puri, Consul General of India to Dubai, said, "The Indian business community in the UAE could significantly leverage the strengths of this trilateral to boost economic growth of all nations."

Ran Tuttnauer, Honorary President of IFIICC in Israel and

"the innovation and economic prospects of this trilateral are endless".

The European business school (ESCP) in a seminar organised recently also highlighted the global potential of trilateral ties between Israel, the UAE and India. The seminar held last month was organised in cooperation with SPJIMR.

Established in 1819, the ESCP Business School is considered to be the world's first business school.

The post-Abraham accords phase normalising Israel's ties with some of the Arab countries has generated a lot of interest in this trilateral partnership with several events organised by various organisations, including leading banks.

ByteDance Says India's Freeze On Bank Accounts Is Harassment: Court Filing

Agenceis

China's ByteDance has told an Indian court that a government freeze on its bank accounts in a probe of possible tax evasion amounts to harassment and was done illegally, according to a filing seen by Reuters.

ByteDance in January reduced its Indian workforce after New Delhi maintained a ban on its popular video app TikTok, imposed last year after a border clash between India and China. Beijing has repeatedly criticised India over that ban and those of other Chinese apps.

An Indian tax intelligence unit in mid-March ordered HSBC and Citibank in Mumbai to freeze bank accounts of ByteDance India as it probed some of the unit's financial dealings. ByteDance has challenged the freeze on the four accounts in a Mumbai court.

None of ByteDance India's employees have been paid their March salaries due to the account freeze, said two people familiar with the matter. The company told the court it has a workforce of 1,335, including outsourced personnel.

In the 209-page court filing lodged on March 25, ByteDance told the High Court in Mumbai the authorities acted against the company without any material evidence and gave no prior notice, as required by Indian law, before such "drastic action".

Blocking accounts "during the process of investigation amounts (to) applying undue coercion," ByteDance argued. It is "intended, improperly, to harass the petitioner."

India's Directorate General of Goods & Services Tax Intelligence, and the finance ministry which oversees it, did not immediately respond to requests for comment over the weekend.

Rupee Slumps 31 Paise to 73.43 Against USD in Early Trade

Agenceis

MUMBAI: The Indian rupee slumped 31 paise to 73.43 against the US dollar in opening trade on Monday amid concerns over rising COVID-19 cases.

Besides, losses in domestic equity markets also weighed on investors' sentiment. At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 73.38 against the US dollar, then fell further to 73.43, registering a decline of 31 paise over its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 73.12 against the American currency. The forex market was closed on April 2, on account of Good Friday.

The Indian rupee started weak this Monday and may weaken further against the dollar on concerns over India's economic outlook following a further increase in coronavirus infections. Reliance Securities said in a research note. India recorded an all-time high of 1,03,558 coronavirus infections in a day pushing the nationwide COVID-19 tally to 1,25,89,067,



ments being very different, for different categories of users, including feature phone users.

Trai may rope in an agency to conduct the survey, which is expected to initially focus on consumers in small pockets. The modalities, including medium of conducting the survey, will be worked out in coming days.

Asked about the trigger for the survey and if TRAI had noted any ambiguities, the official said overall the role of the regulator is to keep a watch on the market to ensure that the sector is functioning smoothly, and consumer interests are being addressed. At present, the tariffs are under forbearance, meaning that operators virtually have a free hand in fixing the rates and report plans to Trai in seven working days of launch.

'Please, Release My Father', Appeals Daughter Of CoBRA Commando Kidnapped By Naxals

Agenceis

JAMMU: "Please, release my father", pleaded five-year-old Shragvi, the daughter of a CoBRA commando held hostage by Naxals after an ambush in Chhattisgarh.

This is all a sobbing Shragvi could utter as she wiped away her tears. The family of Commando Rakeshwar Singh Minhas was in deep shock after the news of the deadly ambush on Saturday and his disappearance broke out.

At least 22 security personnel were killed in the attack on the CoBRA battalion of CRPF by the Naxals who claimed that they had abducted Minhas after the ambush.

"We came to know about the



attack and that he went missing during action from news channels. Nobody from the government or the CRPF informed us about the incident," Meenu, the wife of Minhas, told reporters at her residence in Barnai area

on Jammu-Akhnour road. She said she made frantic efforts to reach out to the CRPF headquarters in Jammu to know the whereabouts of Minhas. "I was told that there is nothing we can share with you. Once we

get a clear picture, we will come to you," Meenu said as having been told by the CRPF officers.

With her daughter in her lap who also pleaded for the safe return of her father, she said an officer also visited her house and repeated the assurance.

She said Minhas had not picked up the phone since "we talked for the last time" on Friday at 9:30 pm when he was leaving for duty. Meenu said it was the government's duty to ensure his safe return to his family.

"My husband served the country for the last 10 years and now it is the turn of the government to ensure that he returns to us hale and hearty," she said surrounded by relatives who were there to support the family through the ordeal.

"Minhas joined the CRPF in 2011 and he has been serving the nation for the last 10 years. He was transferred to Chhattisgarh only three months back from Assam," she said, holding back her tears.

"I got a telephone call from a person who introduced himself as a local reporter from Chhattisgarh. He wanted me to send a picture of my husband along with an appeal to the Naxals," Meenu said.

However, she did not respond to his calls after discussing the matter with her family.

Meenu appealed to Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to take up the matter with the Union government and urge the prime minister and home minister for his safe return.

122 youths trained for self-employment in J&K

Press Trust of India

JAMMU: A batch of 122 aspiring entrepreneurs passed out from the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) after a three-week entrepreneurship development programme held at different districts, an official said on Monday.

The training programme was simultaneously conducted at JKEDI district centres in Reasi, Kishtwar, Kulgam and Anantnag. The purpose was to provide training facilities at their doorstep so that the scheme would cover maximum unemployed youth, the spokesperson said.

The institute also imparted special sectoral training to the trainees during the three-week

course, the spokesperson said.

The institute trained the candidates in manufacturing, services and agri-allied sectors under the Himayat Self Employment Scheme (HSES) of the Ministry of Rural Development.

The programme is aimed at providing lessons on skill development, performance improvement, basic business concepts and self-development training to aspiring entrepreneurs, he said.

In the next phase, the detailed project reports of the trained candidates would be formulated by the institute, followed by preparation of financial appraisals and another related process for disbursement of funds to enable the qualified candidates to establish their business ventures.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

'We Wake Up To See

"We're living in a continuous state of fear from last two year because these landslides keep no calendar."

No wonder why, he says, people have grown paranoid and panicky in Shripora.

The crumbling life has also redefined the rustic routine and disrupted its ties with the neighbouring villages.

"Our tragedy is now isolating us from others," Ashraf says, walking through the derelict structures. "Mindful of our precarious situation, people from other parts are now refusing to wed their wards in our village."

Some hours into the conversation and an old man with a long flowing grey beard starts detailing Shripora's sliding situation.

With his wrinkled face and sunken eyes, Mohammad Jamal Dar has an ageless feel about him. Yet, his concern for his dispersing community is aging him fast. Like others, he's also seeking closure to the home crisis.

Dar takes me to the other side of the village where cracks on the walls are widening, so are worries and woes. His endless destitution detailing clearly makes a case for the village desperately waiting for an intervention.

"People aren't doing well economically here," says Dar, a village patron figure. "Over the years we've toiled hard to construct these houses, but destiny is rendering us homeless."

Besides losing their homes to the loose land, Dar's tribe is equally facing official inertia—making them feel abandoned and agonized lots of Baramulla's northern heights.

But this gloomy situation hardly stops weary townspeople from frequenting this haunted village for an escape route. While Shripora is a retreat zone for sightseers, it's a "bottomless pit" for the natives.

Dar says that landslides started some two years back and till today, they're far from over. "Natives are fighting nature here," he adds. "We can't explain why it's happening to us. But the idea of losing homes is making all of us restless."

Out of almost 300 families, the villagers say, fifty have completely lost their homes, while over hundred have suffered damages.

Many homeless families are now living in tin sheds. This past winter, Dar says, the vale's classic cold almost froze families inside those tin sheds.

But while some stayed and fought the vagaries of weather, many migrated to other places. Some are living with their relatives here and there.

One of the tin-shed dwellers, Abdul Khaliq Lone takes me to the place where once he shared laughter and lively moments with his family. But now, the home is a tumbledown structure on the caved-in courtyard.

"We've been witnessing this crestfallen situation over the years," Lone says, as he stares at his lost home, "but it hardly creates any hue and cry in the official circles. Our plight is yet to move them."

As desperate dwellings, even those makeshift sheds make life highly uncertain for the villagers.

"As landslides strike frequently and crumble a sense of calm here, chaos and confusion is engulfing our lives," Lone laments.

"We don't even have an option of migration because we're dependent on our orchards and paddy fields here. If we move out, our family will starve."

Shripora's shaky ground situation only turns dangerous when it rains.

A week before my arrival, the rain had swept the village and created another wave of destruction.

Many villagers are now collecting bits and pieces of what used to be their home barely seven days ago.

"Whenever it rains," Lone says, "we end up losing everything. Though these heavenly waters are needed for our farms, we keep praying against it now. Nothing hurts more than losing your home to a blessing!"

Even in its visibility, the commoner's life torn asunder by the crumbled earth is harrowing. Besides a growing sense of destitution, Shripora is full of native narratives of despondency today.

To capture the crisis in detail, I climb a rickety flight of steps inside an abandoned home to get to the terrace. From that vantage point, the village looks a dreamy spot mired in an unending nightmare.

Dented land, poor drainage, sweeping destruction and distressed souls together torment Shripora's simpletons.

And while the crisis persists, the absence of crisis-managers is making the villagers feel as if they're "children of a lesser god".

"The successive governments have totally overlooked this village in terms of development and now we're bearing the brunt of

it," says Mohammad Akbar, a shopkeeper in Shripora.

"We're cut from the rest of the other villages for almost two months now due to this sliding ground situation here. But then, since it's the season of farming, we're compelled to take our children to farms in a fearful state of mind to earn our livelihood."

Although a few families were lately compensated, the far cry remains that the whole village should be rehabilitated to avoid any untoward incident.

Amid all this, none seems to have any clear clue about Shripora's landslide situation.

"Call it nature's wrath or some yet to be unearthed phenomenon, but whatever it is, we're ending up homeless in the process," says Akbar.

Down the hill, some earth science experts are calling for detailed geo-technical studies to map and mitigate Shripora's landslide situation.

"As far as I know, this area is prone to landslides due to Karewas," says Mohammad Sartaj, Geology and Mining officer in Baramulla.

"An official expert team is currently studying this sinking situation there. But while the land is continuously crumbling and the study likely to take some time to unearth the situation, the villagers must be shifted to some other places for a time being for their safety."

But at sundown, as I leave Ashraf behind at the crumbling heights, his fear arises from the ruins of Shripora: "What if all of us fall into the bottomless pit tonight!"

Leaves Of Doctors

Territorial Offices are directed to refrain from forwarding any kind of leave to this Directorate till further orders," the circular added.

89 Travellers Among

death count across the Union Territory to 2010.

Among the new cases of Covid-19, Kashmir Valley reported 280, while in Jammu division 162 people tested positive for virus, taking the number of people infected by the virus in J&K to 133454, an official said Monday.

Giving the district-wide details, the official said, Srinagar reported 141, Baramulla 47, Budgam 19, Pulwama 2, Kupwara 21, Anantnag 9, Bandipora 11, Ganderbal 6, Kulgam 21, Shopian 3, Jammu 97, Udhampur 14, Rajouri 5, Kathua 8, Samba 2, Kishtwar 1, Poonch 6, and Reasi 29 fresh cases of coronavirus.

About the fatalities reported Monday, the officials said that the victims included a 60-year-old man from Kanjigund and a 70-year-old man from Dedipora, both places in Kulgam district of south Kashmir. Their death took the overall fatality count due to covid-19 in J&K to 2010—741 in Jammu and 1269 in Kashmir.

Moreover, they said, 241 more patients have recovered—60 from Jammu Division and 181 from Kashmir Division, taking the number of people who have recovered so far 127290.

There are 4154 active cases—1024 in Jammu and 3130 in Kashmir. (With GNS inputs)

Gujarati Tourist

had tested negative one day prior at Airport. Confirming the death, a doctor at the hospital said that the tourist was suffering from "severe covid-19 Pneumonia" and died on Sunday, reports said.

Interestingly, a tourist like the one from Pune Maharashtra who died last week had tested negative for the covid-19 at the Srinagar airport on arrival to Valley.

A few tourists are already admitted to CD hospital as well as Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Hospital, two of the exclusive facilities for the management of covid-19 patients here, officials said.

Sources in these exclusive health facilities said that most of these tourists have tested negative at the airport and those who arrived by road were reportedly not even tested en-route.

"Some tourists have arrived by road and told hospital authorities that they were not tested anywhere en-route," they said, raising a question about the administration's concerns about stemming the spread of the covid-19 at a time when it's rapidly spreading in India and elsewhere. The spread has already forced the closure of schools in Jammu and Kashmir. There is also the threat of the spread of new variants, already found in at least five patients in Jammu.

Ex-GOC 15 Corps

the former Army commander said that he is very connected to the peace of Kashmir and with dialogue everything will be good and settled."

He said that if Pakistan wants to extend peaceful relations with India there will be peace but it must have some clarity about the decisions made there.

Recalling the service days rendered in

Baramulla district, the former GoC of Srinagar 15 Corps said that "I was posted in Uri when the two governments of India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire along the borders and even at the time of Karavan -E-Aman between the two nations."

He stated that Pakistan must be clear about its decision since they extend a hand for peace and trade but within no time the decisions are reversed and there is no clarity about who is the decision-maker.

Pakistan talks about forgetting about everything that has happened in the past to develop relations with us but the next minute everything is reversed, the former general maintained.

He maintained that there is peace across Kashmir and everything must start with a dialogue in the valley with a new beginning. He also said that once the confusion about the decision-making ends in Pakistan only then there will be peace.

It may be recalled that in February in a joint statement released the two Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan in a meeting decided to strictly adhere to all the ceasefire agreements along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sectors from the 25th February.

Earlier in a tweet, Army informed that a Bridge command level flag meeting between India and Pakistan Army was held at Poonch-Rawalkote Crossing on 26 March to discuss the implementation mechanism as per the understanding.

Pertinently, the border shelling has killed hundreds of people in Kashmir and Jammu region since 1990 and left scores handicapped forever. Besides, houses and livestock worth billions of rupees have also been damaged as well due to the cross LoC shelling in J&K in the past 30 years. (KNO)

3 Day Rain

a low of 7.2 degree Celsius against 4.2 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said. Pahalgam, the famous resort in south Kashmir, had 7.4mm of rain while as it recorded a minimum of 4.8 degree Celsius against 1.0 degree Celsius on the earlier night, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, received 0.8mm of rain and recorded a low of 5.7 degree Celsius against previous night's 4.0 degree Celsius, the official said.

Kupwara had 7.8mm of rain while the north Kashmir district recording a low of 5.2 degree Celsius against 4.0 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said.

Gulmarg received 7.8mm of rain and light snowfall of 0.2cm depth during the time while the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded a minimum temperature of minus 0.6 degree Celsius against 0.5 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official added.

In view of a fresh western disturbance, the weatherman has forecast fresh rains or snow for the next three days with main activity during April 6 and 7.

"A fresh western disturbance has affected the Jammu & Kashmir and light rain thunder on 5th April and main activity (moderate rain/snow/ thunderstorms with gusty winds 30-40 KMPH) is expected on 6th & 7th April," reads an advisory issued by the meteorologist at the local MeT office, M H Mir said.

"The system is likely to cause heavy rain / snow mainly in upper reaches of Kashmir (Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Baramulla, Bandipora (Gurez & Tulail valley) and Kupwara (Karnah Sector), Shopian, Qazigund-Banihal axis, Pirpanjal Range of Jammu Division, Dras (Gumri & Minamarg) and Zaskar subdivision of Ladakh".

The probable impacts, the advisory says includes 'temporary disruption' of surface traffic mainly on Jammu-Srinagar and Srinagar-Leh Highway (Zojila Pass), Leh-Manali Highway, Mughal Road, and Sadhna pass on April 6th and 7th April.

There is also possibility of landslides and shooting stones at vulnerable spots of Jammu-Srinagar Srinagar-Leh Highway, the advisory said.

"There would be temporary water logging in low lying areas in Kashmir Valley," it said. The other impacts include suspension of agricultural and horticultural operations and dip in day temperatures.

CJ Orders Virtual

"Virtual Mode" for time being.

"Entry of litigants and public into the Court premises from the very outer gate shall continue to be prohibited," reads an order. In addition to virtual hearing, the Chief Justice said that the matters may also be taken up for physical hearing, where the counsel for both the parties to the case give their consent for such physical hearing. "if counsel for either party declines

or fails to give such consent in that event the roster bench may consider the request of other counsel for physical hearing," the order reads. Identification of cases for physical hearing shall be done by the concerned Registrar Judicial a day before the date of listing, the order said.

"Advocates concerned in a particular case, who intend to get their case listed for physical hearing, shall give written consent for physical appearance and provide the requisite detail of the case to the concerned Registrar Judicial through email at least two days before the date of listing."

The Registrar Judicial concerned, then, shall provide list of such counsel whose cases are listed for physical hearing, well in time to the incharge Security at the main gate to facilitate entry of such counsel, it said.

"In order to decongest the sections/ offices / Courts, the officials shall be permitted to function in batches with 25 percent reduction on rotation basis." The roster in this regard, the order said, shall be formulated by the Registrar Judicial of the concerned wing.

"The officials, who as per the roster are not on duty in the office, shall not leave the station and shall remain available on telephone and electronic means of communication at all times." The staff on duty and the counsel appearing physically in Court shall take necessary precautions, ensure physical distancing, wearing of mask and observance of SOPs and guidelines issued by the respective Governments (J&K and Ladakh) from time to time."

Regarding district and Subordinate Courts and Tribunals in J&K and Ladakh, the CJ's order said that entry of litigants and public into the Court premises from the very outer gate shall continue to be prohibited. "Pr. District & Sessions Judges, taking into consideration the urgency involved, apart from virtual hearing, may, where the counsel for the parties /parties in person involved give their consent to appear for physical hearing, permit physical hearing in Criminal trials where accused is /are in Custody, Matrimonial Cases, MACT Cases, Cases under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, Compromise matters or in any other matter as deemed desirable in the courts under their jurisdiction." The courts under the supervision of concerned Pr. District & Sessions Judge, the order said, shall devise their own mechanism for listing of cases for physical hearing after taking consent of respective counsel, subject to their own assessment of prevailing local conditions including the intensity of COVID-19 infection. "The staff on duty in courts and the counsel appearing physically shall take necessary precautions, ensure physical distancing, wearing of mask and observance of SOPs and guidelines issued by the respective Governments from time to time."

In order to decongest the sections/ offices of the Courts, the officials working in the Subordinate Courts, shall be permitted to function in batches with 25 percent reduction on rotation basis, the order added.

NCW Creates Separate

The panel decided to set up a separate cell for these regions after NCW Chairperson Rekha Sharma visited Jammu and Kashmir in February where she had held interactive sessions with NGOs, one-stop centres for women and other officials in the union territory to take stock of problems faced by women there.

Two Budgam Woman

with the militant attack on BJP leader Anwar Khan's house last week in which a security guard was killed, news agency KDC reported Monday while quoting sources. One among the arrested women, the report said, was a nursing student and is pursuing her studies in Chadoora area of the district.

The report also claimed that SSP Srinagar did not respond to the repeated calls and texts from the wire agency.

Bandipora Authorities

director said in another order.

He requested the general public to "kindly follow all the mandatory Covid-19 SoPs to fight the virus".

The Centre had from April 1 allowed people above 45 to get vaccinated against the novel coronavirus.

HC Takes Note

created and established for the purpose, the entire responsibility should be shifted upon it and the authority alone should be allowed to work out a broad scheme for solving all the problems in connection with the Dal," the division bench said. Accordingly, the court directed that henceforth all the Committees created in the past stand disbanded. Fresh committee or committees would be constituted, if necessary in future, the court said.

"We direct the Vice Chairman LAWDA to

draw a complete scheme for the management and the development of the Dal as well as the area around it in co-association with the various departments and to submit the same before the Court by the next date." The court said, adding, "The Vice Chairman is also directed to survey and prepare a list of all the drains that are flowing into the Dal and to take immediate steps that the drain water and the effluents are not discharged into the Dal and proper arrangements are made by the Department concerned for the treatment of the sewage or the drain water in sufficient number of plants established at proper places."

The court said that an exercise may also be undertaken to find out if the waste material from any houseboat is being discharged into the lake and if so, to take measures to stop it or to divert it to some alternative place.

"The LAWDA would formulate a scheme for the development and the beautification of the Char Chinar and to ensure the security thereon."

The court also reiterated in line with its earlier orders, "no construction activities in the Dal or in the area of the Dal or the prohibited area shall be permitted subject to the condition as may have been imposed from time to time and steps would be taken for the removal of all the encroachments."

It also directed that appropriate measures be taken for the traffic management in and around the Dal area, especially on the Boulevard Road and the Jetty at Nehru Park. (GNS)

Seized Vehicles

"It is pertinent to mention here that the vehicles are being detained and seized only on the ground of disobedience of an order of the public servant i.e., of the court in the present case under Section 188 of RPC which is pari-materia with Section 188 of IPC. However, Section 188 do not specifically provides for the seizure and therefore the seizure is only on account of the directions given by this Court in the PIL.

PIL," said a bench of Chief Justice Pankaj Mishal and Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul.

"A Division Bench of Jammu Wing of this court has directed that all applications for the release of vehicles (carrying illegal construction material) shall be moved before the competent Magistrate who shall deal with those applications independently on merits on the analogy of the provisions of Section 457 of the Code of Criminal Procedure but shall not release any vehicle without realizing the composite amount of Rs. 50,000/- in the case of first time violation and Rs. 1.00 lacs in the case of second time violation and to confiscate if the offence is repeated for third time and not to release it until the completion of the investigation pursuant to the FIR or the trial thereof."

Accordingly, the court said that since the matter of release of vehicle is a Magisterial act and is dependent upon the outcome of the FIR lodged against the driver/owner of the vehicle.

"We provide that henceforth all applications for the release of vehicles seized for carrying building material for violation of the directions of this court, would be filed before the concerned Magistrate who is dealing or is supposed to deal with the investigation pursuant to the relevant FIR, but he shall not release it without asking for security of Rs. 50,000/- in the case of first offence, Rs. 1.00 lacs in the case of second offence and that in the event the offence is repeated for the third time, the vehicle shall not be released until and unless the final report is submitted and accepted of the accused is acquitted in the trial."

Explosives Seized

deployed in Karnah, 15 sticks of plastic explosives were recovered on Monday evening owing to the high state of alertness of the Army and police," he said.

The operation was conducted in the heart of Tangdhar market with zero inconvenience to locals, the spokesperson said.

SSB Man Falls

the SK institute of medical sciences, Soura, where the doctors declared him dead.

Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance of the incident and registered a case in this regard.

IED Recovered,

defusing the IED, the traffic was later restored—(KNO)

Militant Associate

"During checking, incriminating material including letter pad of TRF outfit has been recovered from his possession," the police spokesperson said.

"In this regard, a case vide FIR No. 82/2021 under relevant sections of law stands registered at police station and further investigation into the case is in progress and more arrests are expected," he added.

After Fakhar Zaman's Controversial Run-Out, MCC Says It's Up To Umpires To Decide

Press Trust of India

LONDON: Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman's contentious run-out in the second ODI against South Africa has sparked a debate on spirit of the game with Marylebone Cricket Club saying it was "up to the umpires to decide" if Quinton de Kock had attempted to mislead the batsman.

In a stiff chase of 342, Zaman smashed a spectacular 193 in a losing cause as the batsman was run out in a controversial fashion involving South Africa wicket-keeper de Kock.

The stumper pointed his finger towards Lungi Ngidi but the ball was, in fact, thrown by Aiden Markram towards the keeper's end and it was a direct hit. Zaman had slowed down his pace at the end of his second run and could not make it back into his crease.

Replays showed that de Kock had seemed to convince Zaman into believing that the throw was going to the non-striker's end.

"Law 41.5.1 states: It is unfair for any fielder wilfully to attempt, by word or action, to distract, deceive or obstruct either batsman after the striker has received the ball," the MCC, custodians of the game, tweeted.

In another, the MCC wrote, "The Law is clear, with the offence being an ATTEMPT to deceive, rather than the batsman actually being deceived. It's up to the umpires to decide if there was such an attempt. If so, then it's Not out, 5 Penalty runs + the 2 they ran, and batsmen choose who faces next ball."

The debate around de Kock's gesture was whether he was intentionally attempting to deceive Zaman into thinking that the throw was headed for the other end, leading to the batsman slowing down his pace while going for the second run at the Wanderers on Sunday.

Many in the Pakistan cricket circles blamed de Kock for "de-

liberately distracting" Zaman, leading to his dismissal.

Former captain Waqar Younis and fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar questioned the South African's act.

"What a master inning by @FakharZaman. Treat to watch. Single handedly brought the game here. Sad end to the inning. Deserved a 200. Was the spirit of the game compromised by South Africa & @QuinnDeKock69 in that run out?" Akhtar asked in a tweet.

Waqar wrote on his twitter handle, "Record breaking inning. Simply Outstanding @FakharZamanLive. What about this cheeky giggle from Quinton tells you?"

Pakistan lost the game by 22 runs as the hosts levelled the three-match series 1-1.

ICC Law 41.5 says: "Deliberate distraction, deception or obstruction of batsman. 41.5.1 in addition to 41.4 states it is unfair for any fielder wilfully to attempt, by word or action, to distract, deceive or obstruct either batsman after the striker has received the ball."

However, the Pakistani opener, who achieved the highest score by a batsman in an ODI chase, refused to blame de Kock.

"The fault was mine as I was too busy looking out for Haris Rauf at the other end as I felt he'd started off a little late from his crease, so I thought he was in trouble. The rest is up to the match referee, but I don't think it's Quinton's fault."

"I played a very good innings but it would have been better if we had won the match," Fakhar said after the game.

South African captain Temba Bavuma said de Kock's act was "quite clever".

"You're always got to look for ways especially when things are not going your way, got to find ways to turn momentum around. Quinn did that," Bavuma said.

"I don't think he broke the rules in any kind of way. It was a clever piece of cricket."

'PSL 6 Bio-Bubble Broken And Compromised On Several Occasions,' Reveals PCB

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: An independent fact finding committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has confirmed that the bio-bubble set up for the PSL 6 was broken and compromised on several occasions.

The two-member committee of infectious diseases experts was constituted by the PCB to probe what went wrong with the bio-secure bubble in PSL 6.

The final report of Dr Syed Faisal Mahmood and Dr Salma Muhammad Abbas was submitted to the PCB chairman Ehsan Mani on March 31.

The PCB chief will now study the report and share the details with the board members before any final decision is taken.

But a source privy to the findings of the committee said that while it had not blamed any particular individual, the report had confirmed that there were several occasions when the bio-secure bubble was compromised during the tournament in Karachi.

The source said the committee had also made recommendations on how the board can ensure a safe and secure bio-secure bubble for stakeholders when the PSL 6 resumes in June.

The PSL 6 was postponed by the PCB in early March after just 10 of the 34 matches were completed following a rise in COVID-19 cases in the event.

The PCB had to postpone PSL 6 abruptly after several players, including foreigners Fawad Ahmed, Tom Banton, Lewis Gregory and some local players and officials had contracted the virus despite remaining in a bio-secure bubble.

Interestingly, the source said the experts had mentioned that some stakeholders had even brought to notice of some PCB officials about the bio-secure breaches but they didn't respond proactively.

The PCB has said that it would take action against those employees found to be responsible for not enforcing the bio-secure bubble properly.

Pakistan Hockey Officials Keen On Revival Of Bilateral Ties Against India



Press Trust of India

KARACHI: Top officials of the cash-strapped Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) will push for revival of bilateral ties against India during the 47th FIH Congress in New Delhi next month.

PHF officials will be taking up the issue of resuming bilateral series against India at neutral venues on the sidelines of the 47th International Hockey Federation (FIH) Statutory Congress.

The meeting is scheduled from May 19 to 23 in the Indian capital.

A top PHF official said it is an

important meeting as the FIH president and executive board members will be elected for the next four years.

"The meeting will give us an opportunity to talk to the Indian hockey federation officials on the possibility of reviving bilateral ties that could benefit Pakistan and India and the hockey followers in both countries," he said.

PHF president Brig (ret'd) Khalid Sajjad Khokhar and secretary Asif Bajwa are preparing to fly out for the meeting and have already applied for Indian visas.

The official said that Pakistan is

keen to revive bilateral series even at neutral venues as it is badly in need of finances and believes only a series with India can allow them to earn good money from broadcasting rights, sponsors, advertisers etc.

Pakistan and India have not had any bilateral hockey ties in the last decade and PHF officials want to "convince their Indian counterparts of the financial benefits for both federations" from playing against each other.

He recalled that 10 years ago both Pakistan and India were regularly playing home and away series.

Maharashtra Govt Clears Way For IPL, Allows Teams To Practice Post 8 PM At Wankhede

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra government on Monday cleared the decks for the IPL to take place in the COVID-ravaged Mumbai, allowing teams to practice after 8pm and travel to their respective hotels during the night curfew that has been imposed to contain the pandemic.

In a related development and a major relief to the Mumbai Cricket Association, it is learnt that most of the Wankhede's 10 ground-staff members, who had earlier tested positive for the virus, have now tested negative.

Due to the massive surge of COVID-19 cases in Mumbai and Maharashtra, the state government on Sunday announced "Break the Chain", under which section 144 and night-curfew from 8pm to 7am on weekdays has been imposed on entire Maharashtra, including Mumbai.

The guidelines are to be implemented from this evening.

However, the state government has allowed the IPL teams to practice beyond 8pm, provided there is "strict adherence to bio-bubble". The event starts in Chennai on April 9.



"Considering the match-timings, teams practicing at the CCI and MCA are scheduled to practice in 2 sessions—from 4pm to 6.30pm and 7.30pm to 10pm," wrote Sri-rang Gholap, Under Secretary of the Disaster Management, Relief and Rehabilitation department, in a letter issued to the BCCI.

Mumbai is scheduled to host 10 matches of the IPL at the Wankhede Stadium and nine of them are scheduled to start at 7.30pm. The first game at the Wankhede is due on April 10 between Chennai Super Kings and

Delhi Capitals.

The city recorded more than 11,000 COVID-19 cases on Sunday. "...permission has been requested for teams and the IPL staff (to) be allowed to practice inside the grounds after 8pm and they may be allowed free movement from the ground to their respective hotels after the said time.

"Accordingly, permission is being hereby accorded for the said request subject to scrupulous adherence to the bio-bubble," stated the letter, a copy of which is in possession of PTI.

Pakistan All Rounder Shadab Khan Out Of South Africa Tour With Toe Injury

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: Pakistan all-rounder Shadab Khan was on Monday ruled out of the remainder of the South Africa tour due to a toe injury that will keep him out him out of action for four weeks.

The Pakistan Cricket Board said that leg-spin batting all-rounder picked up the injury while batting during the second One-Day International against South Africa on Sunday.

The X-rays conducted following the match revealed an "intra articular communicated fracture" though there is neither any displacement nor angulation, the PCB said.

"The injury will be treated con-

servatively and Shadab will undergo a four-week rehab."

The PCB did not mention if Shadab would return home or remain with the touring squad.

After the third and final ODI on April 7, Pakistan are scheduled to play a four-match T20 series, starting April 10.

Shadab has suffered a spate of injury problems in the last two years and had only recently recovered after missing the home series against Zimbabwe and SA.

He made a comeback in the postponed PSL 6 matches.

Earlier also he had suffered fitness problems on the tour of New Zealand after captaining Pakistan in the T20 series in NZ last November.

In La Liga, Valencia Walks Off Field In Racism Protest While Atletico Loses

Agencies

MADRID: On a day dominated by Valencia saying it felt threatened into resuming its interrupted game after an alleged racial insult, Atletico Madrid risked seeing its once-comfortable Spanish league lead cut to a point after losing to Sevilla.

Valencia stopped playing at Cadiz on Sunday and walked off the field before halftime after defender Mouctar Diakhaby said he was insulted by Cadiz defender Juan Cala.

Fourth-place Sevilla beat Atletico 1-0, opening the door for Barcelona to inch closer to the top with a win at home against relegation-threatened Valladolid on Monday.

The loss left Diego Simeone's team only three points ahead of second-place Real Madrid, which on Saturday beat Elbar 2-0 to tighten the race for the title entering the final stretch.

Barcelona now depends on its own results to lift the trophy, as it will host Atletico in May.

RACISM ACCUSATION

At Cadiz, Cala denied any wrongdoing and was defended by team-

mates and coach Ivaro Cervera.

The team resumed the game after more than 20 minutes. Valencia said its players felt threatened after the referee told them about the potential consequences of not returning to the field which would be the likely loss of points.

"The players were forced to play after the threat of punishment," the club said in a statement.

It had earlier said the decision to return was made after a request to do so by Diakhaby, who is Black.

Cadiz scored late to win the match 2-1.

"Today is a sad day for our sport," Valencia said.

"We didn't lose only a match, we lost the respect and the spirit of soccer and of sport."

OTHER RESULTS

Celta Vigo won 3-1 at last-place Alaves with Nolito, Iago Aspas and Santi Mina all scoring. Celta played with 10 men from the 54th after defender Jeison Murillo was sent off with a second yellow card.

Relegation-threatened Elche drew 1-1 with fifth-place Real Betis.

Russian Open And Indonesia Masters Cancelled Due To COVID-19

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Two Super 100 badminton tournaments – the Russian Open 2021 and Indonesia Masters – have been cancelled due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) said on Monday.

"The ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and complications left local organisers no choice but to cancel the tournaments," a BWF statement read.

"The respective decisions of the National Badminton Federation of Russia and Badminton Indonesia were made in consultation and agreement with the



BWF," it added.

The Russian Open was scheduled in Vladivostok from July 20-25 and Indonesia Masters from October 5-10. The Canada Open, supposed to be held in June, has also been cancelled.

Another Super 100 event, the Hyderabad Open, is scheduled from August 24-29 but with the fluid COVID-19 situation in India, it remains to be seen if it will take place or not.

Betting Can Lead To Match-Fixing, Govt Right In Not Legalising It: New BCCI ACU Chief

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The BCCI's new Anti-Corruption Unit chief Shabir Hussain Shekhadam Khandawala doesn't want betting to be legalised in India as it "encourages" match-fixing and feels his biggest challenge will be stamping out "shady activities" from smaller leagues.

There is a school of thought that legalising betting will bring in massive revenues for the government at a time when most of it is going unchecked. But Khandawala looks at it differently.

"Whether the government legalises betting or not that is a different matter but deep inside, I feel as a police officer that betting can lead to match fixing. The government, so far, has rightly not legalised betting," the 70-year-old told PTI.

"Betting encourages match fixing. So there should not be any change on this, we can make the rules more strict. We will work on that. It is a matter of great prestige that cricket is largely free of corruption. Credit should go to BCCI for that."

In the words of outgoing BCCI ACU chief Ajit Singh, legalising betting is another way of controlling corruption in the game.



Union minister and former BCCI president Anurag Thakur, too, had suggested legalising underground betting and gambling sporting activities last year.

However, Khandawala, a former DGP of Gujarat, feels otherwise on the subject.

"Betting might be legal in some countries but the people who go into stadiums to watch the game and watch it on television they believe in this game and don't go to grounds thinking this game could be fixed. We need to protect their belief that game is free of all corruption."

While the game at the highest level remains more or less clean, corruption cases have come to light

in the local and state T20 leagues. With the shortest format thriving, Khandawala said detecting and preventing "shady" practices in these leagues will be his team's biggest challenge.

"Our top players are so well paid that they are miles from the menace of match-fixing. We should feel proud about that.

"Rooting out corruption from smaller events and leagues is a big challenge and we need to put an end to it. We need to ensure there is nothing shady happening at all levels of cricket being played in the country. Besides detecting, preventing any shady activity is very important," he said.

Khandawala feels his love for the game should help him immensely in this new role.

"During my time as a police officer, I organised many (police) tournaments in Gujarat. I have loved the game since childhood.

"A lot of good work has been done in the past and I need to carry that forward. New players coming into the scene are most vulnerable. We need to protect them."

Khandawala's first assignment with the BCCI will be the IPL beginning April 9.

IPL 2021: Punjab Kings – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: With a new name and a stronger squad, Punjab Kings will be hoping for a change of fortunes this season after spending big money on addressing their death bowling concerns and beefing up a not-so-inspiring middle-order.

Punjab Kings finished sixth last season but missed out on a play-off spot narrowly after bouncing back strongly with five wins on the trot.

They lost games they should have won and if that controversial short run call did not go against them in their tournament-opener against Delhi Capitals, they would have ended up sneaking into the top-four.

Lack of support to lead pacer Mohammed Shami and the big-hitting Glenn Maxwell not firing also hurt their chances, areas they feel they have addressed this season.

Here is a look at the team that will open its campaign on April 12 against Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai.

STRENGTHS:

Punjab Kings have one of the strongest batting line-ups this season. They have a dangerous opening pairing in skipper KL Rahul, who won

the 'Orange Cap' last season, and the ever-reliable Mayank Agarwal.

Universe Boss Chris Gayle, who hammered 288 runs in seven games at a strike rate of 137.14 last year, is expected to start from game one this time after warming the bench in the initial part of the 2020 edition.

Include flamboyant wicketkeeper-batsman Nicholas Pooran to the mix and the top four seems sorted. They have also roped in the services of the world's number one T20 batsman Dawid Malan, seen as Gayle's back-up.

After Maxwell's expected departure, the middle-order has been strengthened with the arrival of all-rounder Moises Henriques and Tamil Nadu batsman Shikhar Khan.

Deepak Hooda has also proven he can strike the ball hard and is experienced enough to play the role of the finisher. In Fabian Allen, Punjab Kings have another overseas all-rounder options.

The pace attack has boosted by the signing of Australian speedsters Jhye Richardson and Riley Meredith, who had a sensational Big Bash campaign. Alongside Mohammad Shami and England's Chris Jordan the quartet makes for

a formidable fast bowling unit.

WEAKNESSES:

Punjab Kings' biggest weakness is the lack of quality spinners. They released off-spinner K Gowtham, who ended up becoming the most expensive buy ever at the latest auction.

The likes of Murugan Ashwin and young Ravi Bishnoi, who impressed last season, will be expected to deliver. They have added Lalaj Saxena, who is a highly experienced domestic player and picked up 10 wickets in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy earlier this year at an excellent economy rate of 6.26.

But with no internationally successful players in the spin department, it remains the weakest link.

The team also doesn't have another India pacer of the calibre of Shami.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Punjab Kings are yet to win an IPL title. With most of their bases covered on paper, they seem like strong contenders this year. This season is the perfect opportunity for Rahul and his men to get their hands on their maiden title, having charted out a three-year plan under his leadership and coach Anil Kumble's guidance.

THREATS:

Shami, who fractured his wrist in Australia last year, has not played cricket in four months. With the national team's workload management to be kept in mind in a busy year, it remains to be seen if he plays all league games. He had a memorable run last year with 20 wickets and the team's success will depend a lot on his performance.

The Squad:

KL Rahul (c/wk), Mayank Agarwal, Chris Gayle, Mandeep Singh, Prabhsimran Singh, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sarfaraz Khan, Deepak Hooda, Murugan Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Harpreet Brar, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Porel, Darshan Nalkande, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Jhye Richardson, Shikhar Khan, Riley Meredith, Moises Henriques, Lalaj Saxena, Utkarsh Singh, Fabian Allen, Saurabh Kumar.

India Joins Multilateral Naval Drill In Eastern Indian Ocean



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: India and three other Quad member nations on Monday joined France in kick-starting a three-day mega naval exercise in the eastern Indian Ocean, in reflection of their growing strategic co-operation in the region.

Officials said the Indian naval ships Satpura and Kiltan along with P-8I long range maritime patrol aircraft are participating in multilateral exercise "La Perouse". The Indian Navy ships and aircraft will exercise at sea with ships and aircraft of navies of France, Australia, Japan and the United States during the exercise, they said.

Indian Navy Spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said the exercise will witness complex and advanced naval operations including surface warfare, anti-air warfare and air defence exercises. He said it will also feature weapon firing exercises, cross deck flying operations and tactical manoeuvres among others.

"The exercise will showcase high levels of synergy, coordination and interoperability between the friendly navies," he said.

"Participation by the Indian Navy in the exercise demonstrates the shared values with friendly

navies ensuring freedom of seas and commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international order," Commander Madhwal said.

Besides host France, the four other participants are members of the Quad or Quadrilateral coalition. India has been expanding co-operation with navies of the US, Japan, Australia and France in the last few years.

On March 28 and 29, India and the US navies carried out a two-day naval exercise in the eastern Indian Ocean Region.

The Indian Navy deployed its warship Shivalik and long range maritime patrol aircraft P8I in the "PASSEX" exercise while the US Navy was represented by USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group.

A carrier battle group or carrier strike group is a mega naval fleet comprising an aircraft carrier, accompanied by a large number of destroyers, frigates and other ships.

The PASSEX exercise came over a week after US Defence Secretary Austin flew into India as part of his three-nation first overseas tour that signalled the Biden administration's strong commitment to its relations with its close allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

March Was Third Warmest In 121 Years, Says India Meteorological Department



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: March was third warmest in 121 years in terms of monthly average maximum temperature, the India Meteorological Department on Monday said.

The IMD, in its review for the month, said the observed monthly average maximum, minimum and mean temperature for the country as a whole during March this year are 32.65 degrees Celsius, 19.95 degrees Celsius and 26.30 degrees Celsius, respectively, against the normal 31.24 degrees Celsius,

18.87 degrees Celsius and 25.06 degrees Celsius based on the climatology period 1981-2010.

"The all India average monthly maximum temperature during March 2021 with 32.65 degrees Celsius is the warmest in the last 11 years, and third warmest in the last 121 years with 2010 and 2004 as the ever warmest and second warmest month with 33.09 degrees Celsius and 32.82 degrees Celsius, respectively," the IMD said.

Several parts of the country had recorded temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius in March.

Data Of 61 Lakh Indian Facebook Users Allegedly Leaked Online: Expert

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Personal details such as phone numbers of around 6.1 million (61 lakh) Indians on Facebook have allegedly been leaked online and posted on hacking forums, according to a cybersecurity executive.

According to Alon Gal, co-founder and chief technical officer of cybersecurity firm Hudson Rock, personal data of 533 million Facebook users globally - including names, phone numbers and other details - was allegedly leaked online and posted for free on hacking forums.

"All 533,000,000 Facebook records were just leaked for free. This means that if you have a Facebook account, it is extremely likely the phone number used for the account was leaked," Mr Gal has said in a tweet flagging the issue.

A list of countries that was shared in the tweet, showed that information of 6.1 million users from India, 32.3 million from the US, 11.5 million from the UK and 7.3 million from Australia, was part of the leaked data.

When contacted, a Facebook company spokesperson said: "This is old data that was previously reported on in 2019. We found and fixed this issue in August 2019".

Mr Gal said in early 2020, a vulnerability - which enabled seeing the phone number linked to every Facebook account - was exploited, creating a database containing the



information of 533 million users across all countries.

He added that details include phone number, Facebook ID and full name and "bad actors will certainly use the information for social engineering, scamming, hacking and marketing".

In the past too, Facebook - which had 2.80 billion monthly active users (MUAs) as of December 31, 2020 - has faced challenges around data security.

In March 2018, Facebook data of over 5.62 lakh Indians was allegedly compromised as UK-based Cambridge Analytica had accessed information of about 87 million users globally. India is among the biggest markets for Facebook and its group companies, WhatsApp and Instagram. According to government data, India has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 41 crore Facebook users, and

21 crore users of Instagram.

Recently, the Indian government tightened rules governing social media, requiring them to take down contentious content quicker, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist in investigations.

The rules, announced in February, have been designed to curb misuse of social media platforms, mandate that platforms appoint executives to coordinate with law enforcement, remove contentious content flagged by the government or legal order quickly and that user grievances be resolved within 15 days.

The government is also crafting data protection law to ensure privacy, safety and security of user data. These include provisions around the handling of data of adults and minors, storage within the Indian borders and penalties for non-compliance.

India Records All-Time High Of 1.03 Lakh Covid Cases In A Day

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Coronavirus cases in India hit a record daily high since the outbreak of the pandemic with 1,03,558 new infections pushing the nationwide COVID-19 tally to 1,25,89,067, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The single-day rise in cases surpassed the earlier peak of 97,894 infections reported on September 17, last year, making it the highest so far. The death toll increased to 1,65,101 with 478 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Last year, it took 76 days for the single-day rise in coronavirus cases in India to reach the then peak of 97,894 from 20,000. However, this time the daily rise in cases have galloped at a much faster pace taking just 25 days (March 10 to April 4) to cross the grim milestone of one-lakh infections.

Registering a steady increase for the 26th day in row, the active cases have increased to 7,41,830 comprising 5.89 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 92.80 per cent, the data stated.

The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 comprising 1.25 per cent of the total infections.

The number of people who



have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,16,82,136, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.31 per cent, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR, 24,90,19,657 samples have been tested up to April 4 with 8,93,749 samples being tested on Sunday.

The 478 new fatalities include 222 from Maharashtra, 51 from Punjab, 36 from Chhattisgarh, 31 from Uttar Pradesh, 15 from

Karnataka, 14 each from Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, 11 from Madhya Pradesh and 10 each from Himachal Pradesh and Kerala.

A total of 1,65,101 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 55,878 from Maharashtra, 12,778 from Tamil Nadu, 12,625 from Karnataka, 11,081 from Delhi, 10,344 from West Bengal, 8,881 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,239 from Andhra Pradesh and 7,083 from Punjab.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation. PTI

After Unparalleled Electioneering, Kerala Set For Assembly Polls On Tuesday



Agenceis

After weeks-long stormy campaign sessions, marathon rallies and mammoth road shows, Kerala is all set to go to polls on Tuesday with 2.74 crore voters exercising their franchise to decide the fate of 957 candidates including high-profile leaders and independents in 140 Assembly constituencies across the state.

The total electorate in the state includes 1,32,83,724 male voters, 1,41,62,025 female voters and 290 transgenders, according to Election Commission figures.

As the high-octane public campaign drew to a close last night, the southern state is now witnessing silent electioneering in which candidates and party workers are busy visiting homes and institutions to seek votes at the last minute.

An array of ministers and several sitting MLAs from both the traditional coalitions - the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-headed United Democratic Front (UDF) are seeking another term in the April 6 polls.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, health minister K K Shailaja, Devaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendran, Power Minister M M Mani and Higher Education Minister K K Jaleel are among the prominent personalities trying their electoral luck from the ruling side.

Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala, former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, senior leaders K Muraliedharan, P T Thomas and Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan are among those contesting from the UDF fold.

The election is crucial for an array of BJP leaders including former Mizoram Governor Kumanam Rajasekharan, 'Metroman' E Sreedharan, who joined the saffron party recently, state president K Surendran, senior leader Shobha Surendran, Rajya Sabha members Suresh Gopi and K J Alphons and others.

The April 6 poll is equally significant for Kerala Congress (M) chief Jose K Mani who recently snapped decades-long ties with the UDF and joined hands with the Left front.

It would be a litmus test especially for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi personally as he had camped in the state for several days and taken part in dozens of corner meetings and rallies across Kerala to campaign for the UDF.

The ruling LDF is hoping to retain power for a second consecutive term breaking the state's four-decades-old trend of alternating between the UDF every five years.

While the UDF is all confident to form their government when the results are out on May 2, the BJP-led NDA is leaving no stone unturned to garner maximum number of seats to become a decisive force in the state's rule.

Since the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced the poll dates on February 26, Kerala had been witnessing unprecedented competitive spirit between all the three political fronts from carrying out maximum number of rallies and

meetings to bringing in all possible national leaders to woo the voters.

In the place of one or two prominent national figures usually, the state this time saw multiple visits by leaders right from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union home minister Amit Shah and a dozen of their cabinet colleagues including Nirmala Sitharaman, Rajnath Singh and Prahlad Joshi and UP chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Sachin Pilot, A K Antony, Salman Khurshid and so on.

The release of the election manifesto also drew much attention this time as the three fronts came out with populist promises including pension for housewives, raising of welfare pensions, free gas cylinders for poor, free laptops for economically backward students and so on.

To consolidate votes of majority community and keep devotees with them, the BJP even promised in their manifesto a law to contain alleged 'love jihad' and even a state legislation to protect the customs and traditions of the Sabarimala temple.

The topics of faith, religion, development and welfare have taken a centre-stage throughout the campaigns.

The state witnessed how the ruling LDF strived hard to bring focus of the poll debate on the agovernment's achievements in the development and welfare fronts in the last five years and its much celebrated COVID-19 and food management.

But, the Congress-UDF and BJP-NDA have tried their best to make a topic of discussion the Sabarimala women entry issue and the controversial gold and dollar smuggling cases, in which the Chief Minister's office, Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan and some other ministers were facing allegations.

The LDF, who projected themselves as the sole saviour of minority communities especially in Muslim-dominated Malabar (north Kerala) districts during the campaign, is calculating that their votes would be consolidated en-mass in their favour.

They also accused the Congress of adopting a soft stand towards the Hindutva agenda to pick a hole in their vote-bank.

The Congress was seen reaching out to prominent figures and institutions related to Hindu, Christian and Muslim religions to ensure their support. Besides wooing the majority community votes by promising a law to check 'love jihad' and protect the tradition of Sabarimala, the BJP also tried to reach out to the Christian community during the campaign.

Many national and state leaders of the saffron party could be seen meeting the cardinal, bishops and church leaders during the period.

Since the 1980s, the LDF and UDF have alternatively formed the government with neither able to gain back-to-back victories in Kerala.

If the ruling front can manage to buck the trend in the state this time, it will be history.

Take Money Being Distributed by BJP And Vote For TMC: Abhishek Banerjee Tells People

Agenceis

Tinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee, on Monday, accused the BJP of distributing cash for votes in West Bengal and asked the people to accept the money but exercise their ballot for TMC instead.

There will be anarchy in the state if the saffron party assumes power in West Bengal, Banerjee cautioned the voters.

"The BJP is distributing money to the people and asking them to cast their votes for the party. I ask you (the people) to accept the money and not return it, but cast your votes for the smaller flower, referring to the grass flower which is the symbol of TMC and the much larger lotus, the emblem of the saffron party."

"It is your money. The money is from the tax you have paid to the government," Banerjee said addressing different rallies held in Hooghly and Howrah districts in support of party candidates contesting for the phase four of polling slated for April 10.

"If the BJP comes to power in Bengal, there will be anarchy throughout. I will urge you not to vote for them if you want to live without any fear. Look at what is happening in UP and other

states where they are in power. It is time for you to realize the ground situation and cast your vote. Do you want to have biryani a single day or have rice and dal for the next five years ... It depends on you to decide," he said.

Polling will be held in 44 assembly seats spread over the districts of Howrah (Part II), South 24 Parganas (Part III), Hooghly (Part II), Alipurdar and Coochbehar in the fourth phase.

Banerjee also accused the BJP of giving grants of Rs 10,000 to each club in West Bengal and asking them to organise feasts and vote for the party.

If the BJP comes to power in the state, it will stop the Swasthya Sathi (cashless health) scheme initiated by TMC chief Mamata Banerjee and instead implement Ayushman Bharat for which only a few will be enrolled as per the central scheme's eligibility, he said. "You will not get free health service then. As per the eligibility criteria of Ayushman Bharat scheme even a person who has a refrigerator is not eligible for it."

Challenging the saffron party to come out with its performance report of the last seven years, Banerjee said "You (the BJP) are claiming to be the world's biggest political party,

but if you compare your report card and that of ours we will beat you by 10-0 goals. I will quit politics if I am lying."

"The common people had faced a lot of hardship due to demonetization and the "unplanned" lockdown to check COVID-19 in 2020. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had forced people to stand in queues outside banks, while Mamata Banerjee made them wait for their turn outside ration shops for free rice and wheat," the TMC MP said.

He also accused the BJP of selling the country in its bid at privatisation of Railways as well as the nationalised banks.

Lambasting the Modi government at the Centre, he said "The BJP is selling the country. Look what they (the BJP) have done to it; prices of LPG and fuel have shot up. Is this acche din?... The same leaders are asking for votes to turn Bengal into Sonar Bangla (prosperous Bengal) ... Sonar Bangla has been already built by Mamata Banerjee and that is why she has been internationally acclaimed for her Kanyashree scheme."

The Kanyashree Prakalpa is a conditional cash transfer scheme to im-

prove the status and well being of the girl child in West Bengal by incentivizing schooling of all teenage girls and delaying their marriage until they attain the age of 18. The scheme has won national and international recognition for its design and features of good governance.

Hitting out at BJP's Chuchura candidate and BJP MP Locket Chatterjee, Banerjee said, "I have never heard her speaking about her plans to develop Hooghly district. Her only job is to criticise Mamata Banerjee and to appease the party leadership."

The saffron party knows nothing of the state or its culture, he said referring to BJP's allegations that Durga Puja and Saraswati Puja are not allowed to be held in West Bengal. "The BJP is alleging that Mamata Banerjee does not allow Durga Puja to be held in West Bengal. Do they have any knowledge that under Didi's leadership how many Durga Pujas are organised in the state? The clubs get special encouragement fund from the government to do so."

"... They (the BJP) have no knowledge about the Bengalis nor about our culture ... Will you allow 'outsiders' to rule the state," he asked.

171 Votes Cast In Assam Booth That Has 90 Voters; Five Poll Officials Suspended

Agenceis

Total 171 votes were cast in a booth in Assam's Dima Hasao district, even though 90 people were eligible to exercise their franchise, officials said on Monday, revealing a massive irregularity.

The booth is in the Halong constituency, which went to the polls in the second phase on April 1.

Halong witnessed 74 per cent polling.

As the incident came to light, the district election officer suspended five poll officials of the booth, set up at 107(A) Khotli LP School, and proposed a repoll.

However, the official order for re-election at the booth, an auxiliary polling station of the main voting centre at Mouldam LP School, is yet to be issued.

The suspension order by the deputy commissioner-cum-district election officer of Dima Hasao was issued on April 2, the next day of polling, but it came to light on Monday morning.

Stating "dereliction of duty", the EC suspended Seikhosiem Lhangum (sector officer), Prahlad Ch Roy (presiding officer),



Parameswar Charangsa (first polling officer), Swaraj Kanti Das (second polling officer) and Lalzamo Thiek (third polling officer) with immediate effect.

The voters' list of the polling station had 90 names, but 171 votes were cast in the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), officials told PTI. "The head of that interior village

refused to accept the voters' list and brought a list of his own. Then, the people of the village voted according to that list," an official said.

It was not immediately known why the polling officials accepted the village head's demand and whether there was any security personnel present at the polling station or the role they played.