



P3 CITY

NIFT SRINAGAR HOLDS MAIDEN CONVOCATION

National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Srinagar Friday celebrated its first-ever Convocation at SKICC. The ceremony was held for its first batch of 31 students....

P7 THINK

POLITICAL COMPLACENCY

RISE IN INFECTIONS SHOULD BE BLAMED ON THE POLITICAL CLASS IN INDIA

Health officials need not look beyond Indian politicians campaigning among the crowds with not even a pretence of social distancing and masking to understand why...



P5 STATE

NIGHT CURFEW BEATS LOGIC, SAYS KASHMIR DOCTORS BODY

A day after the announcement of night curfew in Jammu and Kashmir, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Friday said the move won't stop the spread of Covid-19...



Quote!
We won't have a society if we destroy the environment
—Margaret Mead

NEWS DIGEST

Lt Gen Joshi Reviews Security Situation

SRINAGAR: The Northern Army Commander, Lt Gen YK Joshi visited forward posts on the Line of Control (LoC) and in the hinterland to review the overall security scenario in the Kashmir Valley. According to an army spokesperson, Joshi was accompanied by the Chinara Corps Commander, Lt Gen DP Pandey visited formations along the LoC in forward areas of district Kupwara and Rashtriya Rifles conducting Counter militancy. **More On P10**

Man Held After Grenade Recovered

JAMMU: A 35-year-old man was arrested on Friday after a hand grenade was recovered from his house in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. Safdar Ali, who is a brother of Pakistan-based militant Mohammad Amin, has been arrested, they said. He is a labourer by profession and a resident of Kathawa village of the district's Thatthi area, the officials said. **More On P10**

PDD Lineman Dies Of Electric Shock

SRINAGAR: A lineman of Power Development Department (PDD) was electrocuted to death in Kandhama village of central Kashmir's Budgam district on Friday. Fayaz Ahmad Masoodi, a resident of Khoor-Sharabad Pattan, was repairing an electric HT line at Kandhama Magam on Friday afternoon when he came in contact with a HT live wire and received an electric shock, an official said. He said that the lineman was shifted to SDH Magam, where he **More On P10**

4 Gamblers Held In Ganderbal: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday claimed to have arrested four gamblers in a raid in Lati Gund Roshan area of Ganderbal district. Acting on an input, a team from police post Shadipora carried out a raid in Lati Gund Roshan area and apprehended four gamblers from the spot, a police spokesperson said. He said besides playing cards, an amount of Rs 4400 was also seized from their possession. **More On P10**

Body Found From Rail Track In Kathua

JAMMU: A 35-year-old man was found dead on a railway track in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Friday. The body was recovered near Lakhampur rail track on Thursday night and was subsequently shifted to a government medical college hospital in Kathua for identification and postmortem, the officials said. They said the man was believed to have **More On P10**

7 Militants Killed In Twin Gunfights In South Kashmir

AGUH Chief Among Slain Militants In Shopian, Tral: Police



File Photo

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Four more militants, including Ansar Ghazwatul Hind's chief Imtiaz Ahmad Shah, were killed by government forces in twin encounters in south Kashmir's Shopian and Pulwama districts, taking the total number of militants dead

in the gunfights during the last 24 hours to seven, police said on Friday.

"Five militants have been killed in a Shopian operation, while two others were killed in the encounter at Nowbugh in Tral area of Pulwama district," a police official said. Earlier, the Kashmir Zone Police had said that efforts were **More On P10**

Soldier Shot Dead In Bijbehara

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Suspected militants on Friday shot dead a Territorial Army soldier in Jablipora area of Bijbehara in South Kashmir's Anantnag district. Police officials said that militants shot at TA man following which he was immediately shifted to SDH Bijbehara in a critical condition where from he was referred to GMC Anantnag for treatment. The injured TA man, however, was declared brought dead at the hospital. The soldier has been identified as Mohammed Saleem Akhnoo, son of Ghulam Hassan Akhnoo of Jablipora Bijbehara. Meanwhile, the area has been cordoned off and a massive **More On P10**

The Committee, as per an order, is to be headed by Commissioner/Secretary to the Government, General Administration Department as Chairman and Commissioner/Secretary to the Government,

HC Tells Mehbooba

'Avail Remedy For Passport'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Friday asked Mehbooba Mufti to avail remedy under law even as it disposed of the former Chief Minister of erstwhile state of J&K and PDP President's plea challenging dismissal of her petition for passport last week. Mehbooba had challenged dismissal of her plea last week by high court's single bench after Addl. Director **More On P10**

US Intelligence Report Sets Off Alarm

'India, Pak May Stumble Into Large-Scale War'

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: In a sensational disclosure, a United States intelligence report has warned about the possibility of an unintentional large-scale war between India and Pakistan though none of the two nuclear countries would want so.

"India and Pakistan may stumble into a large-scale war neither side wants, especially following a terrorist attack that the Indian government judges to be significant,"



says the Global Trends report, which is produced every four years by the US government's

National Intelligence Council. The report was released in Washington on Wednesday and takes a longer-term, strategic look, trying to peer 20 years ahead to examine how current changes could transform the world of the future.

A similar report was released by the Obama administration in 2017, highlighting the risk of a pandemic and the vast economic disruption it could cause — a prescient prediction in hindsight. The ability of some **More On P10**

SSPs To Brief Media About Encounters: IGP

AGENCIES

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir range Vijay Kumar Friday said that district SSPs have been directed to brief media men about encounter updates and that the media persons are once again advised not to inch closer to gunfight sites as that poses threat to their lives. The IGP said that if media persons go closer to the operation sites, the same may disturb the men involved in anti-militancy operations and the live coverages of encounters may trigger law and order situation in other areas. Replying to a query at PCR Srinagar whether injury to the three civilians can be reported by the media, the IGP said: "I reiterate that no live **More On P10**

J&K Integral Part Of India, Says VP Naidu

Asserts Delhi Does Not Need Unsolicited Advice



Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India, and the country is capable of solving its own problems, Vice President M

Venkaiah Naidu said here Friday, asking other nations to "confine themselves to their domestic problems" rather than giving unsolicited advice to India. On his first **More On P10**

J&K Reports 808 New Covid Cases, Four Deaths



File Photo

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir on Friday recorded 808 new COVID-19 cases, which

took the tally to 1,36,470, while four deaths in the past 24 hours pushed the toll to 2,023 in the union territory, officials said. Out of the fresh cases, **More On P10**

Omar Tests Positive 2 Days After Vaccine

Press Trust Of India

Two days after receiving the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, National Conference leader and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah Friday tested positive for the deadly virus. "For a year I did my **More On P10**

Dulloo Calls For Increasing RT-PCR Tests

amid a surge in COVID-19 cases over the past two weeks, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday assessed the preparations and called for increasing the rate of RT-PCR tests. Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education, Atal Dulloo chaired a meeting with senior officers of the **More On P10**

4350 Persons Lodged In J&K Jails

Agencies

SRINAGAR: As many 4350 persons were languishing in jails of Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory by the end of February this year.

According to the official data, 4212 males and 138 females were languishing in 13 jails of J&K. J&K UT had 14 jails for lodging undertrials, convicts and detainees but Hira Nagar jail was de-notified as a prison on March 05 and then notified as holding center for lodging of Rohingya refugees by the UT's Home department.

Of them, only 170 are convicts- 166 males **More On P10**

Highway Open For Two-Way Traffic Today

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Authorities on Friday announced two-way traffic on Jammu-Srinagar highway, the only surface link connecting

Kashmir Valley with the outside world, tomorrow.

"Subject to fair weather and better road condition, LMVs (Passenger) shall be allowed from both sides on Jammu-Srinagar highway viz **More On P10**

Mercury Dips In Gulmarg, Pahalgam

Press Trust Of India

With dry weather predicted for now, the minimum temperature fell across Kashmir Valley with Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort, recording minus 2.5 degree Celsius, officials said on Friday. A meteorological **More On P10**

'He Stabbed Me Like A Bollywood Villain': Kashmir's Dagger Account

AUQIB JAVEED

In ward number 18 of Srinagar's Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital (SMHS), a youth lying on a hospital stretcher — bandaged and bloodied — still wonders how he's alive.

"Miracle it was," he told Kashmir Observer in a quivering voice. "The attacker looked from a gang the way he stabbed me."

The injured youth is Najmu Sakib Dar of Chinkral Mohalla Habba Kadal, Srinagar.

He was stabbed with a dragger over a dozen times by another youth inside his home on the evening of 5 April, 2021.

"The attacker ensured that I would

be dead," the knifed person said.

On Monday, Dar was alone at his home when a person known to him allegedly trespassed his house and stabbed him from left, right and centre, in a vengeful huff to settle the "personal grudge".

Dar was rushed to SMHS by his neighbours after hearing the hue and cry. He's under medical observation in the hospital and is stable, but unable to move, breathe, and eat properly.

"I've received over 60 stitches on my different body parts," he said. "The dagger was nearer to my lungs. It's Allah's mercy that I'm still alive!"

The attack came a week after two persons were stabbed by a group

of persons in Babademb locality of Srinagar's Fateh Kadal on March 28.

The injured were identified as Shafat Ahmad Sofi (35), son of Bashir Ahmad Sofi, a resident of Batamalo, and Danish Nazir, son of Nazir Ahmad, a resident of Bemina.

The condition of both the injured is said to be stable. Similarly, on 12 January this year, the entire city was shocked after a boy was stabbed to death and another was injured near Dastgeer Sahib shrine (RA) at Khanyar area of Srinagar.

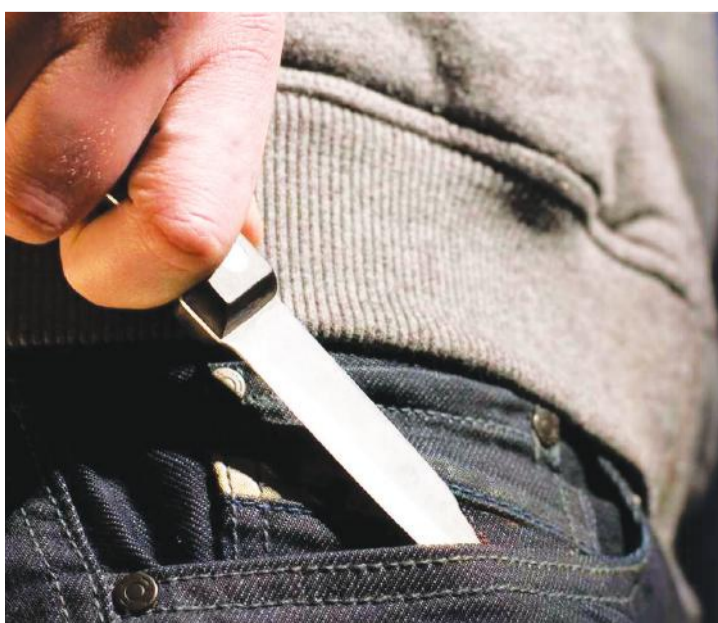
The slain was identified as Ziyaan Chisti, son of Mohammed Ashraf Chisti, resident of Rainawari, Srinagar. While the injured

accompanying him was identified as Faizan Fida Bhat, son of Fida Ahmad Bhat, a resident of Ellahi Bagh area of Srinagar.

The police investigation in the case revealed that the murder was carried out for the sake of a small amount of money, which the "accused" owed to the slain youth.

Old Srinagar residents allege that a few "gangs" carry out these piercing attacks to settle personal scores.

"Most of the people are druggies and roam around the city in jeep brandishing hockey sticks and sometimes knives," said Mohammad Irfan, a resident of Khanyar. "None dares to tell them anything." **More On P10**



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

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

Subject: Provisional Select List of candidates recommended for Admission to B. Ed. Course-2020 in Government College of Education, Canal Road, Jammu Second list thereof.

Reference: (i) Notification No. 003-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 05-01-2021
(ii) Notice No. 011-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 21-01-2021
(iii) Notice No. 016-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 04-02-2021
(iv) Notification No. 039-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 19-03-2021
(v) Notification No. 042-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 23-03-2021
(vi) Notice No. 037-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 30-03-2021

Notification No. 050-BOPEE of 2021 Dated: 06-04-2021

Consequent upon receipt of shortfall from Government College of Education, Canal Road, Jammu after the last date of joining of candidates pursuant to Notification No. 042- BOPEE of 2021 Dated 23-03-2021 read with Notice No 037-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 30-03- 2021, the candidates figuring in Annexure "A" to this notification, have been provisionally selected for admission to B.Ed. Course-2020 in Government College of Education, Canal Road, Jammu against the said shortfall. The Principal of the College will get the following certificates in original verified from the Incharge admission and countersigned by him/her before allowing the candidates to complete their admission formalities:-

(i) **Qualifying Marks Certificate (10+2+3);**
(ii) **Domicile Certificate of UT of J&K / Ladakh (for candidates belonging to UT of Ladakh, ST certificate issued by Competent Authority of UT of Ladakh shall be treated as Domicile Certificate);**
(iii) **Category Certificate, if any;**
(iv) **Date of Birth (DOB) Certificate and**
(v) **Any other certificate required by the College in accordance with the rules.**

The selected candidates are directed to report to the College from 07th to 15th of April, 2021 up to 4:00 P.M along with their relevant certificates in original. The Head of the Institution shall send the details of candidates, who do not complete their admission as SHORT FALL on 15th of April, 2021 up to 5.00 P.M. to the BOPEE office, Jammu positively.

Note:

- In view of non-availability of the eligible candidates in the following reserved category in B.Ed. Jammu 2020 in Govt. College of Education, Canal Road, Jammu; the vacant category seats have been converted into open merit under Section-9 (2) of J&K Reservation Act-2004 as per details given below and filled up from Open Merit category candidates accordingly.
(i) **Pahari Speaking People (PSP) = 02 Seats**
- The Principal of the Institution is advised to ensure to admit only those candidates whose documents are complete in all respects. In case of any deficiency found during the verification of documents / certificates including Marks Card, such candidate (s) should not be allowed admission in any case. Any lapse in this regard will be the sole responsibility of the concerned Head of Institution.
- The candidates with rank 115, 130 (CDP), 117, 118, 139, 140, 144 (RBA), 129 (SC), 132, 152, (ALC/IB), and 147 (ST) who were selected in their respective categories vide Notification No. 042-BOPEE of 2021 Dated 23-03-2021 are now/hereby treated to have been selected in Open Merit.
- The Annexure "A" shall be available on the BOPEE website www.jkbopee.gov.in only.

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

DIPK-NB-112/21

No: BOPEE/Exam-17/2021 Dated: 06-04-2021

NIFT Srinagar Holds Maiden Convocation

Smriti Irani Announces New Courses On Technical Textiles



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Srinagar Friday celebrated its first-ever Convocation at SKICC. The ceremony was held for its first batch of 31 students.

The event was attended by Smriti Irani, Union Minister Of Textile and Minister of Women and Child Development as Chief Guest, Minister of State, Youth Affairs and Sports and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijju, Lieutenant Governor J&K Manoj Sinha were the Guests of Honour.

Irani on the occasion announced the introduction of

new courses on technical textiles at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Srinagar. She also said that the students who want to try their luck should go through the Jammu and Kashmir Industrial Policy thoroughly.

"The challenge is that this campus (Srinagar campus) and those across the country don't have a specially dedicated team for technical textiles. That's why I find it quite privileged to announce that NIFT will have a course on technical textiles at its few campuses including Srinagar," Irani said.

Irani said India in the past five years has seen an increase

of 35 percent in the production of silk. "We are in the position to be self-sufficient completely in the production of silk in next two years, which means currently we are at number two after China and after two years we will be completely self-sufficient and not depend on any country for raw material. India is the number one jute producer of the world as well," she said.

"If we talk about employment generation only in the sector of silk, we have seen a 20 percent increase in employment opportunities. In past three to four years, Textile ministry has been focusing of technical tex-

Govt Working To Ensure GI Tagging Of Kashmir Art Products: LG

Observer News Service

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Friday said that his administration is working on ensuring GI tagging of several handmade products like wood carving, carpet and other products of Kashmir Art.

"The government is working for GI tagging of several handicrafts like wood carving, carpet and several others. The GI tagging would help the people affiliated with the job to get good amount in international markets," he said while addressing a gathering at SKICC, through video conferencing said. He said that there is no dearth of talent in Kashmir, saying that the people here are gifted with different talents.

"I am observing that NIFT Srinagar is playing a huge role. I believe that new courses will be started soon and will in furnishing the talent of the youth," he said. Sinha also said that Union Textile Minister has been doing her best and taken the textiles to new heights.

tiles, which helps in producing rocket components, bullet proof jackets and other related things," she said.

"According to the recent budget presented by the government, there is capital expenditure possibilities of around Rs 3 lakh Crore and of which technical textile designers, manufactures have a huge domestic market that we can capture," she added Dr Javed Ahmed Wani, Director NIFT Srinagar presented academic report of the NIFT Srinagar. He informed the gathering that the permanent campus of NIFT Srinagar shall be made functional from this year which

will have world-class facilities for education and research.

All speakers congratulated the graduates and wished them luck for future endeavours.

In this ceremony 3 students from each department were awarded with certificates and gold medals for their innovation and creativity reflected in the graduation projects. Furthermore, awards of academic, artistic and athletic excellence were awarded to 4 students for their outstanding overall performances. The function was attended by many academicians, state functionaries as well as representatives and students of various schools.

THE CHALLENGE IS THAT THIS CAMPUS (SRINAGAR CAMPUS) AND THOSE ACROSS THE COUNTRY DON'T have a specially dedicated team for technical textiles. That's why I find it quite privileged to announce that NIFT will have a course on technical textiles at its few campuses including Srinagar,"

LMD Books Two Delivery Boys For Overcharging On Cooking Gas

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The field executives of Legal Metrology department today booked two delivery boys in downtown Srinagar for overcharging on cooking gas refills and a penal sum of Rs 5000 was also collected from them on the spot.

As per a statement issued here it was informed that the Oil Marketing Companies (OMC) has fixed a rate of Rs 925 (inclusive of subsidy) for refill cooking gas cylinders for district Srinagar whereas the delivery-boys were found charging more than the amount fixed by the authorities.

Rijju Inspects Infrastructure At Institute Of Unani Medicine Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Union Minister of State, Youth Affairs and Sports (IC) and MoS Ministry of Minority Affairs and AYUSH, Kiren Rijju Friday visited Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine here and took overall review of its functioning as well as physical infrastructure and Testing Labs.

During the visit, Rijju oversaw the different types of Unani System of treatment including Cupping without Scarification, Cupping with Scarification, Inkibab (Application of Steam), Natool (Irrigation) and Dalk(Massage) provided to patients.

On the occasion, MoS said that he is impressed with the ISM treatment and stressed for its further promotion so that maximum people get benefit out of this.

Rijju took round of all Testing and Research labs including Biochemistry, Radiology, Photochemistry, Histology and other Labs and took onspot review of their functioning.

While speaking on the occasion, Rijju said that he is pleased to visit the Institute and oversee the treatment given to ailing patients. He said Kashmir is blessed with the natural vegetation which houses varieties of medicinal herbs, helpful in curing different ailments and diseases.

He appreciated Research work being carried at the Institution and emphasised on the improvisation in the treatment and other activities of the institute.

Rijju also interacted with the patients admitted in the Institute and enquired about their well being and recovery. Patients on the occasion apprised him re-



garding the facilities available to them and the quality of treatment provided.

"Every disease has specific treatment and can be cured by Unani, Ayurveda or Psychological treatment", Rijju said.

While referring to history of application of Unani Medicine here, he said Kashmir has adopted Unani medicine much earlier.

In relation to prevailing pandemic, the MoS said that traditional System of Medicine has become a vital method to fight the pandemic in recent times.

Kiren Rijju during the visit assured the administration of the Institute that the government will provide all necessary support for further development and promotion of infrastructure and Medicine of these institutions.

Earlier, Kiren Rijju planted a sapling of Prunus armeniaca L (Apricot) locally called "Tcheer" in the premises of the Institute and watered it. He was briefed regarding the benefits of the tree by the officers of the Institute.

NIT Srinagar Hosts Webinar On Pursuing Quantum Career

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Department of Physics, National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar on Friday organised a webinar on 'Pursuing Quantum Career in the Age of Neural Networks'.

The virtual session was presided over by Director NIT Srinagar Prof. Rakesh Sehgal. While Registrar NIT Srinagar Prof. Kaiser Bukhari, HOD Physics Dr. Prince A. Ganai, faculty members, and students of the department also attended the session.

The session was hosted by Dr. Rukhsan ul Haq, Quantum AI Scientist at IBM, and shared his vast experience with the students.

Prof. Sehgal said Quantum physics has vast opportunities and our students should be aware of these things and which are very helpful.

"Such sessions are playing an important role and students should know about pursuing Quantum career in the age of neural networks. There are several specialisations in this field which can lead to a career in quantum computing," he said.

Sehgal said NIT Srinagar will host such webinars and seminars for research scholars and students in the future also. Our institution will extend every possible support for such initiatives, he said.

Registrar NIT, Kaiser Bukhari



also appreciated the Physics department for conducting webinars on relevant themes. He said these sessions are need of the hour and very helpful for opting a career in Quantum technologies.

On the occasion, HOD Physics Dr. Prince A. Ganai said welcomed the guest Dr. Rukhsan ul Haq and stated that both faculty members and students were interested in the discussed topic.

Ganai said Dr. Haq is among brightest students from the Valley. I have met him several times and he has been always wonderful for his understanding and thoughts.

Dr. Haq is a quantum Artificial Intelligence Scientist at IBM, former series forecasting and Analyst at Johnson and Johnson. He is also the founder of the Kashmir Institute of Mathematical Sciences.

While interacting virtually with students, Dr. Haq shared his vast experience in Quantum physics with the students and urged them to work hard to make a career in the developing field.

During the session, Dr. M.A. Shah said NIT Srinagar should take lead in going to the data center and then to artificial intelligence. He urged Dr. Haq to visit the campus and identify the students whom department can send for training in the future.

The concluding remarks were presented by Dr. Seemin Rubab and she thanked the speaker for his wonderful session. "It was a very interactive session as there were plenty of questions asked by students during the online session," Dr. Rubab said.

Apart from faculty, the webinar saw good participation from 50-60 students and research scholars from the Physics department.

Mock Drill To Test Flood Preparedness Held At Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A Mock Drill on flood preparedness was conducted by NDRF in collaboration with SDRF, DDMA Srinagar and JKSEOC in River Jhelum near Zero Bridge here.

The mock drill was carried out as part of preparation to combat flood like situation.

The Drill was conducted in presence of Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Srinagar, Dr. Syed Hanief Balkhi.

On the occasion, all the stakeholders from the concerned departments participated in the smooth conduct of the drill.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADC said that the aim of the exercise was to check the Disaster preparedness of all the departments and to find the gaps in resources and communication system in the district, besides to spread awareness among the stakeholders and the general public regarding their role.

He further said that such mock exercises are very important as it helps in proper coordination, decision-making, prompt response, and other life safety aspects at the time of any incident.

During the event, both the response forces, NDRF and SDRF presented various rescue and response techniques utilized to save lives during floods like situation including rescue of drowned persons due to boat capsizing, river crossing rope rescue, use of improvised floating aids, deep diving to find the dead etc.

DC Srinagar Directs For Intensifying COVID-19 Vaccination

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In view of the surge in Covid-19 cases, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mohammed Aijaz Asad Friday chaired a meeting of concerned officers to review the progress of the Covid vaccination process in the district.

The meeting discussed the status of Covid-19 vaccination besides the impact of the precautions that need to be taken in the district to control the spread of the Covid-19.

At the outset, the concerned officer apprised the DC that about 10409 health workers and 56343 frontline workers have been so far administered Covid vaccine in the district besides 18 thousand people above age of 45 years were also covered under vaccination drive in Srinagar.

The DC directed the officers to work with added zeal and continue to maintain the highest level of alertness to ensure implementation of SOPs to counter the spread of virus.

The DC reiterated that apart from executing proactive measures, mobilization of all resources and manpower shall be put on ready gear to enable the Administration to tackle any emergencies arising from Covid-19 pandemic.

He also directed officers to intensify vaccination process in order to achieve cent percent immunization in the district with special focus on hotels, Coaching Centers, Banks, Business establishments and areas where public footfall is high.

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS



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

This Day in History

- 837 - Comet 1P/837 F1 (Halley) approaches within 0.0334 AUs of Earth
- 1589 - Spanish troops conquer Geertruidenberg
- 1815 - Mount Tambora in Indonesia experiences a cataclysmic eruption, one of the most powerful in history, killing around 71,000 people and causing a global volcanic winter
- 1877 - 1st human cannonball act performed in London
- 1887 - US President Abraham Lincoln's re-buried with his wife in Springfield, Illinois
- 1913 - President Woodrow Wilson throws out 1st ball, Senators beat Yankees 2-1
- 1923 - Hitler demands "hatred & more hatred" in Berlin
- 1938 - Austria becomes a state of Germany
- 1944 - Soviet forces liberate Odessa from Nazis
- 1946 - 1st election for Japanese Parliament
- 1964 - Iranian motor launch catches fire & sinks killing 113 (Persian Gulf)
- 1972 - 7.0 earthquake kills 1/5 of population of Iranian province of Fars
- 1973 - Pakistan suspends constitution
- 1979 - Soyuz 33 launched with a Russian & a Bulgarian
- 1981 - Computer glitch keeps Space Shuttle Columbia grounded
- 1986 - Benazir Bhutto returns to Pakistan
- 1989 - Intel corp announces shipment of 80-486 chip
- 1991 - Rare tropical storm develops in the Southern Hemisphere near Angola; first to be documented by satellites
- 1996 - Fastest wind speed ever recorded (not a tornado) 408 km/h (220 kn; 253 mph; 113 m/s) during tropical cyclone Olivia on Barrow Island, Australia
- 2006 - Hundreds of thousands protest H.R. 4437 (aka the "Sensenbrenner Bill") in the United States.
- 2010 - Polish Air Force Tu-154M crashes near Smolensk, Russia, killing all 96 people on board including President Lech Kaczy ski
- 2012 - United Nations deadline for Syrian troop withdrawal passes as violence continues
- 2012 - Apple Inc claims a value of \$600 billion making it the largest company by market capitalization in the world
- 2013 - Japan and Taiwan sign an agreement on fishing rights around the Senkaku Islands



HIJRI
CALENDAR

26

SHABAN
-UL-
MUAAZZAM

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR
4: 41

ZUHR
12: 32

ASR
5:08

MAGRIB
7:01

ISHA
8:25

From KO Archives

'I'LL WATCH CRICKET & TALK KASHMIR'

Musharraf Says, Positive Signals From India To Resolve Kashmir

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf today said he would discuss the Kashmir issue with Indian leaders during a two-day visit to New Delhi next week.

Reports suggest there is more to watching cricket than what is said to on cards during Musharraf's visit to New Delhi on April 16.

Originally billed as a visit to watch the last one-day match in New Delhi on April 18. General Musharraf has said (that the main purpose of his visit was to use the opportunity for talks on Kashmir.

Musharraf told a gathering of students here that he is more interested in talks on Kashmir than watching cricket.

"I am going to India on April 16 to watch the cricket match. I will discuss Kashmir. It is more important," he said.

Cricket match will not have that much importance, as that of a dialogue on Kashmir," said die General, while addressing convention at Jinnah Convention Centre at Islamabad today.

In his address, general Musharraf did not seem to attach too much importance to the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service.

"It is a small step towards confidence building and a small contribution for the happiness of people," he said.

He asserted the people should "appreciate good things" before "condemning" them outrightly.

"When something good is being done, it should not be negated," he said observing that the bus service was a good confidence building measure (CBM) but not a solution to the Kashmir issue.

"CBMs are a contribution towards the progress of the people. It is not total. You cannot say it is nothing or a zero. They are something, not enough but. I also say that more needs to be done," he said to a female student from Pakistan controlled Kashmir wH\$] criticised the service.

Before the bus service began, extensive "consultations" were held with Kashmiris in Jammu and Kashmir and A/ad Kashmiri to find out whether they favoured it or not. Musharraf said.

"It is not for Pakistan and India but for Kashmiris on both sides who wanted to meet and travel. This is a right step. You should support it. The effort would be to resolve the Kashmir j dispute," he added.

Since (he visit was finalised, hectic backdoor diplomacy, was I on between officials of both the countries to prepare the ground I work for talks between Singh and Musharraf on Kashmir and I other contentious issues.

Official sources here said former Indian diplomat and S M Lamba and Musharraf's close confidant and Secretary of the Pakistan's National Security Council (NSC) Tariq Aziz have been holding secret talks to prepare a broad agenda for the meeting.

(Kashmir Observer, 10 April, 2005)

Israel Refuses To Work With ICC On War Crimes Probe



Agencies

Israel on Thursday said it has formally decided not to cooperate with an International Criminal Court war crimes investigation into the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The ICC's chief prosecutor announced on March 3 that she had opened a full investigation into the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories, infuriating Israel, which not a member of The Hague-based court.

The ICC sent a deferral notice on March 9, giving Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) a month to inform judges whether they are investigating crimes similar to those being probed by the ICC.

Had Israel informed the court that it was carrying out its own probe into alleged war crimes perpetrators, it could have asked for a deferral.

Ahead of the deadline, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office issued a statement saying the government had agreed "to not cooperate" with the ICC.

Israel would instead send a letter to the court "completely rejecting the claim that Israel commits war crimes," it said.

The letter would also "reiterate Israel's unequivocal position that The Hague tribunal has no authority to open an investigation against it."

"The state of Israel is committed to the rule of law... and expects the court to refrain from violating its sovereignty and authority," the statement reads.

'Hypocrisy'
The PA, based in the occupied West Bank, has been a state party to the ICC since 2015.

The Palestinians have welcomed the investigation and said they will not seek any deferral.

The world's only permanent war crimes tribunal, the ICC was

set up in 2002 to try humanity's worst crimes where local courts are unwilling or unable to step in.

ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda has said her probe will cover the situation since 2014 in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

It will mainly focus on the 2014 Gaza war but also look at the deaths of Palestinian demonstrators from 2018 onwards.

After a five-year preliminary probe, Bensouda said there was a "reasonable basis" to believe crimes were committed by both sides -- by the Israeli military, Hamas Islamists who have controlled Gaza since 2007, and Palestinian armed groups.

Hamas has welcomed the ICC probe and argued that its attacks on Israel were justified acts of "resistance."

Netanyahu, a vocal critic of the ICC, on Thursday, accused the court of "hypocrisy" of targeting Israeli troops who "fight with high moral conduct against terrorists."

The long-serving premier has previously lambasted the decision to open the probe as the "essence of anti-Semitism" and declared Israel was "under attack."

Thursday's statement marked the first time that Netanyahu had made it clear Israel would not directly engage with the ICC.

The United States has also criticized the ICC investigation and voiced support for its ally Israel.

The ICC last week welcomed US President Joe Biden's lifting of sanctions imposed by Donald Trump on Bensouda, saying it signalled a new era of cooperation with Washington.

The Trump administration imposed financial sanctions and a visa ban on Bensouda last year after she launched an investigation into alleged war crimes by US military personnel in Afghanistan.

Diplomats Loyal To Myanmar Military Seize London Embassy

Agencies

LONDON: Britain on Thursday condemned "bullying" by the Myanmar junta after the country's ambassador to London was ousted in an extraordinary diplomatic coup after calling for the release of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Diplomats loyal to the Myanmar military authorities seized control of the embassy on Wednesday, leaving ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn locked out in the street.

The ambassador said the defence attaché had taken over the mission in "a kind of coup", two months after the military seized power in Myanmar.

Daily protests demanding a return of democracy



have rocked the country and brought a brutal response from the armed forces, with almost 600 civilians killed according to a local monitoring group.

The coup prompted several high-profile diplomatic

defections, including the country's ambassador to the United Nations.

The junta recalled Kyaw Zwar Minn last month after he issued a statement urging them to release Suu Kyi and deposed civilian President Win Myint.



THE AMBASSADOR SAID THE DEFENCE ATTACHE HAD taken over the mission in "a kind of coup", two months after the military seized power in Myanmar.

How Worried Should We Be About Links Of Blood Clots To AstraZeneca's Vaccine?

ZURICH: Europe's drug regulator on Wednesday said it had found a possible link between AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine and very rare blood clots in adults who received the shot. Britain recommended people under 30 get an alternative COVID-19 vaccine if possible.

Here's what we know so far: **WHAT HAS HAPPENED?**

The EMA said its vaccine side effects monitoring system, as of April 4, had received 169 reports of cases of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST), or clots in blood vessels exiting the brain, and 53 cases of splanchnic vein thrombosis (SVT), or clotting in veins in the abdomen.

That's out of some 34 million AstraZeneca vaccine doses administered in Britain and the European Economic Area since vaccinations started almost three months ago.

Its safety committee carried out a review of 62 cases of CVST and 24 cases of SVT, of which 18 were fatal. Most of the cases reported have occurred in women under 60, though that could be misleading. Germany and Britain say many more women received AstraZeneca's shot than men.

Most cases occurred within 2 weeks of the person receiving their first dose.

German vaccination officials who recorded 29 cases of CVST in women aged 20 to 59 who got the AstraZeneca vaccine said the occurrence rate in that group was 20 times higher within 16 days of vaccination than what would have typically been expected.

Germany's health ministry has said 1 to 1.4 cases of CVST would have been expected during that time.

WHAT HAS BRITAIN'S REGULATOR SAID?

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency reviewed 79 cases of rare clotting coupled with low



platelets, with 19 fatalities - 13 women and 6 men. Eleven of the deaths in people under the age of 50 and three under 30.

All 79 cases occurred after a first dose of the vaccine.

HOW DID REGULATORS COME TO THEIR DECISION?

British officials drew on statistics from the University of Cambridge's Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication to explain their recommendations that young people get an alternative shot while older people still get AstraZeneca's.

According to the Centre, vaccination with the AstraZeneca shot would reduce admissions to intensive care units by nearly seven in 100,000 people in the group aged 20-29 years old with a high risk of exposure to the virus, while 1.1 people per 100,000 people in the same group were estimated as likely to suffer serious vaccine-related harms.

The risk of serious harm due to vaccination falls further the older people get, and ICU admissions prevented by vaccination rise sharply, boosting the AstraZeneca shot's benefit-to-risk ratio. The Centre concluded only 0.4 people for every 100,000 in the 50-59 age group would suffer vaccine-linked harm, while 95.6 ICU admissions per 100,000 people would be prevented.

EMA investigators checked if the frequency of events was higher in the vaccinated population than normal background rates drawn from public health statistics or insurance records. This would be combined with a medical analysis of each case and insight from scientific literature.

In its findings, the EMA said on March 18 that, on average, just 1.35 cases of CVST might normally have been expected among people under 50 within 14 days of receiving AstraZeneca's vaccine, whereas by the same cut-off date 12 cases had been recorded. By comparison, four women out of 10,000 would get a blood clot from taking oral contraception.

Key to the EMA's assessment that benefits continue to outweigh risks are its conclusions about likelihood of an increased risk from clotting, compared with the benefits of preventing COVID-19 and reducing hospitalizations and deaths.

WHAT'S THE EU DOING NOW?

The EMA said that unusual blood clots with low blood platelets should be listed as very rare side effects and countries should decide on how to proceed with their national COVID-19 immunisation campaigns.

These may vary from nation to nation, the EMA said, depending on factors like how quickly infections are spreading and whether vaccines are available. Its safety committee requested new studies, and changes to ongoing ones, to provide more information about the mechanism behind the rare clots.

AstraZeneca and European regulators have said concerns about blood disorders did not emerge during clinical trials.

ARE THERE ANY THEORIES FOR WHAT MAY BE LEADING TO THE CLOTS?

Among possible causes for these rare cerebral sinus vein clots being investigated are that the vaccine triggers an unusual antibody in rare cases.

The EMA said the vaccine may trigger an immune response leading to the unusual clotting, though it acknowledged that scientists have yet to identify any risk factors that might predispose somebody to clotting combined with low platelets. **Reuters**

Explosives Found Near Kabul Airport, Plane With Pak Lawmakers Turned Back

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD: A plane carrying Pakistan's Parliament Speaker and a delegation of lawmakers was not allowed to land in Kabul and was turned back due to security reasons after explosives, apparently years old, were found buried near the airport.

National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser was heading a nine-member parliamentary delegation to Kabul for a three-day visit on the special invitation of Speaker of Afghan Wolesi Jirga Mir Rehman Rehmani.

A spokesperson for the speaker said that Qaiser along with the delegation had departed for Kabul from the Islamabad International Airport as per schedule but when their aircraft was still in the air, the delegation members were informed that Kabul airport had been closed due to some "security reasons", the Dawn News reported.

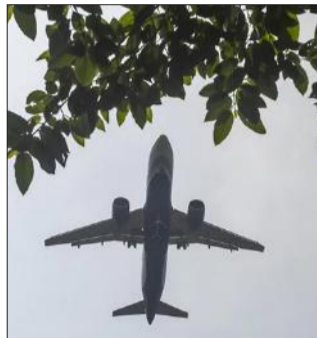
The plane was about to descend when the control tower informed of the closure of the airport.

Riaz Arian, the commander of Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIR), told Afghanistan's Tolo News that Qaiser's flight was diverted because of the relocation of unexploded explosives from under a building near the airport.

An official from NATO's Resolute Support Mission said a digging crew uncovered explosives that appeared to have been bur-

ied "for quite some time" in the area, the news portal reported.

"During construction at HKIA international airport, a digging crew uncovered unexploded ordnance that appears to have been buried for quite some time. The explosives were uncovered in an unoccupied area far from any active runway. Turkish military explosives experts conducted a controlled detonation to render the device safe. Flight



operations resumed shortly thereafter," said the official.

Qaiser later received telephone calls from his Afghan counterpart as well as chairman of Afghanistan's Senate Fazal Hadi.

During their telephone conversation, the two Afghan leaders said the Pakistani plane was not allowed to land at Kabul airport due to security concerns. They expressed the hope that the Pakistani delegation would soon visit Afghanistan, the Dawn News reported.

Vienna Talks On Iran's Nuclear Deal Conclude Hopeful Opening Week



Agencies

TEHRAN, IRAN – The first week of talks to restore Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers has concluded with all sides hopeful of continuing the discussions that started in Vienna.

A Joint Commission meeting of the remaining participants of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – Iran, China, Russia, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom – was held in the Austrian capital on Friday following a virtual meeting last week and an in-person meeting on Tuesday.

Iran's foreign ministry said Tehran was in favour of continuing the talks if all sides continue to exhibit "political will and seriousness" to restore the deal that the United States unilaterally abandoned in May 2018.

For now, negotiators – including those from the US who were in Vienna but in a different hotel as Iran refuses to meet them directly – will head back to reflect on the progress made this week. The talks will continue on Wednesday.

"The JCPOA participants took stock of the work done by experts

over the last three days and noted with satisfaction the initial progress made," tweeted Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's representative at the talks that are aimed at figuring out how remaining parties can facilitate the return of the US and bring Iran back into full compliance after it started steps in 2019 to scale back its commitments.

After Tuesday's meeting, two working groups were formed. One was to list the sanctions the US started imposing in 2018 that would need to be lifted while the other would gauge what measures Iran needs to take to return to full compliance with the accord.

In response to US sanctions, Iran has boosted uranium enrichment and stockpile, installed cascades of new centrifuges, and expanded its research and development.

The sanctions dilemma
On Thursday, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – the nuclear watchdog tasked with monitoring Iranian nuclear activity – met in Vienna separately with representatives of Iran, the US and Europe tasked with communicating Joint Commission messages to the US.

People Can Now Think About Summer Vacations, UK Minister Says

LONDON: The British public can now think about booking summer vacations abroad but there were still risks, transport minister Grant Shapps said on Friday after the government unveiled details of its new traffic light system for travel.

"I'm not telling people that they shouldn't book some holidays now, it's the first time I've been able to say that for many months, I think everybody doing it understands there are risks with coronavirus," Shapps told Sky News.

"For the first time, people can start to think about visiting loved ones abroad, or perhaps



a summer holiday, but we're doing it very, very cautiously because we don't want to see any return of coronavirus in this country." **Reuters**

NEWS MAKERS

Britain's Prince Philip, Husband Of Queen Elizabeth, Dies At 99

LONDON: Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth and a leading figure in the British royal family for almost seven decades, has died aged 99, Buckingham Palace said on Friday.

The Duke of Edinburgh, as he was officially known, had been by his wife's side throughout her 69-year reign, the longest in British history. During that time he earned a reputation for a tough, no-nonsense attitude and a propensity for occasional gaffes.

"It is with deep sorrow that Her Majesty The Queen announces the death of her beloved husband, His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh," the palace said in a statement.

"His Royal Highness passed away peacefully this morning at Windsor Castle. Further announcements will be made in due course. The Royal Family join with people around the world in mourning his loss."



A Greek prince, Philip married Elizabeth in 1947. He went on to play a key role in modernising the monarchy in the post-World War Two period, and behind the walls of Buckingham Palace was the one key figure the queen could turn to and trust.

"He has, quite simply, been my strength and stay all these years," Elizabeth said in a rare personal tribute to Philip, made in a speech marking their 50th wedding anniversary in 1997.

Philip spent four weeks in hospital earlier this year for treatment for an infection to have a heart procedure, but returned to Windsor in early March.

His charm and disinclination to tolerate those he regarded as foolish or sycophantic earned him a position of respect among some Britons. But to others, his sometimes brusque demeanor made appear him rude and aloof. He was a delight to newspaper editors keen to pick up on any stray remark at official events.

The former naval officer admitted he found it hard to give up the military career he loved and to take on the job as the monarch's consort for which there was no clear-cut constitutional role.

"Like the expert carriage driver that he was, he helped to steer the royal family and the monarchy so that it remains an institution indisputably vital to the balance and hap-

piness of our national life," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

HEAD OF THE FAMILY

In private, the prince was regarded as the unquestioned head of his family, but protocol obliged the man dubbed "the second handshake" to spend his public life literally one step behind his wife.

"There was no precedent. If I asked somebody 'what do you expect me to do?', they all looked blank - they had no idea, nobody had much idea," he said in an interview to mark his 90th birthday.

After completing more than 22,000 solo appearances, Philip retired from public life in August 2017, although after that he occasional appeared at official engagements.

His last appearance was last July at a military ceremony at Windsor Castle, the royal palace to the west of London where he and the monarch have resided during COVID-19 lockdowns. **Reuters**

This PM Was Fined By Police Over Covid Rules Violation

OSLO: Norwegian police said on Friday they have fined Prime Minister Erna Solberg for breaking COVID-19 social distancing rules when she organised a family gathering to celebrate her birthday.

The fine is for 20,000 Norwegian crowns (\$2,352), police chief Ole Saeverud told a news conference.

The two-term prime minister apologised last month for organising an event for her 60th birthday with 13 family members at a mountain resort in late February, despite a government ban on gatherings of more than 10 people.

While the police would not have issued a fine in most such cases, the prime minister has been at the forefront of the government's work to impose restrictions, police said.



"Though the law is the same for all, all are not equal in front of the law," said Saeverud, justifying the fine.

"It is therefore correct to issue a fine in order to uphold the general public's trust in the rules on social restrictions," he said.

Police said Solberg and her husband, Sindre Finnes, made the decision together to hold a celebration and picked the restaurant, with Finnes taking care of the practical arrangements.

Though police said he had broken the law as well, he was not fined. The restaurant where the celebration took place was also found to have violated the law but it was not fined.

"Solberg is the country's leader and she has been at the forefront of the restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the virus," said Saeverud.

The prime minister's office was not immediately available for comment.

Solberg, who faces elections for parliament in September, has championed strict rules to curb the spread of the coronavirus, resulting in some of Europe's lowest rates of infection and deaths.

But the country saw a rapid rise in infections in the first quarter of 2021, led by more contagious variants of the virus, forcing the government to tighten restrictions in late March. **Reuters**

Imams, Khateebbs Call For Release Of Mirwaiz Umar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Ulema, Aima and Khateeb of the Mosques, Khanqahs, Imambarahs and Shrines on the occasion of congregation Friday prayers expressed anguish and resentment over the 20-month-long “arbitrary” house detention of Mirwaiz Dr Umar Farooq and termed it a gross violation of an individual’s personal freedom besides a sheer interference in the religious affairs.

The Ulemas and Khateebbs said that as the holy month of Ramzan is about to commence, the authorities must release unconditionally the Mirwaiz and all the political prisoners and youth who are languishing in jails, a statement released by Muttahida Majlis Ulema said.

At the historic Jamia Masjid Sri-

nagar, the Vice President of Anjuman Auqaf Jama Masjid and Imam and Khateeb of the grand Masjid Mou-lana Ahmad Syed Naqshbandi while stressing upon the authorities to release the Mirwaiz said the sentiments of the people are hurt due to the continuous detention of Mirwaiz. He reiterated that the pulpit and minarets of Jama Masjid are silent due to the absence of Mirwaiz which otherwise used to reverberate with Qaal Allah Wa Qaala Rasool (SAW).

In their Friday sermons, the Imams and Khateebbs also impressed upon the people to religiously follow the Covid guidelines and SOPs advised by health experts by wearing masks, using sanitisers and ensuring social distancing in Mosques, Khanqahs and Imambarahs.

Jammu Has Emerged As Education Hub Of North India: Jitendra Singh

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Friday said Jammu region has emerged as the education hub of north India over the last seven years after Narendra Modi took over as the country’s prime minister. He said projects sanctioned simultaneously for Jammu and Srinagar have taken off in the winter capital but are languishing in the valley owing to “peculiar circumstances” there.

“Jammu today has virtually emerged as the education hub of north India. We have IIMs, IITs, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, AIIMS, three government medical colleges within a range of 10 to 20 km as well as north India’s first ever teaching department of space technology by ISRO in central University Jammu,” the minister of state in the Prime Minister’s office said.

Singh was speaking at the third fourth convocation of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM).

Singh said north India’s first biotech park is coming up in Kathua besides several engineering colleges. “All this has happened in the last seven years and we owe it to the central government headed by Modi,” Singh said, adding one the largest stadiums in the country is also com-

ing up in Jammu region named after former finance minister Arun Jaitley besides a water sports complex at Mansar in Udhampur.

“The stadium is next to only Ahmedabad stadium and Kolkata’s Eden Garden,” said the Union minister who had laid the foundation stone of the Rs 58.23 crore mega-sports complex spread over 270 kanals of land at Hiranagar in Kathua in September last year.

“This is actually happening around us which has a direct connection with our youth. Earlier, the common grievance was that discrimination was happening against Jammu,” Singh said.

Singh said all the projects which were sanctioned simultaneously for Jammu and Srinagar are progressing in Jammu, while they are languishing in the valley.

“We have the first phase of ring road already functional in Jammu, first batch of 50 students selected for AIIMS and an industrial park is also ready in Kathua but the projects are yet to take off in the valley whatever be the reason or peculiar circumstances over there,” Singh said.

“Despite all this, some people still keep claiming that there is discrimination (against Jammu). Maybe they are the victims of the victimhood hangover of the past,” Singh added.



A HEALTH WORKER administering a Covid-19 vaccine shot to an elderly in Srinagar. KO Photo: Abid Bhat

Night Curfew Beats Logic, Says Kashmir Doctors Body

‘Disallowing Gatherings, Following SOPs Effective Tools To Stem Transmission Of Virus’

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A day after the announcement of night curfew in Jammu and Kashmir, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Friday said the move won’t stop the spread of Covid-19 infection.

“It beats logic to have restrictions at night when most of the crowds are during the day,” said DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan, in a statement.

“One wonders how night curfew will help in curbing the spread, when people go about their business during the day hours,” he said.

He said Kashmir has no night life. There is no movement at all during the night hours. Life comes to a standstill in the night.

“All activities happen during the day and that is the time when virus transmission occurs,” DAK President said.

He said it is during day-

time that huge crowds are seen in markets, large gatherings are seen at social and public functions which is the main cause behind the spread of Covid-19 infection in the community.

“Kashmir is reeling under the grip of a raging second wave of Covid-19 with surge in number of cases and hospitalisations too,” he said.

The J&K administration late Thursday night announced imposition of night curfew from April 9 in a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus.

“The virus does not take rest during the day and becomes active during the night. It doesn’t work like that,” Dr Nisar said.

He said there is no data to support the use of night curfew to reduce the virus transmission.

“Even union health ministry has written to states like Maharashtra that night cur-

few has not much impact on virus transmission.”

He said instead of applying night curfew, “we need to make people understand that corona is still here and they need to be cautious,” he said.

“Things like masking mandate, not allowing gatherings and improving ventilation in public places are all effective tools to stem the transmission of the virus.”

“And key is to ramp up the vaccine drive and inoculate as many people quickly as possible,” he added.

He said, also, the focus must remain on tracking, testing and isolation of cases. “If we pursue these measures very aggressively, we may be able to control the situation soon.

“And, if we slip-up on any of these measures, we will be down on a slippery slope for some months to come,” said Dr Nisar.

HC Asks Govt To Consider Representation Of DDC’s Challenging Inter-district Recruitment

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The District Development Council members, Chairpersons of Block Development Councils Sarpanches and other representatives of Gujjar and Bakerwal community along with ALC and Pahari speaking people representatives of all districts of Kashmir province and Doda Reasi, Udhampur and Kathua from Jammu province have filed a writ petition in representative capacity before High Court of Jammu and Kashmir at Srinagar against the inter district recruitment.

The case titled Shista Aslam and others v/s Union of India was listed on 6th of April 2021 before the bench of Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey.

Petitioner Shaista Aslam a DDC member from district Srinagar along with 15 other petitioners including Gh Mustafa Deedad DDC member District Kupwara, Fazil Din Deedad DDC member district Shopian, Mian Amjid Hussain, DDC member district Ganderbal,

Jameela Akhter DDC member district Kulgam, Advocate Mumtaz Ahmad Beigh, PSP representative Uri Baramulla and others have challenged the inter district recruitment.

Appearing on behalf of the petitioners Senior advocate Javid Ahmad Kawoosa, Advocate Aatir Javid Kawoosa and Advocate Areeb Javid Kawoosa made a strong submission point by point before the High Court that

the Govt while considering the backwardness of Jammu & Kashmir made domicile as mandatory for jobs in Government of J&K. However, the Government has ignored the educational and economic backwardness of the various districts of J&K and scrapped the district domicile condition being mandatory for district cadre recruitment and it has led to grabbing of all the Govt jobs in J&K by the candidates of few developed districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

As unemployment is ram-

pant in J&K and grave injustice is meted out to backward district candidates by the action of the Govt. The petitioner’s counsels prayed before the High court that direction should be passed for restoration of district cadres by restoring the section 6 and 7 of the J&K Civil Services decentralisation and Recruitment Act 2010 and scrape the relevant part of S.O. 1229 (E) dated 31 March 2021 by virtue of which, the Govt. deleted the section 6 and 7 of the J&K Civil Services Decentralisation and Recruitment Act 2010.

After hearing the counsels for the petitioners and the respondents , the High Court admitted the case and directed the respondents to file the response within 3 weeks-time. The court also directed on the respondents to consider the representation of the petitioner within the same notice period on the next date of hearing i.e 29 April, 2021.



Gas Tanker Driver Dies In Banihal Road Accident

Observer News Service

A driver of a gas tanker died on the spot after the vehicle he was driving rolled into a gorge along Kashmir highway on Friday.

An official said that the tanker bearing registration number JK02AD-0969 met with an accident after the driver lost control over the vehicle near Nowgam area of Banihal. Although the gas leaked from the tanker but fortunately it didn’t catch fire.

The driver was identified him as Amarjeet Singh, son of Mehar Singh a resident of RS Pura. Officials said that his body has been shifted to SDH Banihal for post-mortem and after the completion of the legal-medical formalities, the body will be handed to his legal heirs. (CNS)

Motorcyclist Critically Injured In Bijbehara Road Accident

Observer News Service

A youth was critically injured in a road accident in Tulkhan area of Bijbehara in South Kashmir’s Anantnag district on Friday.

25-year-old Jamid Hussain Dar son of Abdul Rehman Dar, a resident of Aishmuji Kulgam was riding his motorcycle bearing registration number JK14E-4172 when an unknown vehicle hit him near Tulkhan area injuring him seriously. Officials said that the injured was rushed to Sub District Hospital (SDH) Bijbehara, where from doctors referred him to a Srinagar hospital for advanced treatment. (CNS)

Youth Wanted In Attempt To Murder Case Surrenders

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A youth who had carried out an attack with intention to kill a local contractor in Srinagar last year, surrendered before police at Press Enclave Srinagar on Friday afternoon.

Meanwhile the youth who identified himself as Majid Khan, a resident of Maharaja Bazar, Srinagar, surrendered before the police after confessing his crime before the media at Srinagar’s Press Enclave.

Majid admitted that he was hired by a Jammu-based company to kill a contractor, Nisar Ahmad of Padshahi Bagh area of the city.

He also confessed that he was ‘provoked’ to attack Nisar, who according to his bosses was hiring non-local labourers from different parts of India to work in Kashmir Valley.

He alleged that his bosses, whom he identified as Abhijit Singh and Harry Singh from

Pathankot, and one Shah Nawaz Reshi from Athwajan are “using local Kashmiri youth for target killings”.

“I am ashamed and seek apologies from Nisar Sahab and his family,” he said.

“Since the lockdown due to COVID-19 was in force last year, we were unemployed and looking for a job desperately. I was hired by a Jammu-based construction company, which later gave me a contract to kill Nisar,” confessed Majid.

He also added that some other 20 youth who were also hired by the company on his recommendation, were also involved in the act. Majid along with three of his friends was later taken into custody by the police and shifted to Police Station Kothibagh.

Station House Officer (SHO) Police Station Kothibagh, Mohammad Ishaq said that the accused was later shifted to Saddar Police Station for further investigation into the instant case. (CNS)

Nursing Colleges Of IUST Commemorate World Health Day

Observer News Service

AWANTIPORA: Nursing Colleges of Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) organised two seminars on Thursday with focus of this year’s theme ‘Building a Fairer, Healthier World’.

During the seminar held at Alamdar College of Nursing and Medical Technology of IUST, Principal of the college Prof Mehmooda Regu called for collective approach in eliminating health inequities, in order to bring people together to build a fairer and healthier world. The seminar also highlighted WHO’S constitutional principles that “the enjoyment of highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social

condition”. The seminar also focused on Covid -19 which has hit all countries hard, however its impact has been hardest on those communities which were already vulnerable, who are more exposed to the diseases. During the seminar poster exhibition was also held.

During the seminar Dean Academic Affairs, Prof. A M Shah who was the Chief Guest on the occasion emphasised the importance of good health and highlighted the social and emotional impact of Covid 19. He emphasised that there should be fairer and equitable distribution of health care facilities.

Registrar IUST Prof. Naseer Iqbal emphasised that health care institutions including nursing institutions should be given first and foremost importance, as health is the most valuable asset of every individual.

242 Employees Found Absent, 11 Offices Found Locked In Kishtwar

Salary Of Absentees Withheld, Explanation Sought

Observer News Service

KISHTWAR: Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar Ashok Sharma Friday constituted various teams at tehsil and Sub division level to conduct surprise inspections to check attendance in the offices.

During the inspection conducted by various teams in the district, 242 employees were found absent, while 11 offices were found locked.

Acting touch against the defaulting officers/ Officials, the

Deputy Commissioner ordered withholding of the salaries of all the absentee employees, besides ordered concerned controlling officer to sought the explanation from concerned absentee employee within one week so that future action could be initiated against the absentees.

The DC said that similar drives would be conducted frequently in the district to ensure punctuality and enforce transparency in the functioning of the government offices.

Sub-Jail Pulwama Gutted In Mysterious Fire

Observer News Service

Pulwama: Authorities on Friday said that a two-story building at the sub-jail in South Kashmir’s Pulwama was gutted during a mysterious fire. Officials said that the fire broke out inside the sub-jail located in Drusso area of Pulwama and by the time it was brought under control, the two-storey building was completely reduced to ashes. However the cause of the fire was not immediately known, but police have already registered a case and launched an investigation in this regard. Some computers, laptops and machinery was damaged in the incident. (CNS)

NEWS MAKERS

Police Arrest Eight Persons In Handwara For Illegal Mining

Observer News Service

HANDWARA: Jammu and Kashmir Police in Handwara Friday arrested 8 persons and seized 8 vehicles for illegal mining and clay transportation in the area.

In a statement, a police spokesperson said that a police party of Police Post Langate while on patrolling seized 8 vehicles bearing Regd No’s. JK05E/ 6247, JK05G/ 4142, JK13E/ 2804, JK 18/ 6011, CH NO. NHN 36305ZKH47955, CH NO. NHN 363002KN490769, JK09/4712 and JK05F/3903.

The statement said that the vehicles were loaded with illegal clay and sand extracted from Nalla Mawar. The drivers of vehicles have also been arrested for violation of government orders.

Police said that a case under FIR number 79/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Handwara.

Govt Withdraws Plea To Pave Way For Rohingyas’ Deportation

Observer News Service

JAMMU: To ensure the deportation of foreign nationals from Jammu and Kashmir, the administration has decided to withdraw a petition before the High Court in Jammu against a group of Bangladeshi-Rohingyas after talks about repatriation with the counters parts.

Additional Advocate General (AAG), Aseem Sawhney said that he has received a case withdrawal request letter from the Government of Jammu and Kashmir saying that the case against certain Bangladeshi-Rohingyas be taken back to ensure their deportation from J&K.

He said that there are many sub-judice cases of Rohingyas and many have been booked under Public Safety Act’s (PSA’s) and Foreign Acts.

Referring to the particular case, Sawhney said that the group mainly belongs to Bangladesh but all of them were to be deported, and all the required formal-

ties between the two governments of India and Bangladesh has been finalised.

Citing an example under the legal procedure for the deportation of foreign nationals, the AAG said that, “When there is a pending case an accused (he/she) cannot be brought out of the jail without the prior permission of the Court.”

“We have taken the case and if we take it back that particular person (accused) will be free as under litigation any country won’t take that personally. Also, a proper procedure has to be followed including the filling up of form for repatriation,” the AAG said while citing the legally required procedure.

“It has also to be looked that the persons should not be involved in any criminal case and for the same, I have received a request from the government of Jammu and Kashmir to withdraw the case against certain Bangladeshi-Rohingyas,” Sawhney said.

Sawhney said that he didn’t exactly remember how many among the group of 5 to 6 people are Rohingyas and Bangladeshis but they are all foreign nationals.

“The communication I have received has termed them as Bangladeshi nationals. The letter calls them Bangladeshi at every place,” the AAG said.

Notably, the Jammu and Kashmir government over a month back started the verification process of Rohingyas in the Jammu division putting up in different parts for further deportation process.

Earlier, the Home Ministry in a written reply filed in Parliament said that central government has been vested with powers under relevant sections of the Foreigners Act to detain and deport foreign nationals staying illegally in the country.

“Detection and deportation of illegal migrants including Rohingya migrants from Myanmar after due process of nationality verification is a continuous process,” MHA said in a reply—(KNO)

J&K Police Book Noida-based Firm For Duping Investors

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Police’s Crime Branch on Friday booked a Noida-based company for allegedly duping people by promising them lucrative returns on their investments, an official spokesperson of the investigating agency said.

The case was registered following an investigation into a complaint lodged by Suresh Kumar Bhat of Trikuta Nagar here and his wife Chetna Bhat alleging that they had been cheated by the accused company of over Rs 33.80 lakh, the spokesperson of Crime Branch, Jammu, said.

A preliminary verification enquiry was initiated after the receipt of the complaint. During the course of enquiry, it was found

that the complainants had transferred the money to the accounts of Sanjay Bhatti, the managing director of Garvit Innovative Promoters Limited (Bike Bot) and other directors of the firm that is headquartered in Uttar Pradesh’s Gautam Buddh Nagar district, the spokesperson said.

Bhatti and others lured the complainants to invest money by promising them lucrative returns but never fulfilled their promise, thereby committing criminal breach of trust, he said.

“Bhatti and other directors of the company have cheated the complainants and misappropriated their money,” he said.

A criminal case under relevant sections of law has been registered against Garvit Innovative Promoters Limited (Bike Bot), the spokesperson said.

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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NO HOLDS BARRED



‘Celebrating cleanliness weeks or for that matter months, the purpose of which is sensitizing people towards the essence of cleanliness and hygiene will have no real impact on people due to lack of established garbage sites in rural areas, the garbage collected during such events is then thrown in open or put into water

The Fate of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in Rural Areas

MUKHTAR AHMAD FAROOQI

Although Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has been successful to a great extent in changing attitudes, mindsets and behaviours of people towards cleanliness and sanitation. COVID 19 pandemic made us realise the importance of personal as well environmental hygiene to prevent communicable /zoonotic diseases.Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) or Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is a nation-wide campaign in India that is aimed at cleaning up the streets, roads and infrastructure of Indian cities, towns, and rural areas. SBM involves the construction of latrines/ lavatories, promoting sanitation programmes in the rural areas, cleaning streets, roads and changing the infrastructure of the country to lead the country ahead. This campaign was officially launched by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on 145th birth anniversary of the Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd of October in 2014 at New Delhi (SBM Website). The mission has two thrusts: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Grameen or Rural), which operates under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation; and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (urban), which operates under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Some important objectives of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Source SBM Urban Website) are:

- To eradicate the system of open defecation in India.
- To convert the insanitary toilets into pour flush toilets.
- To remove the system of manual scavenging.
- To make people aware of healthy sanitation practices by bringing behavioural changes in people.
- To link people with the programmes of sanitation and public health in order to generate public awareness.
- To build up the urban local bodies strong in order to design, execute and operate all systems related to cleanliness.
- To completely start the scientific processing, disposals reuse and recycling the Municipal Solid Waste.

Fate of SBA in Rural Areas

Even though this campaign has been able to create awareness about different types of wastes, benefits in



use of toilets, importance of personal hygiene to prevent various diseases, school children about various hygienic practices, waste segregation but as far as rural populace is concerned there seems nothing on ground. All these activities like taking the broom to sweep the streets, cleaning up the garbage, focusing on sanitation and maintaining a hygienic environment will have an impact when there is no rural and urban divide. Let us look at some real life situations that cause hindrances in implementation. Both rural and urban populace is aware about the hazards of throwing waste in open but in rural areas even if the people collect garbage in homes, after segregation/ collection they remain in dilemma Where to put the garbage? and throw that on roadsides, alleyways and even in water bodies like streams, rivulets or ponds due to non-availability of garbage collectors/sites and established dumping sites thereby the very motive of this campaign gets vanished .No-where we can find any garbage collection unit in villages or for that matter in educational institutions where even

emptying a dustbin at times becomes a matter of debate. In contrast, urban populace has the option of collecting the waste in dustbins even segregating and then putting it in garbage collecting bins (Refuse Collector) of SMC whereby it is then transported to garbage dumping sites.

Disposable nappies and sanitary napkins are thrown in drains, waterbodies or on roadside which not only has become a nuisance in rural areas but has also been slowly mixing with agricultural land. It is pertinent to mention here that the government is responsible for this whole mess as rural populace have no option but either burn the waste generated which will lead to air pollution or throw that waste on roads or water bodies.

Celebrating cleanliness weeks or for that matter months, the purpose of which is sensitizing people towards the essence of cleanliness and hygiene will have no real impact on people due to lack of established garbage sites in rural areas, the garbage collected during such events is then thrown in open or put into water bodies.

Erecting sign boards and hoardings of ODF (Open Defecation Free)in and around panchayats is not going to serve any purpose if government does not rethink about employing a concrete mechanism/policy of dumping the waste generated in rural areas like they do in urban areas as the use of plastic bags/diapers has overwhelmed every corner of the globe and our villages are no exception.More-over the piles of garbage accumulated is more dangerous than the actual faecal matter.

Suggestions

The people concerned at the helm of affairs or executing agencies need to review their basic approach of implementation in view of the already discussed flaws wherein at least one garbage collecting bin (Refuse Collector) like in Municipalities is kept in every village which is emptied every fortnight at least so that the very motive of sensitization and ultimately this campaign is upheld not just taking a broom to pose for a photograph as has been the case. Despite approaching the concerned authorities through social/print media, nothing seems to be happening on ground in rural areas.

Similarly cleaning one area to make the life of people living in and around other areas (dumping sites) hell, the clear case of which is Achan Dumping Site due to non-scientific and rudimentary way of disposing of the waste needs to have a rethink as that is becoming a health hazard and pose serious threat to the inhabitants.

Waste accumulation in inconceivable places like fresh water springs/rivers, school premises, crossways, grazing lands , graveyards etc. in rural habitations can have serious repercussions in near future if some immediate and practical steps on ground are not taken.Government has not yet framed any Solid Waste Disposal/Treatment policy that has also created the chaos.

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

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Meet the latest sensation in the “Islam” demonology franchise: “Islamism,” the French state’s pet bogeyman du jour. According to the anti-Islamism-leftists, discourses challenging oppression – such as anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and feminism – actually serve as sources of oppression, by enabling “radical Islam”.

In previous decades, it was “Islamism” that was all the rage: connoting Islam’s purported affinity not with the left, but the far-right. For centuries before that, it was what might now be called “Islamism-Judaism”: the recurrent conspiracy theories conjoining Jews and Muslims as threats to European Christendom, so that “the two infidel races were [treated] as halves of a single body of Semitic aliens,” as analysed by medieval literature scholar Geraldine Heng.

As the political sands shift, the bogeyman is perpetually reconfigured to fit the current landscape. To quote 19th-century French Orientalist Ernest Renan, Islam is imagined as “the most complete negation of Europe” – however Europe happens to see itself at the time.

When Europe was gripped by homophobia and sectarianism, Muslim societies were criticised for being too non-heteronormative and multicultural – signs of Muslim “degeneracy” remedied through the imposition of colonial rule.

Now that the signifiers of “civilisation” have switched, public “intellectuals” like French philosopher Pascal Bruckner complain that Islamism is curtailing their ability to freely demonise Muslims for being too intolerant. In anti-racism’s “permanent war of all against all,” accusations of Islamophobia are a “weapon of mass intimidation,” Bruckner insists.

Meanwhile, the non-metaphorical state of “permanent war” against Muslims persists, and those documenting its atrocities and critiquing its underpinning ideology continue to be subject to marginalisation, suppression and punishment by the state and other institutions of power.

For example, the Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (Collective Against Islamophobia in France) was liquidated by the French government in November.

Prominent Islamophobia expert Professor Farid Hafez’s home was raided by counter-terrorism police in Austria, also in November – part of a series of raids against Muslim academics and activists.

And in February, the eminent philosopher and anti-racist, Palestine solidarity activist Professor Cornel West was denied tenure at Harvard University.

It seems Bruckner’s “weapon of mass intimidation” inhabits the same plane of unreality as Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction”. And it serves an analogous function – of depicting the targets of systemic aggression as the aggressors.

“Islamism-Leftism” or Islamophobo-Leftism?

Across the political spectrum, a common collection of narratives is rationalising, minimising and invisibilising violence against Muslims.

AZEEZAH KANJI

Meet the latest sensation in the “Islam” demonology franchise: “Islamism,” the French state’s pet bogeyman du jour. According to the anti-Islamism-leftists, discourses challenging oppression – such as anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and feminism – actually serve as sources of oppression, by enabling “radical Islam”

Bruckner is frequently described as a man of the left, highlighting the incoherence of the term “Islamism-leftism”, which obfuscates the Islamophobia within the left itself.

Even the very party accused by French political leaders of being an epicentre of Islamism-leftism, France Insoumise, has hosted speakers claiming that “one has the right to be Islamophobic,” and could barely muster any representatives to participate in a march against anti-Muslim hate after an attack on a French mosque in 2019.

The enduring power of Islamophobia is that there’s something in it for almost everyone, from right to left.

In March, the right-wing Swiss People’s Party managed to break its losing streak in citizens’ referendums, with its victorious proposal to banish Muslim women’s face-veils from public space – which attracted twice the vote share as the party won in the general election. As did its similarly successful 2009 campaign to prohibit minaret construction, which appealed to feminists by portraying minarets as a symbol of women’s oppression. This from the same political organisation that previously fought against a motion to recognise gender equality in marriage.

In countries like Germany and France, left-wing parties and activists have been on the frontlines of initiatives to impose state coercion on Muslim women’s clothing. For the sake of “liberating” Muslim women, there are now five times more European states legally forcing women to unveil as there are Muslim-majority states requiring women to veil.

The Inquisition obsession with stripping Muslims of their head coverings and minarets lives on. In the 15th-century, the problem was said to be the “uncleanliness” of Muslim (and Jewish) blood. Now, it’s the incompatibility of Muslims with “our” culture and values. As Black American novelist Toni Morrison wrote, when it comes to racism, “there will always be one more thing”.

Islamophobia is a great unifier, transcending even the ideological divide between China and “the West”. Since 9/11, China has repackaged its settler-colonial assault on the Muslim Uighurs of Xinjiang as a “war on terror” exercise: pathologising Islam as a “virus” to be eradicated with mass surveillance and bio-

metric collection, forced labour, forced sterilisation, child separation, criminalisation of religious practices and “re-education” in concentration camps.

Yet in the name of resisting Western imperialism against China, some on the left act as denialists and apologists for China’s genocidal imperialism, the most damning evidence of which emanates from China’s own official documents. At a recent seminar organised by Canadian anti-war groups to “debunk” the Uighur genocide, China’s Consul General showed a PR video of Xinjiang that was predominantly images of empty landscapes. Even in China’s genocide-denying propaganda, the Uighurs are largely scrubbed out of the picture.

To invoke the language of the US military, Islamophobia is a system of “full-spectrum domination”: not the purview of one segment of the political field, but a common frame of reference across the field as a whole.

This treatment of Muslims as a “universal enemy” is deeply rooted in history. In the famous 16th-century Valladolid debate on the colonisation of the Americas – considered a foundational event in the (Eurocentric) history of international law – Spanish legal scholars debated Indigenous peoples’ humanity by deciding whether they were like Muslims and therefore to be massacred (the “conservative” position), or unlike Muslims and therefore to be missionised into Christianity (the “liberal” position).

Erasmus, one of the “fathers of humanism,” urged Europeans to stop fighting each other and “let loose [this evil passion] upon

the Turks” instead. “Father of free speech” Voltaire opined that Muslims were the greatest curse on Earth and “should be destroyed.” “Mother of feminism” Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for the emancipation of European women by distinguishing them from “subordinated” and sub-humanised Muslim women (although it wasn’t “Mahometan” law but European law that barred women from independent personhood and owning property).

Freedom, peace, rights and equality for those within the West’s “zone of being” has long been premised on war, domination and dispossession outside of it.

Some 19th-century liberal writers sought to shunt off European responsibility for Europe’s foundational atrocities – the Crusades, the Inquisition, and genocide in the Americas – by blaming Christians’ alleged internalisation of “the principle of Islamism: extermination”.

In the present, progressive commentators refer to neo-Nazis as “vanilla ISIS,” Trump’s officials as “mullahs,” and Trump himself as “Osama bin Laden’s revenge” on America. As if a social order that continues to reap the spoils of the brutalisation of Black, Indigenous and Muslim lives and the theft of Indigenous lands needs to search outside itself for explanations of White supremacism.

“Our” violence is rendered an aberration or a reflection of “their” violence: “their” violence is depicted as essential to who they are.

Within this framework, Muslims are easily normalised as objects of abuse – explained away as presumptively guilty, or ignored as collateral damage. As academics Arun Kundnani and Deepa Kumar pointed out, domestic opposition to the US’s mass surveillance program dropped off precipitously when it was revealed the targets were mostly Muslims.

In the recent debates over expanding counterterrorism to address right-wing extremism, we read in socialist magazine Jacobin that the primary objectionable feature of terrorist listings is that they might be used in the future against left-wing activists – not that such listings have already been used for almost two decades overwhelmingly against Muslims, including charities for donating to humanitarian work in Palestine.

Similarly, in the “principled and progressive” Nation magazine, we are told that the

problem with militarised policing of American anti-racism protests is that tactics and weapons appropriate for “Iraq and Afghanistan” are now being wielded in places like Portland – where “protesters carry skateboards, leaf blowers, lacrosse sticks, and cardboard signs [as opposed to rockets and guns]” and “some are pregnant”.

“No one should be treated this way,” proclaimed author Andrew McCormick. Except, apparently, all the Afghans and Iraqis who have not been spared from military brutality for being pregnant and/or unarmed.

A few weeks ago, the Nation even featured a piece praising the “characteristic erudition” of notoriously Islamophobic Canadian journalist Robert Fulford, celebrating him as “the nation’s finest cultural critic”.

Unmentioned in the Nation’s panegyric, some gems of “erudition” from Fulford’s steady stream of vitriol include exhorting the Palestinians under occupation as “terrorists” and “indiscriminate murderers,” exalting anti-Muslim ideologue Ayaan Hirsi Ali as a “Muslim Martin Luther,” and exhorting a few months after the Quebec mosque shooting – the most fatal act of political violence in Canada at the time since 1989 – that “we should begin by retiring the word Islamophobia in the interest of a franker attitude to terrorism”.

The issue isn’t Islamism-leftism, but Islamophobo-leftism. Across the political spectrum, a common collection of narratives rationalises, minimises and invisibilises violence against Muslims: pitching Islamophobic policies as progressive, projecting Muslims as the paradigm of barbarism, and expurgating the racism of its own past and present.

This spectrum offers a series of false choices: between Euro-American imperialism and China’s alter-imperialism; between conservative, right-wing racism and liberal and left-wing racism; between being subjugated violently and subjugated slightly more gently (with violence always in reserve).

Thinking and working beyond this artificially-restricted consensus are those Muslims who, in solidarity and collaboration with other peoples and movements, are drawing on Islam’s prohibition of worshipping anything other than God to challenge human-made hierarchies of oppression: of human over non-human, white over non-white, coloniser over colonised, man over woman, heteronormative over queer, and the wealthy over the dispossessed. “Like sunflowers that only the sun can subjugate,” in the words of French-Algerian decolonial writer and activist Houria Bouteldja.

Perhaps this is the real danger posed by “Islamism-leftism”: the possibility not of a more “violently radical” world, but one radically more equal and just.

Al Jazeera

Political Complacency

Rise in infections should be blamed on the political class in India

The complacency only grew with the announcement of elections and the subsequent political rallies by myriad parties in states going to polls — Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and West Bengal. Caution has since been thrown to the winds during election season and the country is reaping the whirlwind of infections.

Health officials need not look beyond Indian politicians campaigning among the crowds with not even a pretence of social distancing and masking to understand why coronavirus cases have hit record levels in the country. On Monday the country showed a daily rise of 100,000 new cases, the first time in over of a year. It's a shocking dereliction of duty by those in government and the ruling class but their sins will be forgotten and forgiven on the road to power. The ruling class will go unpunished and blame will be pointed at some regional governments and even the hand of fate. The ordinary citizen, meanwhile, is bearing the worst of the suffering because the lust for power is greater than the common good. The health of the nation of 1.3 billion is at stake with politicians busy doling out freebies and brandishing promises to woo the electorate who come out to listen to them in thousands — the perfect setting for the pathogen to spread. Super-spreader events are being held in the country in plain sight but winning is all that matters in the charged political climate where charges and counters are being hurled.

Only two months ago cases had ebbed (and people had grown complacent). New Delhi was sending vaccines abroad as vaccinations at home got off to a slow start (it has picked up since). Experts rushed to conclusions about herd immunity setting in early and the government slapped itself on the back for the stellar leadership it had shown in times of crisis. Vaccine diplomacy was the song on everyone's lips while viral dangers continued to lurk at home. Others said Indians had it in their genes to fend off the virus that still remains mysterious, its origins unclear, though bats may have been the first host.

The vaccination drive had commenced in January in



India and it appeared that people would be spared the second wave of infections. This was not to be. The complacency only grew with the announcement of elections and the subsequent political rallies by myriad parties in states going to polls — Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and West Bengal. Caution has since been thrown to the winds during election season and the country is reaping the whirlwind of infections. The western state of Maharashtra has the highest cases the

government would do well to vaccinate citizens of the state, of all ages rapidly by roping in the private sector for the task. The country can reverse course if people stop listening to the political class while placing their trust in science. They should first head to the nearest vaccination booths before casting their ballots at polling stations.

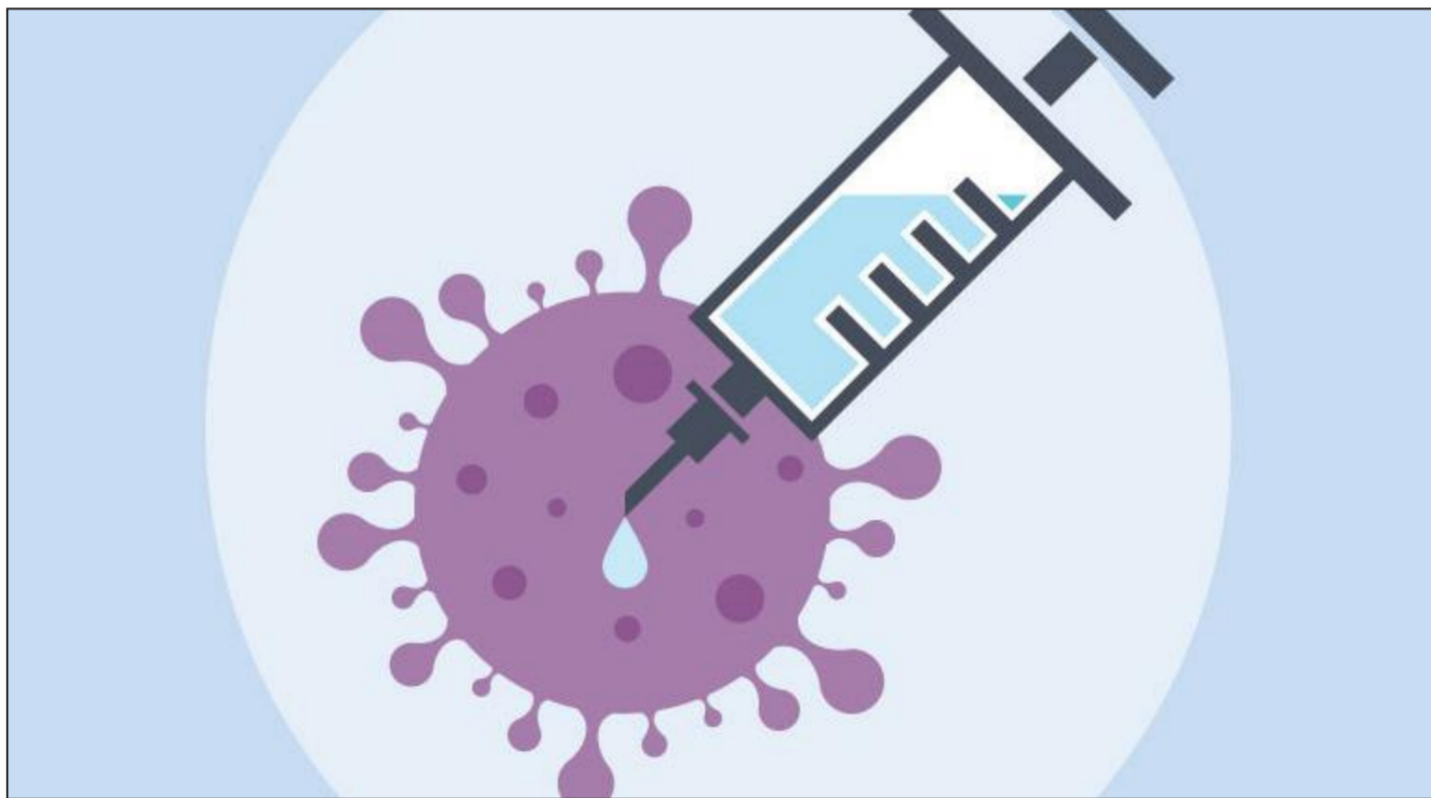
Khaleej Times

To Get or Not to Get

Do I need to get a covid vaccine if I have already been infected by covid-19?

CASSANDRA BERRY

As COVID-19 hasn't been around for a particularly long time, it's difficult to know how long natural immunity generally lasts. However, antibodies and immune memory appear to last for at least two months



The COVID vaccine rollout is underway, with Australians lining up to get their jabs. But what if you have already had COVID-19? Is it still a good idea to get vaccinated?

Although natural exposure to the virus stimulates immunity, we don't yet know how long this immunity will last. And people will vary in their ability to mount a protective immune response.

Even if you've had COVID-19, you should still get vaccinated. A COVID vaccine may offer more reliable and sustained immunity than a previous infection. At the very least, it will add an extra layer of targeted protection.

Here's how our immune response works after a natural infection versus a vaccine.

From B cells to neutralising antibodies

Soon after becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), our immune cells (T cells and B cells) activate. Activated B cells produce so-called neutralising antibodies. These antibody-secreting cells defend our bodies against the infection by making antibodies that bind to spikes on the virus surface, and block the virus from entering our cells.

Neutralising antibodies spill over into the bloodstream and travel around the body looking to mop up virus. After the infection has resolved, these activated B cells calm down and transition to a resting state. They move from our blood to our lymph nodes and bones. These so-called memory B cells survive for decades, along with help from memory T cells.

But they need a nudge once in a while to ensure they're ready to kick into gear if we're exposed to an infection.

Our immune cells rely on memory

When we're re-exposed to a virus, or receive a vaccine booster, these memory cells awaken, become activated and produce large amounts of antibodies much faster. This immune mem-

ory reduces the risk we'll become infected with SARS-CoV-2. But if we do, it allows for quicker healing from COVID-19.

Sustained neutralising antibody levels indicate a good degree of protection against SARS-CoV-2. How long we hang onto natural immunity after COVID-19 is variable and depends on viral, human and environmental factors. For example, the viral variant can make a difference, along with our genes, underlying health conditions, and age.

These factors can affect our neutralising antibody levels, which can wane over time to dip below protective levels.

As COVID-19 hasn't been around for a particularly long time, it's difficult to know how long natural immunity generally lasts. However, antibodies and immune memory appear to last for at least two months.

For patients who have recovered from SARS, a related coronavirus, research has shown they maintained antibodies for up to two to three years following infection.

Immune responses to a vaccine

Again, because of the short time frame, we have limited data on sustained antibody responses following vaccination. But immunity appears to be strong three months after the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

With COVID-19 vaccines, certain variable factors have been targeted, in a way they can't with natural infections. For example, considerations like the dose size and the time between doses are all established to confer optimal immunity.

As we continue to monitor people who have received the COVID vaccines, we'll develop a better understanding of protective immunity and its longevity.

Staying on top of variants

Natural immunity from infection may protect against other variants to some degree, but

vaccines will play a crucial role as the virus continues to mutate.

It may be necessary to get regular boosters of the COVID vaccine until the pandemic is under control. This will provide protection against variants our pre-existing antibodies may not be able to neutralise.

Boosters enhance our broad immunity to parts of the spike proteins shared between different virus variants. Antibodies produced to these common regions can neutralise the virus and stop infection.

We saw this to a limited extent in people who had common cold infections with other coronaviruses before COVID-19.

Only one jab? Vaccines as a cure for long COVID?

There's been some research suggesting people who have had COVID may only need one dose of the vaccine to be protected.

For people who have had COVID, one dose may serve to top up their antibodies to protective levels. This is because they're starting on a stronger footing in terms of their antibody levels and immune memory, compared to people who haven't had the virus.

But experts in Australia still recommended two doses, regardless of whether you've had COVID.

Meanwhile, reports have indicated people experiencing long COVID may also benefit from vaccination. We're not sure how this happens, but symptoms may improve with clearance of any hidden virus reservoirs from the body. Research into this phenomenon is ongoing.

At the end of the day, when the vaccine is available to you, you should get vaccinated, even if you've had COVID-19. While the vaccine is likely to protect you, it's also important to protect others, as we look towards a goal of herd immunity.

*By arrangements with
The Conversation*

Earth receives over 5K tonnes of extraterrestrial dust each year

Micrometeorites have always fallen on our planet. These interplanetary dust particles from comets or asteroids are particles of a few tenths to hundredths of a millimetre that have passed through the atmosphere and reached the Earth's surface.

Agencies

Every year, over 5,000 tonnes of extraterrestrial dust fall to Earth each year, scientists have determined. Our home planet encounters dust from comets and asteroids. These interplanetary dust particles pass through our atmosphere and give rise to shooting stars. Some of them reach the ground in the form of micrometeorites. Micrometeorites have always fallen on our planet. These interplanetary dust particles from comets or asteroids are particles of a few tenths to hundredths of a millimetre that have passed through the atmosphere and reached the Earth's surface. An international programme conducted for nearly 20 years by scientists from the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), the Universite Paris-Saclay and the National museum of natural history with the support of the French polar institute, has determined how much of these micrometeorites reach the ground. To collect and analyse these micrometeorites, six expeditions led by CNRS researcher Jean Duprat have taken place over the last two decades near the Franco-Italian Concordia station (Dome C), which is located 1,100 kilometres off the coast of Adelie Land, in the heart of Antarctica. Dome C is an ideal collection spot due to the low accumulation rate of

snow and the near absence of terrestrial dust. These expeditions have collected enough extraterrestrial particles (ranging from 30 to 200 micrometres in size), to measure their annual flux, which corresponds to the mass accreted on Earth per square metre per year. If these results are applied to the whole planet, the total annual flux of micrometeorites represents 5,200 tonnes per year, according to the study which will be available in the journal Earth & Planetary Science Letters from April 15. This is the main source of extraterrestrial matter on our planet, far ahead of larger objects such as meteorites, for which the flux is less than ten tonnes per year. A comparison of the flux of micrometeorites with theoretical predictions confirms that most micrometeorites probably come from comets (80 per cent) and the rest from asteroids. The results could help scientists better understand the role played by interplanetary dust particles in supplying water and carbonaceous molecules on the young Earth.



Late-night snacks may affect workplace performance: Study

Agencies

A recent study has found that unhealthy eating behaviours at night can make people less helpful and more withdrawn the next day at work. The findings of the study were published in the Journal of Applied Psychology. "For the first time, we have shown that healthy eating immediately affects our workplace behaviours and performance," said Seonghee "Sophia" Cho, corresponding author of the study and an assistant professor of psychology at North

Carolina State University. Cho added, "It is relatively well established that other health-related behaviours, such as sleep and exercise, affect our work. But nobody had looked at the short-term effects of unhealthy eating." Fundamentally, the researchers had two questions: Does unhealthy eating behaviour affect you at work the next day? And, if so, why? For the study, researchers had 97 full-time employees in the United States answer a series of questions three times a day for 10 consecutive workdays. Before work on each day, study participants answered questions related to their physical and emotional well-being. At the end of each workday, participants answered questions about what they did at work. In the evening, before bed, participants answered questions about their eating and drinking behaviours after work. In the context of the study, researchers defined "unhealthy eating" as instances when study participants felt they'd eaten too much junk food; when participants felt they'd had too much to eat or drink; or when participants reporting having too many late-night snacks. The researchers found that, when people engaged in unhealthy eating behaviours, they were more likely to

report having physical problems the next morning. Problems included headaches, stomachaches and diarrhea. In addition, when people reported unhealthy eating behaviours, they were also more likely to report emotional strains the next morning - such as feeling guilty or ashamed about their diet choices. Those physical and emotional strains associated with unhealthy eating were, in turn, related to changes in how people behaved at work throughout the day. Essentially, when people reported

Not only were emotionally stable people less likely to have physical or emotional strains after unhealthy eating, their workplace behaviours were also less likely to change even when they reported physical or emotional strains. "The big takeaway here is that we now know unhealthy eating can have almost immediate effects on workplace performance," Cho said. Cho added, "However, we can also say that there is no single 'healthy' diet, and healthy eating isn't just about nutritional content. It may be influenced



by an individual's dietary needs, or even by when and how they're eating, instead of what they're eating. "Companies can help to address healthy eating by paying more attention to the dietary needs and preferences of their employees and helping to address those needs, such as through on-site dining options. This can affect both the physical and mental health of their employees - and, by extension, their on-the-job performance," Cho further said. The researchers also pointed to a variety of research questions that could be addressed moving forward. "One confounding variable is that the way our questions were phrased, we may be capturing both unhealthy eating behaviours and unhealthy drinking behaviours related to alcohol," Cho said. "That's something we will want to tease out moving forward. And while we focused on evening diet, it would be interesting to look at what people are eating at other times of day. Are there specific elements of diet that affect behavioural outcomes - such as sugar or caffeine content? Can there be positive effects of unhealthy eating, such as when people eat comfort foods to help cope with stress? This promises to be a rich field of study," Cho concluded.

It is relatively well established that other health-related behaviours, such as sleep and exercise, affect our work. But nobody had looked at the short-term effects of unhealthy eating

physical or emotional strains associated with unhealthy eating, they were also more likely to report declines in "helping behaviour" and increases in "withdrawal behaviour." Helping behaviour at work refers to helping colleagues and going the extra mile when you don't have to, such as assisting a co-worker with a task that is not your responsibility. Withdrawal behaviour refers to avoiding work-related situations, even though you're at your workplace. The researchers also found that people who were emotionally stable - meaning people who are better able to cope with stress because they're less emotionally volatile - suffered fewer adverse effects from unhealthy eating.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my Migration certificate bearing Regd No; N11341430130, Roll No: 2427498 . Now I am applying for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may contact Board Of School Education sub office Magam within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Muzamil Nisar
D/o Nisar Ahamd Khawaja
R/O Hagipora Magam

x

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

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

Subject: - Extension in date for submission of online Application Forms for Common Entrance Test (CET) for Engineering Courses, 2021.

Reference: - Notification No. 036-BOPEE of 2021 dated 10-03-2021.

Notice No. 39-BOPEE of 2021

Dated: 06-04-2021

In view of the poor response to above referred Notification for submission of online Application Forms for Common Entrance Test (CET) for Engineering Courses-2021, the Board has decided to extend the last date for submission of online Application Forms for the said Courses from 06-04-2021 to 16-04-2021(mid-night).

The other terms and conditions shall remain the same as notified in the elnformation Brochure and the Notification No. 036-BOPEE of 2021 dated 10-03-2021.

E&OE.

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

No. BOPEE/Exam-04/2021
Dated: 06-04-2021

DIPK-NB-103/21

Office Of The Executive Engineer (Distribution), Electric Division Bijbehara, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited

Contact No/ Fax: - 01932-234398 E-mail:- exenedbj@yahoo.co.in

NIT: - EDB/e-tender/01 of 2021-22
Dated: - 05-04-2021

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir UT, e-tenders (Two-Cover) are hereby invited from Registered Class-A Electrical Contractors (General) Supply of Workshop/Plant materials and Line Material as and when required during first half of 2021-22.

S. No	Name of Work	Est cost. (Rs. In Lacs)	Treasury Receipt/ Challan	Category
1	Supply of Workshop/Plant materials and Line Material as and when required during first half of 2021-22	18.00	1000	Gen

1	Publishing Date & Time	06-04-2021 (1300Hrs)
2	Document Download / Sale Start Date & Time	06-04-2021 (1300Hrs)
3	Seek Clarification Start Date & Time	06-04-2021 (1300Hrs)
4	Seek Clarification End Date & Time	11-04-2021 (1400 Hrs)
5	Bid Submission Start Date & Time	06-04-2021 (1300Hrs)
6	Bid Submission End Date & Time	22-04-2021 (1300 Hrs)
7	Bid opening date & Time	23-04-2021 (1300 Hrs)
8	Venue of opening Bids	Electric Division Bijbehara
Please Read Document Carefully		
Position of Funds: Authorised		

The Quoted rates shall be Firm, inclusive of all taxes and duties, WCT, freight, transportation upto working sites. The rates shall include costs, if any attracted towards mandatory inspections / testing by the designated agencies and the department will not be required to pay / reimburse anything over and above the price quoted.

DIPK-NB-121/21

No: -EDB/TS/71-79

Dated: - 05-04-2021

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Electric Division Bijbehara

"India Inc. Must Consider "Digital Ethics Framework For Responsible Digitalisation"

BENGALURU: India Inc. must consider "Digital Ethics framework" for responsible digitalisation, according to a study by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP (DTTILLP) together with Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC).

The study emphasised on an immediate need for India Inc. to introduce and adopt a "Digital Ethics framework" that would ensure a holistic view of ethics, and govern every digital intervention in the transformation journey of a business.

An accelerated pace of digital transition, consumption of goods and services via app-based interface, and proliferation of data bring numerous risks such as biased decision-making processes being trans-

sible usage of technology, Jain said, adding, its interplay becomes vital to managing data privacy rights while actively adopting customer analytics for personalised service.

"All these concerns have made it crucial to have an ethical framework that would ensure effective governance and risk mitigation aspects are in place," he added.

Chair of Young BCIC Expert Committee, Manas Dasgupta, said certain areas related to possible misuses of technologies such as privacy and security are fairly well-regulated both from legal as well as corporate governance aspects.

"However, inadvertent fallouts of technologies like autonomous machines that use



ferred to machines or algorithms at the development stage by humans, a Deloitte statement said on Friday.

"These biases can be a threat to the reputation and trust towards stakeholders, as well as cause operational risks," it said.

Partner, Deloitte India, Vishal Jain, said the pandemic compelled businesses and consumers to embrace digital technologies like artificial intelligence, big data, cloud, IoT and more in a big way.

"However, the need of the hour is to relook at the business operations layered on digital touchpoints with the lens of ethics, given biases might arise in the due course, owing to a faster response time to an issue," he said.

Societal pressure to do "the right thing" now needs a careful consideration of the trade-offs involved in the respon-

AI / Robotics, etc. are yet to be fully understood," he said.

It is the need of the hour that the industries start meaningful conversations and note sharing around good governance on these technologies and ensure that we are within our limits to stay fair to everyone in the society, remain transparent and responsible in our Digital endeavours, Dasgupta added.

The statement said the growth of digital media in India has largely been fueled by a moderate regulatory framework until now.

Given the growing concerns around information and content available over digital platforms, digital ethics is a topic of concern not only for organisations but also for regulatory bodies and individuals for immediate consideration and deliberation, it said.PTI

Need To Produce Future Business Managers As Per Demand: LG



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha on Friday said that Government needs to need to produce Future Business Managers as per the Market demand in the UT.

Speaking on the fast changing market trends and increased business management challenges, the Lt Governor emphasized on the need to put more focus on up-scaling of emerging skill sets so that Human Capital can be prepared and developed to fill the Skill Gap as per the demand.

"We need to produce Future Business Managers as per the Market demand. Overhauling the entire business management ecosystem and orientation of youth is the need of the hour to complement the dynamics of market trends", said the Lt Governor.

LG was addressing the 3rd & 4th Convocation of Indian Institute of Management, Jammu here at Convention Centre.

Speaking on the occasion, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha congratulated the graduating students for embarking on the new journey in Business Management and wished them a bright future.

With an objective to provide sustained handholding to the students, the Lt Governor announced annual "LG Scholarship" for 10 students each from IIM Jammu, IIT Jammu and NIT Srinagar.

The Lt Governor noted that many experts from the management field have identified Management Strategy and innovation; Management tools & Technology, and Interpersonal Skills as the crucial growth drivers in the post-Covid scenario.

Prime Minister has laid a solid foundation for tackling unpredictability in market trends. J&K Government is also giving focused

attention on identifying and exploiting all major growth potential sectors to provide every child with an opportunity for imbibing the pre-requisite qualities to overcome the market challenges, said the Lt Governor.

Referring to Chanakya, the Lt Governor remarked that we inherit the wisdom of management from our ancient Management Guru, which somehow we have lost mid way. Our Artha shastra has described the theory, business relation, knowledge and research as the core strengths of Business education, he added.

Indian economy is coming back on track and is growing gradually. In this world of Digital and Artificial Intelligence, by evolving students, teachers and all the stakeholders of Business Management, we can move towards prosperity and progress together, the Lt Governor maintained.

Citing a recent report, the Lt Governor said J&K has less unemployment rate than States / UTs like Delhi, Goa, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan, which itself speaks about the strong resolve of the UT Government towards addressing the serious issue of unemployment.

The Lt Governor congratulated IIM Jammu for making a distinguished place for itself in management studies. He also expressed gratitude to the Hon'ble Vice President for attending the convocation and boosting the morale of the students. He congratulated the parents and family members of the students as well.

Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu also addressed the convocation.

The Vice President stressed on the need for re-orienting higher education in tune with the realities of the world. He also underlined the

importance of developing a mindset that encourages innovation and institutional reform that fosters creativity and promotes excellence.

"Your ability to take decisions in an uncertain world and your agility to adapt to new contexts will become very crucial", said Vice President to Students.

He advised the institutions of higher education to "Adapt, Evolve and Respond" to situations that have never before been faced by mankind.

The Vice President stressed the need for strengthening industry-institute linkages. He urged the graduating management students to work with farmers in improving the marketing of farm produce.

The Vice President also recalled the great contribution of Jammu and Kashmir as an important centre of education since ancient times. Highlighting the works of Patanjali, Anandavardhana, Lallswari and Habba Khatoon from the region, he called for continuity in enriching the rich culture of learning and innovation.

Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, MoS, PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, in his address, said that the Union Territory of J&K has become the Educational Hub of North India.

Today, the young generation is much more aspirational and the Government, keeping their aspirations in consideration, is facilitating the youth with a level playing field so that they can become the architects of New India, he added.

The Union MoS also counted the reformative measures taken by the Government for the growth and development of J&K.

Second Covid Wave Heightens Risks For India's Banks: Fitch

NEW DELHI: India's second wave of Covid-19 infections pose an increased risk to the country's fragile economic recovery and its banks, Fitch Ratings said.

Accordingly, Fitch expects a moderately worse environment for the India's banking sector in 2021, but headwinds would intensify should rising infections and follow-up measures to contain the virus further affect business and economic activity.

Lately, India's active Covid-19 infections have been increasing at a rapid pace; new infections have exceeded 100,000 a day in early April 2021, against 9,300 in mid-February 2021.

Fitch forecasts India's real GDP growth at 12.8 per cent for the financial year ending March 2022 (FY22).

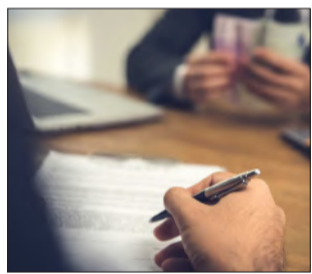
"This incorporates expectations of a slowdown in 2021 due to the flare-up in new coronavirus cases but the rising pace of infections poses renewed risks to the forecast." "Over 80 per cent of the new infections are in six prominent states, which combined account for roughly 45 per cent of total banking sector loans. Any further disruption in economic activity in these states would pose a setback for fragile business sentiment, even though a stringent pan-India lockdown like the one in 2020 is unlikely." As per Fitch, operating environment for banks will most likely remain chal-



lenging against this backdrop.

"This second wave could dent the sluggish recovery in consumer and corporate confidence, and further suppress banks' prospects for new business. There are also asset quality concerns since banks' financial results are yet to fully factor in the first wave's impact and the stringent 2020 lockdown due to the forbearances in place." "We consider the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and retail loans to be most at risk. Retail loans have been performing better than our expectations but might see increased stress if renewed restrictions impinge further on individual incomes and savings. MSMEs, however, benefited from state-guaranteed refinancing schemes that prevented stressed exposures from souring." According to Fitch, private banks are more exposed to retail but also have much better earnings capacity, contingency reserves and core capitalisation to withstand stress on their portfolios.

Next Few Months To Be Critical For India Due To Renewed COVID-19 Surge: Oxford Economics



NEW DELHI: The next few months will be critical for India as the renewed COVID-19 surge challenges the country's immature economic recovery, global forecasting firm Oxford Economics said on Friday.

It also said that while the impact so far appears milder and the economy more resilient, Indian policymakers have no room for complacency.

It further said that with state governments reluctant to reintroduce strict lockdowns, the economic impact will be much less severe than in the second quarter of last year.

"The next few months will be critical, as the renewed COVID-19 surge challenges India's immature recovery.

"While the impact so far appears milder and the economy more resilient, policymakers have no room for complacency," Oxford Economics said.

It said that based on the international experience, the vaccination rate in India is far below the level required to contain the virus by itself.

"The second wave likely has some way to go both in height and breadth.

"If the health situation

worsens substantially and tighter restrictions are re-imposed widely, this would threaten our baseline forecast for the first half of 2021," Oxford Economics said.

It said mobility levels are likely to come under more pressure in the coming days as the second wave looks set to widen. The global forecasting firm, however, said it does not expect to see a massive decline like in 2020, as targeted lockdowns remain the preferred containment strategy.

"Still, we expect the economic impact will not be as dramatic as in 2020," Oxford Economics said adding that it is true that countries that avoided lockdowns to control the virus last year have not fared especially better economically than those that did.

India registered a record single-day spike of 1,31,968 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, pushing its infection tally to 1,30,60,542, while the death toll increased to 1,67,642 with 780 more fatalities in a day, the highest since October 18, the Union health ministry data showed.

Registering a steady increase for the 30th day in a row, the number of active COVID-19 cases increased to 9,79,608, which is 7.5 per cent of the total infections, according to the data updated at 8 am.

According to official data, the Indian economy contracted 8 per cent in 2020-21 while the Economic Survey 2020-21 sees 11 per cent growth in 2021-22.—PTI

Artisans Give Expression To Their Creativity Through Their Eyes And Hardworking Hands: LG

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Weavers, artisans, and craftsmen working in the handloom and handicraft sector of J&K are unique examples of creation and development of designs. They are an inspiration for budding fashion designers in designing and fashion communication.

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha made these remarks while addressing the first convocation of the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Srinagar through virtual mode.

Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Union Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development was the Chief Guest and Shri Kiren Rijju, Union Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs and Sports was Guest of Honour during the convocation ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Smt Irani said that the first batch of NIFT Srinagar has



added a golden page in the history of the institution. She inspired the students to be prepared for whatever life has to offer and expressed faith that with the training imparted to them at NIFT, they would be equipped to deal with any tests and hardships that may come their way. The Minister said that the Government of Jammu

and Kashmir has recently announced a package of Rs. 28,400 crore as part of the J&K Industrial Development Scheme and urged upon the students to put in their best efforts to reap benefit from it.

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, during his address, observed that with the revival of art and craft centres, the J&K UT is

emerging as a global fashion hub.

J&K contributes to 80% of the country's total exports of woolen shawls. Special attention has been paid to the handicraft and handloom sector in the new Industrial Development Scheme approved by the central government recently. Handholding to local weavers and artisans is being provided for their livelihood generation as well as promotion of old crafts, said the Lt Governor.

Observing that J&K is witnessing the revival of its traditional handicrafts, the Lt Governor said that the artisans are again giving expression to their creativity through their talented eyes and hardworking hands. He called upon the students and faculty of NIFT to connect themselves with maximum craftsmen and artisans, be their voice and enrich their art with the research and expertise of the institute.

NEWS MAKERS

India's Fuel Consumption Contracts 9.1 Pc In FY21; First Since 1998-99

NEW DELHI: India's fuel demand contracted by a massive 9.1 per cent in the financial year ended March 31, the first in more than two decades, as a stringent lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the pandemic pummelled economic activity, government data showed on Friday.

India consumed 194.63 million tonnes of petroleum products in 2020-21 as compared with 214.12 million tonnes of demand in the previous year, according to the latest data released by the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC).

This is the first time that the fuel consumption has contracted since 1998-99, the most historical year for which government data is available.

The demand contraction was led by diesel, the most-consumed fuel in the



country. Diesel consumption fell 12 per cent to 72.72 million tonnes while petrol demand shrank 6.7 per cent to 27.95 million tonnes.

The government imposed a nationwide lockdown at the end-March of last year, shutting down factories and businesses, halting most road transport, canceling flights and stopping trains. The lockdown was lifted in stages beginning June.

The GDP is estimated to have contracted by 7-8 per cent in 2020-21 after economic activity showed signs of recovery in the last quarter of 2020.

However, a second wave of COVID-19 infections despite a broadening vaccination roll-out, with renewed lockdowns implemented in some states, is threatening to hit the nascent recovery.

Domestic cooking gas LPG was the only retail fuel that posted growth, with consumption rising by 4.7 per cent to 27.59 million tonnes from 26.33 million tonnes in 2019-20. This on the back of free cylinders that the government gave to poor as Covid relief.

With airlines remaining shut for the most years and yet to resume full-scale operations, jet fuel (ATF) consumption fell 53.6 per cent to 3.7 million tonnes.

While naphtha sales were almost flat at 14.2 million tonnes, bitumen (used in road construction) rose 6 per cent to 7.11 million tonnes as the government stepped up construction activity to re-late the economy.

Fuel consumption had halved in April last year following the imposition of the lockdown. It started to recover after the lockdown restrictions were eased.

Petrol sales returned to pre-COVID-19 levels in September last year and festival seasons helped pull diesel demand up in the following months.

In March, fuel demand soared 18 per cent to 18.77 million tonnes with diesel consumption rising 27 per cent and petrol climbing 25.7 per cent. This because of low base effect of March 2020 when restrictions came into effect. — PTI

OnePlus Unveils '9R 5G' In India For Gaming Enthusiasts

BENGALURU: Chinese smartphone maker OnePlus on Thursday unveiled the latest addition to its flagship OnePlus 9 series—9R 5G—that is specially designed for gaming enthusiasts.

The OnePlus 9R 5G comes in two storage variants—8GB+128GB and 12GB+256GB—at Rs 39,999 and Rs 43,999, respectively.

The smartphone will be available in two colour options—carbon black and lake blue—on April 14 for Amazon Prime members and OnePlus Red Cable Club members. Open sales will begin on April 15 across online and offline stores.

"We are excited to launch the OnePlus 9R 5G in India, making the seamless integration of top-of-the-line hardware and software more

accessible to a wider audience of gaming enthusiasts," Pete Lau, Founder, CEO and Chief Product Officer of OnePlus, said in a statement.

The OnePlus 9R 5G is equipped with the Qualcomm Snapdragon 870 mobile platform, offering processing speeds that are 12.6 per cent faster than the previous generation and transforming the device into a gaming powerhouse.

The company said that the device also has 14 temperature sensors that constantly monitors the temperature of the device.

The OnePlus 9R 5G features a 6.55-inch Fluid AMOLED display with 120 Hz refresh rate. It houses 4,500 mAh battery along with super-fast Warp Charge 65 technology.

Army Working On Two-Pronged Strategy In Kashmir: GoC 15 Corps

‘Will Take All Measures To Ensure Smooth Amarnath Pilgrimage This Year’

Agencies

Srinagar: General officer Commanding (GoC) of Srinagar based 15 Corps Lieutenant General D P Pandey said that the army is working on a two-pronged strategy in Kashmir—to prevent the local militant recruitment and to squeeze the OGW and social media network used for radicalization of youth. He, however, said that anyone who picks up arms will be dealt

strictly—local militants will be offered surrender if they refuse, they will be killed.

GoC 15 corps was addressing his maiden presser at Police Control Room (PCR) Srinagar along IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar and GoC Victor Force Rashim Bali about two encounters—Shopian and Tral, Pulwama in which seven militants including the Ansar Gazwatul Hind (AGH) chief were killed.

GoC 15 Corps said that the army is working on a

two-pronged strategy which entails preventing the local militant recruitment and to block the OGW and social media network which is used for radicalization of youth in the Valley.

“This is my first media inter- action and I can feel that there is a new change and new energy. One and all want J&K to be a peaceful region. While rest of Kashmir is peaceful, South Kashmir and some parts of Central Kashmir are witnessing

cycle of violence,”GoC Pandey said. “Our efforts are on to address the situation. We need cooperation from the general public. Our youth are being radicalized and people must help us in stopping the trend.”

He asserted that some parents whose youth have joined militancy have approached army and requested it to “get their children back and rehabilitate them even if they need to be lodged in jails.”

India And China Hold 11th Round Of Military Talks; Focus On Further Disengagement In Eastern Ladakh

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: India on Friday pressed for early disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points like Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh at the 11th round of military talks with China, people familiar with the negotiations said.

The fresh round of Corps Commander-level dialogue began around 10:30 am at the Chushul border point on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh and it was continuing till around 10 pm, they said. The Indian delegation

insisted on completing the disengagement process at the remaining friction points at the earliest, said one of the people.

The 10th round of the military dialogue took place on February 20, two days after both militaries concluded the withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of the Pangong lake. The talks lasted for around 16 hours.

The Indian delegation at Friday's talks is led by Lieutenant General PGK Menon, the Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps.

Late last month, Army Chief General MM Naravane said the threat to India has only “abated”

following the disengagement in the Pangong lake areas, but it has not gone away altogether.

The border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5 last following a violent clash in the Pangong lake areas and both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of the Pangong lake in February, in line with an agreement on disengagement.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

7 Militants Killed

being made to get two militants hiding inside a mosque in Shopian after an overnight encounter to surrender.

“Brother of holed up militants and local imamsahab sent inside mosque to persuade the militants to come out and surrender. Efforts are on to save the mosque,” police had said in a tweet.

They had also tweeted about the Ansar Ghazwatul Hind (AGuH) chief being trapped inside the mosque. “Chief of proscribed militant outfit AGuH (JeM) trapped,” police had said.

The encounter in Shopian town broke out on Thursday evening and giving an update about the operation on the same day, police had said that three militants have been killed and four security forces personnel injured.

Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, Vijay Kumar told reporters that AGuH chief Imtiaz Shah, who was active since 2019, was actually killed in the gunbattle at Tral in Pulwama district.

“While laying a cordon in Shopian, two militants managed to escape after hurling a grenade,” Kumar said.

He said acting on inputs that the militants had moved towards orchards in the Tral area, another operation was launched in Nowbug and the two ultras were killed. One of the slain militants was identified as Imtiaz Shah, Kumar said.

The officer said three people, who hurled stones on security forces when they were laying the cordon, suffered pellet injuries.

The army's 15 Corps Commander, Lt Gen D P Pandey, said the security forces had conducted the Shopian operation with utmost restraint and respect for the place of worship where the two militants were hiding.

“It was ensured that there was no disrespect to the place of worship (the mosque),” he said.

Lt Gen Pandey said security forces gave ample opportunity to the militants to surrender.

“We want the misguided youth to come-back,” he said, but warned that anyone who takes to arms against the state will be neutralised.

On the orders asking the media not to cover live encounters and law and order situations, IGP Kumar said he had written to all senior superintendents of police, keeping in mind the safety of journalists and to ensure media coverage does not hamper operations. “I have directed the district SSPs concerned to brief the media after the operations are over,” he added.

SSPs To Brief

coverage of encounters will be allowed. A stray bullet can hit any media men if you go closer to the operation site. Covering live encounters can pose threat to the journalists.”

The IGP said that live coverage of encounters can instigate people in other adjoining areas of the operational site and lead to law and order situation. “I have directed district SSPs to brief media men about encounter updates in their respective areas, whenever there is any encounter,” he said.

J&K Reports

283 were reported from the Jammu division and 525 from the Kashmir division of the union territory, they said.

The officials said that the 808 new cases included 144 travellers.

Srinagar district recorded the highest of 299 cases, including 61 travellers, followed by 164 in Jammu and 104 in Baramulla, they said.

The number of active cases is 6,115 in the union territory, while 1,28,332 patients have recovered so far, the officials said.

The COVID-19 death toll in the union territory stands at 2,023, they said.

Omar Tests

best to dodge this damn virus but it's finally caught up with me. I tested positive for #COVID-19 this afternoon. I'm completely asymptomatic. Based on medical advice I'm self-isolating at home & monitoring my parameters like oxygen saturation levels etc,” Omar tweeted.

His father Farooq Abdullah had tested positive for coronavirus last week and is now recuperating from the infection.

“I am very grateful to everyone reaching out to me here on Twitter to wish me well. I apologise for not replying individually. For the next few days I'm focusing on beating this virus & will be back here after the battle is won,” Omar Abdullah added in his tweet.

Pertinently, Omar on Wednesday took his first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) in Srinagar.

Dulloo Calls For

department here to discuss issues like availability of general and oxygen-supported beds in hospitals across the Union Territory, an official spokesman said.

Speaking to the officers, the Financial Commissioner said the capacity to conduct RT-PCR tests will be increased in excess of 10,000 tests per day.

He also set a target of immediate functioning of a minimum of 18 oxygen generation plants in Kashmir and five such plants in Jammu division, the spokesman said.

He also directed for an officer to be deputed to look after availability of these facilities in government hospitals in both the divisions.

The Financial Commissioner assured availability of additional medical staff whenever and wherever required.

He ordered the health directors from both the divisions to visit designated COVID hospitals and ensure availability of all facilities round the clock, the spokesman said, adding that the Chief Medical Officers were directed to complete forthwith the pending works pertaining to COVID mitigation.

He said Dulloo directed for deputing intensive care teams at Category-1 dedicated COVID hospitals. In addition to these teams, the health department was asked to ensure availability of ICU beds, ventilators and portable ventilators in the next couple of days.

Similarly, for Category-2 COVID health centres, round the clock presence of a physician, ECG machine, oxygen cylinders, oxygen manifold and bedside monitors was also mandated, the spokesman said.

Regarding COVID Care Centres, the spokesman said the availability of isolation beds, bedding, oxygen concentrator, BP apparatus, pulse oximeters, nebulisers, non-contact thermometers, PPE kits and hypochlorite solution is to be ensured by the health department.

These facilities are to be given to patients who lack space for home quarantine, he said.

Soldier Shot

search operation has been launched to nab the attackers.

Panels Formed

mandated to review the existing administrative powers of Divisional Commissioners/ Deputy Commissioners in respect of staff of various departments posted in districts, including Revenue, Rural Development, PW(R&B), Jal Shakti, Health, Social Welfare Departments besides to recommend modifications in the powers for further strengthening the role of Divisional Commissioners/ Deputy Commissioners for providing better governance.

The Committee shall be serviced by the General Administration Department and shall submit its report by April 16, 2021, the order states.’

J&K Integral Part

Jammu and Kashmir visit since the August 2019 abrogation of Article 370, he said, without naming any country or individual, some people from the neighbourhood always try to create problems and disturbances because they do not want India to progress.

“My advice to some friends who are trying to give unasked advice to us in between and make commentaries to confine themselves to their domestic problems. We are capable of taking care of our own problems and they need not worry about us,” he said, addressing the 3rd and the 4th annual convocation of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) here.

The convocation for two batches were held together as the 3rd was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Union minister Jitendra Singh and J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha also attended the function, during which degrees were awarded to 148 MBA graduates who successfully completed their courses.

“My dear youngsters, where you are studying is an integral part of India,” the vice president told the students. “And we are of the opinion we are capable of solving our problems. No country for that matter has any business to interfere or make comments on the internal affairs of another country or any other country.”

In his nearly half-an-hour speech, he said, “We all believe in democracy and civilization. If you are really civilised you are not expected to interfere in the affairs of any other country. I am very clear about it.”

He said this part of the country is very beautiful and so are the people who need to have peace.

“Peace is the prerequisite for progress. If you have tension, you cannot pay attention. This has to be understood by one and all. That is why peace is very much required,” he said.

The vice president said some people from the neighbourhood always try to create problems and disturbances for India.

“We should not allow them to succeed. We should be guided by the spirit of national integration - nation first, party and profession next and self last. That should be our attitude, nation first attitude irrespective of caste, creed, sex, religion and region,” he said.

He added, “We are all Indians - we may belong to Jammu, Kashmir, south or north. We must remember that we are all sons of this country and we should feel proud that we are Indians.

He said the country is moving forward and “we must fast forward it. The entire world is looking towards India and (the country is being

respected worldwide.”

He said India is the most favourite destination for investment. “With the ease of doing business, the reforms brought in by the Prime Minister and the new ideas, the world is looking towards us and we have the potential to take advantage of that. See to it that we become a strong, stable, peaceful and prosperous nation,” he told the students.

Focus More

called upon students to make valuable contributions towards nation building.

The convocation was presided by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and among others who attended the event was Union Minister Jitendra Singh.

On the occasion, Sinha announced the annual “L-G Scholarship” for 10 students each from IIM-Jammu, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu and the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar.

The vice president awarded medals to students of the IIM's 2018-2020 and 2019-2021 batches. During the convocation, 148 students were conferred with MBA degrees.

Speaking on fast changing market trends and increasing business management challenges, the L-G emphasised the need to put more focus on up-scaling emerging skill sets so that human capital can be prepared and developed to fill the skill gap as per demand.

Sinha also asked students to understand the true virtues of life and make valuable contribution towards nation building and ‘atmanirbhar bharat’ (self-reliant India).

“We need to produce future business managers as per market demand. Overhauling the entire business management ecosystem and orientation of youth are the need of the hour to complement the dynamics of market trends,” he said.

The Lt Governor noted that many experts from the field of management have identified management strategy and innovation; management tools and technology; and interpersonal skills as crucial growth drivers in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid a solid foundation for tackling unpredictability in market trends, Sinha said, adding that the Jammu and Kashmir government is identifying and exploiting all major growth potential sectors to provide youths an opportunity for imbibing pre-requisite qualities to overcome market challenges.

Citing a recent report, the L-G said Jammu and Kashmir has a lesser unemployment rate than states and UTs such as Delhi, Goa, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan. (PTI)

4350 Persons

and four are females, the prison statistics reveal.

According to the data, 3971 persons lodged in jails are undergoing trial in different courts. Among the undertrials, 3837 are males and 134 are females.

As many as 209 persons were lodged under the Public Safety Act in different jails of the UT. The PSA law enacted in 1978 allows detention without a trial for period ranging from three months to two years,

According to the age-profile of PSA detainees, 71 are in age group of 18-25, 66 in 25-35, 40 in 35-45 and 24 in 45-60 and eight are 60 years onwards.

The data reveals that Kotbhalwal jail in Jammu houses the highest number of inmates as 865 persons were lodged there as on February 28, 2021. It is followed by Jammu jail (650) and Srinagar jail (610)—(KNO)

‘Avail Remedy

General of Police, J&K-CID report that police “do not favour issuance of passport” to her.

“In view of the stand taken by counsel for the parties and with their consensus, this appeal is, disposed of, by providing liberty to the appellant (Mehbooba) to approach the appropriate authority to avail the proper remedy available to her under the Scheme,” a division of Justices Tashi Rabstn and Javed Iqbal Wani said.

“On receipt of the appeal, the authority concerned shall consider and decide the same on its merits, strictly under rules, regulations and the provisions of the Act, that too un-influenced by the observations made in the judgment impugned dated 29th of March, 2021,” the court said, adding, “Needless to state that this Court has not expressed any opinion on the merits of the case.”

Mehbooba has the remedy of appeal to Joint Secretary (PSP) and Chief Passport Officer, Ministry of External Affairs, Patiala House, New Delhi against the refusal order made by passport officer within (30) days from the date of receipt of the order under Section 11 of the Passports Act, 1967, being the appellate Authority under the law.

Earlier, Mehoooba's lawyer and senior counsel Jahangir Iqbal Ganie submitted that she can avail the remedy available to her under the Scheme, however because of the certain

observations made by

Single Judge in order on March 24, she was left with no other option but to file the appeal. (GNS)

‘India, Pak May

militant outfits to conduct attacks, New Delhi's resolve to retaliate against Islamabad after such an attack, and Islamabad's determination to defend itself “are likely to persist and may increase” in the next five years, the report says, adding “Miscalculation by both governments could prompt a breakdown in the deterrence that has restricted conflict to levels each side judges it can manage.”

The US intel report also warns policymakers in Washington that “a full-scale war could inflict damage that would have economic and political consequences for years.”

The report also underlines a list of uncertainties in south Asia vis-a-vis the US policy in Afghanistan and its impact on the neighbouring countries.

“US actions in Afghanistan during the next year will have significant consequences across the region, particularly in Pakistan and India,” reads the report.

This would be “especially true” if a security vacuum emerges in Afghanistan that results in a civil war between the Taliban and its Afghan opponents, expanded freedom of manoeuvre for regional militant networks, or criminals and refugees flowing out of the country, it adds.

The report also hints that any outcome in Afghanistan would fuel political tensions and conflict in western Pakistan and sharpen the India-Pakistan rivalry by strengthening longstanding judgments about covert warfare in Islamabad and New Delhi.

“An abrupt US exit probably would also amplify concerns that the United States will lose interest in South Asia generally,” the report says.

The report also opines about the possible India, China conflict, if the armies of the two countries challenge each other on a critical part of the contested border.

The report puts the prospects for increased regional trade or energy cooperation in South Asia during the next five years as low, “due in part to the high probability of ongoing hostility between India and Pakistan”. Trade within South Asia is already the lowest of any region in the world.

The US intelligence community estimates that India and China may also slip into a conflict that neither government intends, “especially if military forces escalate a conflict quickly to challenge each other on a critical part of the contested border”.

In June 2020, a short military exchange resulted in the deaths of at least 20 Indian soldiers, exacerbated the strategic rivalry between Beijing and New Delhi and sharply affected international perceptions of both countries.

The report puts the prospects for increased regional trade or energy cooperation in South Asia during the next five years as low, “due in part to the high probability of ongoing hostility between India and Pakistan”. Trade within South Asia is already the lowest of any region in the world.

The report has also made assessment that Pakistan could face absolute water scarcity by 2025, given a combination of poor water conservation practices, rising temperatures, and decreased rainfall. Besides, it also points out that security threats have “undergirded popular support” for nationalist leaders, and these threats are likely to continue or worsen in some cases. For example, “military tensions between India and Pakistan are at their most contentious in many years, strengthening leaders in both capitals.”

The US intelligence community has also pointed out that in 2019, India “led the world in Internet shutdowns by a wide margin” — with several months-long crackdowns to suppress protests, including in Kashmir.

Highway Open

Jammu towards Srinagar and vice-versa ,” a traffic department official said in a communiqué. “However, TCU Jammu/Srinagar shall liaise with TCU Ramban before releasing the traffic.”

The HMVs shall be allowed from Zig (Qazigund) towards Jammu from 1500 hours, the official said.

Meanwhile, Mughal road, connecting Shopian district with Poonch, remained blocked due to snow accumulation, the official added.

Mercury Dips

department official said that the minimum temperature was minus 3.0 degree Celsius below normal for this time of the year in Gulmarg.

He said that the mercury settled at 4.6 degree Celsius against 5.5 degree Celsius on the previous night in Srinagar. The temperature in the summer capital was minus 2.3 degree Celsius for this time of the season.

Qazigund recorded a low of 3.0 degree Celsius against 4.4 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said.

Pahalgam, the famous resort in south Kashmir, recorded a minimum of minus 0.1 degree Celsius against 1.9 degree Celsius on the earlier night.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of 3.2 degree Celsius against previous night's 4.0 degree Celsius, the official said.

Kupwara recorded a low of 2.6 degree Celsius, same as on the previous night, the official said.

The meteorological department has forecast mainly dry weather for now across Jammu and Kashmir.

‘He Stabbed Me

These car-borne youth, according to some locals, have become a headache for the society and the authorities have done little to stop them.

“Can you imagine putting a dragger inside the body in an attempt to kill anyone!” said Saleem Khan, a resident of downtown. “I mean how they dare to do it and what kind of mentality it is!”

Behind this growing societal anguish, some youth told Kashmir Observer, are two “gangs” operating in two different parts of the city. One of them, they say, even has a Facebook page.

Police, however, maintain that no such groups or gangs are operating in the city, and that they've acted swiftly against the accused involved in different stabbing incidents.

“So far we've arrested 10 people facing attempt to murder charges in few cases that occurred this year,” said a top police officer part of the investigation. “A manhunt to nab the accused involved in Habba Kadal stabbing case is currently on.”

The officer, however, admitted to have received reports about some “erring youth who were called and let go after counseling”.

But how do they arrange daggers?

“Many of these youth get these knives online,” the officer said. “They often use them for stabbing in a fit of rage and anger.”

Ruling out the “gang element” in the city, he said, each incident is different.

“For example,” the police officer explained, “in Ziyaan Chisti case, it was the issue of money. In Babademb stabbing case, the inebriated victims had provoked the locals. And in Habba Kadal case, the accused has some relationship issues with the victim's family.”

Struggling with pain at SMHS, Dar said his family wasn't happy with his sister's four-year-long “abusive engagement” with his assailant.

“He used to threaten us day in and day out for the marriage,” he said. “But since he's notorious for his wrongdoings, we decided to cancel the engagement and he did this to me!”

Picking holes in the police probe, Dar said his potential killer looked professional who operates within the gang.

“He was trying to cut my veins like a professional killer,” Dar said. “I cried for mercy, but he was ruthless. He stabbed me like a Bollywood villain!”

Lt Gen Joshi

operations in the hinterland. “He was briefed on the current situation on the Line of Control including the counter infiltration grid and operational preparedness,” he said.

The Army Commander, he said, laid special emphasis on maintaining the sanctity of the ceasefire as per the understanding reached by DGMOs in February 2021. He however reiterated the necessity of not letting our guard down. During his interaction with the troops, he applauded their selfless service, motivation and high spirits.

“In the hinterland, the Army Commander reviewed the preparations for the Amarnath Yatra. He exhorted the troops to continue with people friendly approach in conduct of intelligence-based Counter militants operations. He complimented the soldiers for the efforts in pursuit of peace & stability in Kashmir,” the army spokesperson said.

Man Held After

Ali was called to the local police station for questioning after information about the grenade was received, they said

The officials said that a case has been registered under the Arms Act and further investigation is on. (PTI)

PDD Lineman Dies

was declared as brought dead. (KDC)

4 Gamblers Held

The police identified the accused as Nazir Ahmad Lorianji, Mehraj-ud-Din Guru, Ghulam Qadir Dar, all residents of Lati Gund Roshan and Fayaz Ahmad Guru of Lati Authkhuroo.

“They have been shifted to Police Station where they remain in custody. Accordingly, a case FIR No. 48/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Ganderbal and investigation has been initiated,” the police spokesperson said.

Body Found From

been hit by a train while crossing the track, resulting in his on-the-spot death.

'Taking Help From Dhawan, Rahane, Ashwin On Strategic Decisions,' Says Pant



Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: The presence of seasoned campaigners in the Delhi Capitals side is a blessing for a young captain like Rishabh Pant, who can bounce off ideas from players such as Ravichandran Ashwin and Ajinkya Rahane.

Pant, one of the youngest captains of an IPL outfit having taken over from an injured Shreyas Iyer, feels that "nothing changes" for him after having even set fields as a keeper when he was not in charge.

"I have been talking to the senior players like Shikhar Dhawan, Ravichandran Ashwin and Ajinkya Rahane about the fields we can set and other strategic decisions for the team," Pant was quoted as saying in a press release on the eve of DC's opening game against Chennai Super Kings.

"I have been talking to Ricky and our bowling coach James Hopes as well. There's a good mix of seniors and juniors in our squad and I think with the help of Ricky, we can do something different this year."

Pant wants to keep things simple and believes that his peripheral vision as a keeper would help while leading the side from behind the stumps.

"I haven't thought about the fact that it's my first match as captain in the IPL. I am just going to keep things simple and give my 100 percent. You get a good idea about setting fields as a wicketkeeper and now as captain I will be making the changes in the field directly."

"So, there's not going to be much of a difference for me," said Pant.

For Ponting, facing a team like

CSK, with a proven record, is always a tough challenge and he expects the "right attitude" from each and every member of his side.

"Although we've got a slightly different squad, we expect to play better as a group and achieve some better results. So, for us, Chennai Super Kings is just game one. We need to approach it with the right attitude and play well."

"Hopefully, win that game and move onto the second game. But we know that we'll have to play well to win," said Ponting.

Suresh Raina's absence last season did hamper CSK's chances, feels the former Australian skipper.

"The Chennai Super Kings have been one of the most successful teams in the history of the IPL. They have got a great leader and a great squad of players. They have always managed to play consistent cricket."

"Last year, they were probably disappointed with the way their season worked out, but I think a lot of that had to do with the fact that Suresh Raina wasn't there for the entire tournament. He comes back to the squad this year, which is almost like a new recruit for them."

Ponting feels that 10-11 days of training before the first game is good enough preparations and there is no place for any excuses.

"I am really happy about how our last 10-11 days have gone. There will be certainly no excuses from us about how we perform in Game 1."

"We've got a great group of players, who are hungry and excited for another challenge for us as a franchise and a team. So, I am excited to see how the boys play tomorrow."

J&K Bank Chairman Felicitates Football Team For Title Winning Show



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Bank Chairman and Managing Director R K Chhibber today felicitated 20-member squad of Bank's Football Club for delivering title winning performance in the recently concluded 28th Annual Football Championship after beating Real Kashmir Football Club Reserves in the finals played at Synthetic Turf TRC Ground, Srinagar.

The top management of the bank including Executive Presidents were part of the felicitation ceremony.

Congratulating the winning

side led by Captain Adnan Ayoub and coached by Hilal Rasool, the CMD said, "You deserve all the plaudits for yet again proving that J&K Bank's football team is one of the best teams going around in UT's domestic circuit and bringing laurels for your institution from the field of sports. The win is a special one as Bank's management including me witnessed the

winning performance of our team who displayed not only their skill but also sportsmanship spirit. Your skill level, talent, fitness and will to win is unmatched and I reiterate my support and backing for all those who take pride in wearing bank's badge on their sleeves."

J&K Bank Football Club has been on a winning spree registering twelve title victories in last five years. The CMD stated that Bank's football team garnered huge support and goodwill earned by the bank over the years thanks to its loyal customer base who always want to see J&K Bank excel in all fields.

"Success in football, like banking business, is more a product of efficient coordination within the team, optimum utilization of the resources and determination to stay ahead of others through a mix of well-thought strategy and timely use of opportunities. Therefore, as members of the premiere financial institution of the UT, we need to keep focus whether we are on

the field or off it", he added.

Notably, the CMD alongwith the management had gone to the venue to egg on their team during the summit clash which saw Bank's football team pip Real Kashmir Football Club Reserves to script title triumph courtesy Furqan Zargar's 55th minute goal. The title decider proved to be humdinger with either team not willing to concede an inch much to the joy and jubilation of the crowd. In the end, J&K Bank players held their nerves to prevail walking away with the trophy.

The Bank side had a dream run on their way to title glory winning all their games beating Novelty Football Club and Lone Star Football Club & Hero Club Jammu before edging past Real Kashmir Football Club in all important finals.

The players expressed their gratitude to the CMD for his constant support and guidance which, they said, was motivating factor for them to give everything on the field to bring glory to J&K Bank.

CSK VS DC, PREVIEW

It's Dhoni Vs Pant As CSK Take On DC In Their IPL Season Opener

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: It will be a battle between the "young apprentice and his master" when Rishabh Pant's Delhi Capitals and Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings square off in an IPL match here on Saturday, with both sides aiming for a winning start to their campaign.

The Delhi franchise ended runners-up last season in the UAE and would be aiming to go one better this time and a good start would be what they will be looking for.

Three-time champions CSK had a forgettable season last year, finishing at seventh out of eight teams and they would also be seeking a winning start in their bid to make amends of a poor IPL 2020.

Keeper-batsman Pant, anointed to captaincy in the absence of injured Shreyas Iyer, has said recently that he would put his learning from Dhoni to use in DC's season opener.

"My first match as captain will be against Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni). It will be a good experience for me as I have learned a lot from him. I'll apply my own experience and learning from him," Pant had said recently.

Delhi's strong batting line up of Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Ajinkya Rahane, Steven Smith and Pant himself will look to fire on all cylinders right from the opening game.

Dhawan (618 runs) was the second highest run-scorer in IPL 2020 and looked in good touch in the recent ODI series against England. He would be raring to go this season.

Shaw will be itching to prove his worth after amassing 827 runs in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. It is most likely that Shaw and Dhawan would open.

Captain Pant, a hard-hitting batsman, is in the form of his life, having emerged as a match-winner for India in the series against

Australia and England. He would like to continue his good run.

The Delhi team also possesses the likes of all-rounder Marcus Stonis, Shimron Hetmyer and Sam Billings but will have to get their team combination right, as only four overseas players can feature in the playing XI.

They have enough options to choose from the battery of pacers comprising Ishant Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Umesh Yadav, Chris Woakes and Anrich Nortje.

Even if the South African duo of Rabada and Nortje misses out the first game as they joined the team just a few days back, DC have enough firepower and experience in the bowling department.

Also, playing a key role on a sluggish Wankhede track would be the spinners — Ravichandran Ashwin and Amit Mishra, though Axar Patel will not be available as he tested positive for COVID-19 last Saturday.

On the other hand, Chennai will be bolstered by the return of the experienced batsman Suresh Raina, who is their all-time leading run-scorer, with 5,368 runs.

Raina will strengthen the top-order, which has the likes of young Ruturaj Gaikwad, South African Faf du Plessis and Ambati Rayudu.

With the likes of young Sam Curran, who almost pulled off a win for England in the final ODI against India, and Moeen Ali, along with great finisher Dhoni, Chennai also have a stable middle-order.

Their bowling attack will be led by the ever-improving Shardul Thakur, who can also bat, and Deepak Chahar. And then there is Ravindra Jadeja, the wily left-arm spinner, who can also be handy with the bat.

Behind the closed doors at the Wankhede Stadium, which was ravaged by a slew of COVID-19 cases before it was cleared to host matches, it remains to be seen whether Pant is able to outsmart Dhoni, or MSD has his way.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan Wants To Bring Indian Premier League To England Capital

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Seeking re-election next month, London's Mayor Sadiq Khan has vowed to work with cricket authorities and bring IPL matches to the British capital after the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided.

Khan expressed his optimism after the successful hosting of NFL (National Football League) and Major League Baseball (MLB) matches in London.

"This is part of my plan to build a better London after the pandemic," Khan said in a press release.

"I know Londoners are hungry to see more of the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Rishabh Pant and, with two of the world's greatest cricket grounds in Lord's and The Kia Oval, London is ideally placed to host IPL matches."

"The absence of live crowds at elite competitions has been hard for many sport-loving Londoners but I know we can build a better, more open and prosperous city after the pandemic and see our capital confirmed as the undisputed sporting capital of the world."

Taking IPL to England will present its own set of challenges, including timing of hosting matches and a busy cricket calendar.

But Khan is determined to stage matches of the immensely popular T20 league in his country's capital city and also sees plenty of benefits should his plans



turn into reality.

"I will never stop banging the drum for investment in our city and bringing the Indian Premier League to London would not only guarantee a home crowd for every country but boost tourism and generate much-needed revenue to help get our capital back on its feet," Khan said.

NFL has a ten-year agreement to play matches at Tottenham Hotspur's new stadium.

The IPL has been held outside India in the past, with South Africa hosting it in 2009 and the UAE last year amid the pandemic.

The 14th edition of the lucrative T20 league kicks off on Friday with Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore taking on Rohit Sharma's five-time defending champions Mumbai Indians in Chennai.

Jhye Richardson Plans To Deal With IPL Pressure With A 'Smile'

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The T20 format can be unforgiving for the bowlers and Australian pacer Jhye Richardson plans to deal with high pressure situations in his maiden IPL with a "smile" before his delivery stride.

A smile before starting his run up worked for him in the Big Bash League, where he ended up as the leading wicket-taker, and he feels sporting a grin even after he is hit for a six should help him deal with the extreme pressure that comes with playing in the world's biggest T20 league.

The 24-year-old, who has played two Tests, 13 ODIs and 14 T20Is for Australia, was bought for a whopping Rs 14 crore by Punjab Kings at the IPL auction. Along with pace spearhead Mohammad Shami, Richardson is expected to put an end to the team's death bowling woes this season.

"The key to my game is to just go out and have fun. It's easier said than done, because you're bowling to the best in the world but for me if I can just stand at the top of my mark, and smile, that is a big one for me," Richardson, who is set to complete his quarantine in Mumbai, told PTI.

"I actually started doing that (smile) during the Big Bash at the top of my mark, just to put a smile on the top, just to remind myself every ball that T20 is fun."

Back to playing regularly after

undergoing a shoulder surgery last year, Richardson said at times he puts too much pressure on himself when he is being taken to the cleaners.

Richardson has replaced West Indian Sheldon Cottrell in the Punjab Kings squad. Cottrell was smashed by Rahul Tewatia for five sixes in an over last season and Richardson is well aware that it can happen to him and he plans to overcome that by staying in the moment.

"Sometimes you can bowl a good ball and it goes for six. The key to deal with that is finding a way to get over that moment. The good thing for me is that in Big Bash, I was probably the person who was required to bowl all the difficult overs. With that comes experience."

"I am certainly becoming more confident about myself and backing my ability to bowl in the death," said the fast bowler, who is looking forward to working with fellow Punjab teammate Chris Jordan again, having played alongside him in the Big Bash.

The pressure of a huge price tag is bound to be there but Richardson is feeling a lot better after a candid chat with head coach Anil Kumble.

"I started putting pressure on myself (thinking about the price tag). But, I had a good conversation with Anil yesterday, and he said, you know, 'we didn't pick you up for the

price tag we just picked you up for your services and what you do on the cricket field'."

"For me that was really important to hear, to know that the coach has picked me up for a reason and knows what I'm capable of."

"So for me, now it's not to worry about the price tag. I know all that coach wants from me is to perform my best and back myself with whatever skill that may be, whether it's opening the bowling or trying to hit some runs in the lower order."

Playing in bio-bubbles comes with its own set of challenges, especially for someone like Richardson who comes from a place where COVID-19 situation is not as alarming as India. Fellow Australian Daniel Sams, who is with RCB this season, has also tested positive for the virus.

"It's hard not to think about all of those things, especially coming from a place where bubbles have sort of calmed down a little bit, so to come into another bubble is unfortunately what we're going to have to get used to moving forward."

"But it's certainly difficult to get your head around. It's just about distracting yourself and trying to keep yourself busy, and making sure that you're in the present and not thinking too far forward."

"If you start to think too far ahead, the bubbles can just drag on for what seems like forever," he added.

Fakhar Zaman Used Bat Gifted By Muhammad Hafeez In ODI Series Against South Africa



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman on Thursday revealed that he had used a bat gifted by senior teammate Muhammad Hafeez to power his way to two successive hundreds in the just concluded One-day series against South Africa. Pakistan won the series 2-1, only their second ODI series win on South African soil since 2013 with Zaman smashing 193 and 102 in the last two ODIs.

"The bat that I used in the series was gifted to me by Muhammad Hafeez," Zaman said at a virtual press conference on Thursday.

Hafeez, a former captain and senior most player in the side gifted the bat after Fakhar felt uncomfortable with the ones he had. Named the player of the series, Zaman however said that he is still not sure whether he would play in the coming T20 series in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The left-handed opener was not named originally in the T20 squad for the twin tours but after his superb 193, the selectors named him in the T20 side as well. Zaman, a hard-hitting batsman, said he was eager to open with fellow opener, Sharjeel Khan who has a reputation of being a big hitter in T20 cricket.

"It would be great if I can open with Sharjeel during the upcoming T20I matches against South Africa and Zimbabwe."

He said that Sharjeel, also a left hander, was one of his favourite players because of his aggressive style of play.

"I would feel really good if I get the opportunity to bat alongside him. He makes cricket look very easy. So, let's see what happens going forward," he added. Zaman said he won't batting down the order since captain, Babar Azam was the regular opener in T20 cricket and also opens with Sharjeel in the Pakistan Super League.

Japan Imposes New Virus Measures In Tokyo Ahead Of Olympics

Agencies

TOKYO: Japan announced Friday that it will raise the coronavirus alert level in Tokyo to allow tougher measures to curb the rapid spread of a more contagious variant ahead of the Summer Olympics.

Japan's national vaccination drive has lagged and most people in the capital still have not been inoculated as infections have surged.

The raised status announced by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga will allow Tokyo's governor to mandate shorter opening hours for bars and restaurants, along with punishments for violators and compensation for those who comply. The measures are to begin Monday and continue through May 11.

Many of Tokyo's cases have



been linked to nightlife and dining, though they have recently spread to offices, elderly care facilities and schools, experts say.

Suga also raised the alert level for Kyoto in western Japan and the southern island prefecture of Okinawa, where cases have surged in recent weeks. The new status there

is to continue through May 5, the end of Japan's Golden Week holidays, to discourage travelling.

The steps come less than three weeks after a non-binding state of emergency was lifted for Tokyo and underscore the difficulty of balancing anti-virus measures and the economy.

Great To Have Bhuvu Back In Team: SRH Captain Warner

Agenceis

Sunrisers Hyderabad captain David Warner on Friday said the return of senior India pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar will strengthen his side which is already quite balanced in all departments.

Bhuvneshwar played just four games in last year's IPL in the UAE after sustaining a hip injury but he is currently in top form after an excellent show for the country during the white-ball leg of the England series at home.

"Our team is pretty balanced and there are going to be some selection headaches which is always good," Warner said on the twitter handle of SRH.

SRH play their first match on Sunday against Kolkata Knight Riders in Chennai.

"It's great that Bhuvu is back. He has had a fantastic series against



England. We have a lot of depth in bowling and firepower in batting."

The swashbuckling Australia opener said the slow pitches in Chennai and Delhi will suit his team.

"We are playing in Chennai in our first 8 or 9 games. The wickets there will be tad slow which will suit our style of play," said Warner who has come out of

a mandatory quarantine.

He said he did some running inside his hotel room during quarantine to keep himself fit.

"They gave me a big enough room and I had a little bit of running inside it."

SRH reached the play-offs in the last edition in the UAE where they lost to eventual runners-up in the Qualifier 2. Bhuvneshwar, on his part, said he was looking to feature in a full season this time.

"It's good to be out of quarantine. Feels that the last IPL was just a few days back. I am not thinking of any new things but will just focus on the simple things and use my experience and bowl my variations, like that," he said.

"I was not there for almost the whole IPL last year and looking forward to play the whole season this time and hopefully contribute for the team."

India Records Highest Daily Spike Of Over 1.31 Lakh COVID-19 Cases; 780 Deaths Take Toll To 1,67,642



Agenceis

India registered a record single-day spike of 1,31,968 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, pushing its infection tally to 1,30,60,542, while the death toll increased to 1,67,642 with 780 more fatalities in a day, highest since October 18, the Union Health Ministry data showed.

Registering a steady increase for the 30th day in a row, the number of active COVID-19 cases increased to 9,79,608, which is 7.5 per cent of the total infections, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The recovery rate in the country has further dropped to 91.22 per cent, it added.

The active COVID-19 caseload in the country was recorded at its lowest of 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 1,19,13,292, while the case fatality rate has dropped to 1.28 per cent, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7 last year, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28 last year, 70 lakh on October

11, 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 25,40,41,584 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in the country so far, including 13,64,205 on Thursday. The 780 new fatalities include 376 from Maharashtra, 94 from Chhattisgarh, 56 from Punjab, 39 from Uttar Pradesh, 36 from Karnataka, 35 from Gujarat, 27 from Madhya Pradesh, 24 from Delhi, 19 from Tamil Nadu, 18 from Kerala and 11 from Haryana.

A total of 1,67,642 deaths due to the disease have been reported so far in the country. The figure includes 57,028 fatalities from Maharashtra, 12,840 from Tamil Nadu, 12,767 from Karnataka, 11,157 from Delhi, 10,370 from West Bengal, 9,003 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,334 from Punjab and 7,268 from Andhra Pradesh.

The Union Health Ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Sunni Board To Challenge ASI Survey Order for Gyanvapi Mosque



Agenceis

The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board has said that it will challenge the Varanasi court order, allowing archaeological survey to take place at the Kashi Vishwanath-Gyanvapi mosque site, in the higher court.

Asserting that the status of Gyanvapi Masjid is beyond question, the Board chairman Zulfar Faruqi said the order violates the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 which has been upheld by the Supreme Court on many occasions.

A civil court in Varanasi, on Thursday, had given its approval for survey of Gyanvapi Mosque and Kashi Vishwanath temple complex by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

The court further directed the Uttar Pradesh government to bear the cost of the survey. The ASI is likely to set up a five-member team that will visit the campus soon.

In a statement, Zulfar Faruqi, Chairman, UP Sunni Central Waqf Board, said the order of the Civil Judge, Varanasi ordering a survey by the Archaeological Survey of India will be challenged before the Allahabad High Court.

"Our understanding is clear that this case is barred by the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. The Places of Worship Act was upheld by a 5-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in the Ayodhya judgment. The status of Gyanvapi Masjid is, as such, beyond question," Faruqi said.

He also underlined that the order of survey is questionable because technical evidence can only supplement certain foundational facts.

In this connection, no evidence has been produced before the court that suggests that there was a prior existing temple at the site of the mosque.

Referring to the Babri Masjid title judgment, the Board chairman pointed out that even in the Ayodhya judgment, the ASI excavation was ultimately of no use as it did not find proof that the Babri Masjid was built upon after a demolished temple. He also underscored that the Supreme Court has specifically observed that there was no such evidence.

The UP Waqf board said that it wants that this practice of mosques being 'investigated' by the ASI be stopped and it will approach the High court immediately against this unwarranted order.

As Migrants Flee Cities, Concerns About COVID-19 Surge In Villages



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: India reported another record number of new COVID-19 infections on Friday and daily deaths hit their highest in more than five months, as it battles a second wave of infections and states complain of a persistent vaccine shortage.

Evoking memories of the last national lockdown when tens of thousands of people walked on foot back to their homes, hundreds of migrants in badly affected Mumbai packed into trains as bars, malls and restaurants have again been forced to down shutters.

One of those fleeing was Suren Puri, who recently lost his job as a cook at a restaurant in Mumbai's suburb.

"There is no other option for me except to return because cooking is the only skill I brought to Mumbai," said Mr Puri, 31, as he waited to board a train back to his village in the country's east.

The fledgling exodus could also spread the virus to India's smaller towns and villages. The second surge has already been faster than the first, which peaked in September

last year with 97,000 cases a day.

The world's second most-populous country reported 1,31,968 new infections and 780 deaths on Friday - the biggest daily increase in fatalities since mid-October. Most of the cases again came from Maharashtra.

India's overall caseload has swelled to over 1.3 crore - the third-highest after the United States and Brazil - and total deaths to 1,67,642. India's total number of infections inched closer to Brazil's 1.32 crore.

The government blames the resurgence mainly on crowding and a reluctance to wear masks as businesses had nearly fully reopened since February, only to be partially shut down again as case have galloped.

"Casual Approach"

Election rallies, where politicians including PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have greeted hundreds of thousands of supporters, most of them not wearing masks, continued this week despite the record surge in cases.

"We all know that it's because of the casual approach that has

been adopted unfortunately by the society and some sort of laxity everywhere in following the discipline of the COVID- appropriate behaviour," Health Minister Harsh Vardhan told a news conference, explaining the unexpected spike.

He denied on Thursday there was any shortage of shots for the groups eligible for vaccination, with more than 4.3 crore doses in stock or in the pipeline. India has been inoculating about 40 lakh people a day, though only to those aged over 45 and health and front-line workers.

But several states, which are not ruled by the BJP, have disputed the minister's claim and said they were rationing vaccines as the central government was not refilling stocks in time.

Rahul Gandhi, the face of the main opposition Congress party, blamed the Modi government for exporting crores of vaccine doses instead of focusing on immunisations at home.

"Was the export of vaccines also an 'oversight', like many other decisions of this government, or an effort to garner publicity at the cost of our own citizens?" he asked in a letter to PM Modi.

Protesting Farmers To Block KMP-KGP Expressway For 24 Hours From Saturday Morning

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Intensifying their protest against the three farm laws, the farmers protesting at Delhi borders will block the key Kundali-Manesar-Palwal highway for 24 hours starting Saturday morning.

"Tomorrow, on April 10, the KMP-KGP highway will be blocked for 24 hours (from 8 am, 10th April to 8 am 11th April) as a warning to the government," the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of the protesting farmer unions, said in a statement on Friday. The KMP stands for Kundali-Manesar-Palwal highway and the KGP for Kundli-Ghaziabad-Palwal highway.

The move is a part of the farmers' strategy for protest this month. These include marking significant historical occasions like the anniversary of Jallianwala Bagh massacre on April 13, and the Ambedkar Jayanti April 14.

"On April 13, the foundation day of Khalsa Panth will be celebrated on the borders of Delhi and at the same time, there will be programmes in the honour of the martyrs on the anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

"The 'Save Constitution Day' and the 'Kisan Bahujan Unity Day' will be celebrated on 14 April. On this day, all the stages of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha will be managed by agitators of Bahujan Samaj and all the speakers will also be Bahujan," the statement noted.

The SKM has urged all dalit-ba-



hujans and farmers to continue their peaceful protest against BJP leaders, who, they alleged, have been spreading "hatred and division".

"On this day (April 14), the Deputy Chief Minister of Haryana is deliberately organising a program in Kaithal.

"We appeal to the farmers and Dalit-Bahujan to protest against this event by reaching in maximum numbers while remaining peaceful," the statement said.

The farmers will also be organising a special event on April 18 to recognise and honour the "participation and dedication of the local people" in the movement.

"Local people will be honoured on the stages and the responsibility of managing the stage will also be given to the local people," the statement said.

Thousands of farmers from all over the country have been protesting against three new farm laws at multiple Delhi borders,

saying that the legislations threaten the existing Minimum Support Price system, a claim the government has repeatedly refuted.

Farmers will host week-long celebrations from April 24 that will mark the completion of 150 days of the movement.

"Week-long special programs will be organised in which along with farmers and labourers, employees, youth, traders, students and other organisations will be called to join the Delhi Morcha," the SKM said.

"In the last week of April, there will be a National convention of organisations supporting the farmers movement across the country, in which plans will be made to intensify this movement nationwide," the statement added.

Earlier, the farmers had announced that they will undertake a foot march to Parliament in the first fortnight of May, the exact date for which is yet to be decided.

West Bengal: Election Commission Removes Mamata Banerjee's Security Officer

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A government notification informs that Ashok Chakraborty, Mamata Banerjee's security officer, is being removed from his post with "immediate effect" as per the Election Commission's directions. The development comes hours before Phase 4 of the assembly polls commences.

The Election Commission of India on Friday removed chief minister Mamata Banerjee's security officer Ashok Chakraborty, a day before the fourth phase of the West Bengal Assembly Election 2021 is to be held, according to an ANI report. The government said in a



notification that Chakraborty is to be removed from his post with "immediate effect" in accordance with the Election Commission's directions, as per reports. Chakraborty is posted as the officer on special duty (OSD) in an ex-cadre post

in the rank of a superintendent of police (SP) in the directorate of security.

Earlier in the day, the commission issued a notice to Mamata Banerjee asking her to explain her stand by April 10 regarding her statements against central

forces on March 28 and April 7. Banerjee alleged that the central forces favoured the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during the first and second phase polling of the West Bengal assembly elections. She was issued another notice over her remarks on April 3 when she appealed to Muslim voters to not let their vote split among different political parties.

The fourth phase of the high-stakes West Bengal assembly elections will see 373 candidates contesting for 44 constituencies spread across five districts. The first three phases of the eight-phase West Bengal polls have already taken place. Counting of the votes will take place on May 2.

Mumbai Tax Inspector Drops ₹5 Lakh Bribe, Triggers Dramatic Chase



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: A Bollywood-style foot-chase for over a kilometre on the streets of Mumbai by a CBI official led to the arrest of bribery-accused Income Tax Inspector Ashish Kumar who had abandoned ₹ five lakh cash on the road before his unsuccessful dash.

The event unfolded on Thursday around 10 pm at Goregaon East in front of Dindoshi Fire Station where the CBI team had laid a trap after getting a complaint that Ashish Kumar and two other Income Tax inspectors -- Dilip Kumar and SN Rai -- have allegedly demanded ₹ 15 lakh the bribe from a person whom they had raided recently, officials said.

All the three accused posted at Ballard Pier office of Income Tax were separately demanding bribes from the person to cover up his alleged tax violations, they said.

During the verification process, the CBI concluded that all the three were assuring the person that they can manage his case in exchange of a bribe.

According to CBI officials, Ashish Kumar and the complainant

had agreed the bribe amount will be paid in the latter's car in front of Dindoshi Fire Station in Goregaon.

On Thursday night, Kumar entered the vehicle, took the money, kept it in his bag and as soon as he came out spotted the CBI officers approaching him. Sensing that his imminent was imminent, he threw the bag containing ₹ five lakh on the road and started running, they said.

CBI PSI Vineet Jain gave a chase through the traffic and busy street for over a kilometre before outrunning the Ashish Kumar. He has been taken into custody, the officials said.

Another Income Tax Inspector Dilip Kumar was also arrested red-handed while allegedly receiving a bribe of ₹ 10 lakh from the complainant. The third inspector, S N Rai, has also been booked but not arrested yet, they said.

"Searches at two places in Mumbai and one place in Delhi at the residential and office premises of accused are being conducted. This led to the recovery of cash of ₹ 7 lakh and incriminating documents relating to an investment in commercial and residential properties from one of the accused," CBI spokesperson RC Joshi said.

3 Elderly Women Given Anti-Rabies Vaccine Instead Of Covid-19 Jab In Uttar Pradesh

Agenceis

SHAMLI: A probe has been ordered in the shocking incident in which three women were allegedly administered anti-rabies injections instead of the Covid vaccine at a government hospital in Shamli district.

Three women--Saroj, 70, Anarkali, 72 and Satyawati, 60--had gone to the government community health centre in Kandhla on Thursday to get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

After the vaccination, the women were handed anti-rabies vaccine

slips, which led to a protest by their family members at the facility.

The condition of Saroj began to deteriorate, and she complained of nausea. Her family members took her to a private doctor who was aghast to see that she had been given the anti-rabies vaccine instead of the Covid vaccine.

The families have lodged a complaint with the Chief Medical Officer Sanjay Agarwal. Briendra Singh, in-charge of the health centre has said that an inquiry would be conducted into the incident.

He said that strict action will be taken against those found guilty.

Three Day-Old Student Passes Class 8, Shows Bihar School Certificate

Agenceis

A Transfer Certificate issued by a Bihar school shows that a three day-old student passed Class 8 exams. As per the TC, the student was born on March 20, 2007 while he passed the exam on March 23, 2007.

The student identified as Prince Kumar told the mediapersons, "I passed Class 8 on March 23, 2007 from Gosaidas Tengrari Government School in Muzaffarpur. The school provided the TC with my date of birth as March 20, 2007. Interestingly, the principal of the school also signed it without noticing the error."

"When I reported the matter to the school and went there to meet the principal, the school authorities threw me out of the school," the student claimed.

My father approached the district education officer (DEO) regarding the matter who admitted the clerical mistake, he said.



Muzaffarpur DEO said, "It was a clerical mistake and we will rectify it soon. We have also initiated departmental action against school administration."

Earlier also a similar error appeared when Muzaffarpur's Bhim Rao Ambedkar University issued an admit card to a BP second year student with father's name as Emraan Hashmi and mother's name as Sunny Leone.

Johnson & Johnson In Discussion With India To Start Clinical Trials Of Its Janssen Covid-19 Vaccine

Agenceis

"We are in discussions with the Government of India with the objective of starting a bridging clinical study of our Janssen Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India, subject to local regulatory approvals," a company statement said.

US pharma giant Johnson and Johnson on Friday said it is in discussion with the Government of India to soon begin bridging clinical trials in the country for its single-dose Covid-19 vaccine Janssen.

"At Johnson & Johnson, we remain fully focused on bringing a safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine

to people around the world, if authorized for use by local health authorities. We are in discussions with the Government of India with the objective of starting a bridging clinical study of our Janssen Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India, subject to local regulatory approvals," a company statement said.

A bridging study tests the safety and immunogenicity of a vaccine. Janssen vaccine is currently approved for use in the United States, the European Union and other nations including Thailand and South Africa.

India currently has two approved vaccines in use, one devel-

oped by Oxford University and AstraZeneca and the other a shot from local player Bharat Biotech.

Faced with a surge in coronavirus cases and heightened demand from states, the country is looking to ramp up its vaccine doses.

The country reported over 1.20 lakh new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours on Thursday.

With 1,26,789 new cases in the last 24 hours, India's active caseload reached 9,10,319 yesterday. India recorded 59,258 recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative recoveries to 1,18,51,393. The national Recovery Rate is 91.67 per cent.