



P3 CITY

**RAGGING TRIGGERS PROTEST, PROPERTY VANDALISED**

Students from Kashmir Law College Friday hit streets to protest the alleged ragging of juniors by 3rd-semester students, stating that the latter brought "goons" who....

P6 THINK

**J&K'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC IRONY**

The mainstream debate on economic development is often confined to quantitative aspects depicted by hard numbers like Gross Domestic Product, per capita incomes, tax growth, investment rate, credit expansion, exchange rates and inflation.....



P5 STATE

**MAINSTREAM LEADERS DEMAND RELEASE OF MIRWAIZ UMAR**

Senior National Conference leader and Member Parliament Justice Hasnain Masoodi Friday said that stopping Mirwaiz from offering prayers reflects...



## Woman Cop Fired, Arrested For 'Glorifying Militancy'

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Police on Friday sacked and arrested a woman special police officer (SPO) for allegedly glorifying militancy and obstructing an anti-militancy operation in south Kashmir's Kulgam district.

The SPO Saima Akhter, daughter of Ghulam Nabi Rah of Frisal was arrested and terminated from services after she allegedly



disrupted an input driven anti-militancy operation of government forces in Karewa Mohallah

of the Frisal area on April 14, a police spokesperson said Friday. The woman cop, he said, obstructed the search party to discharge their duty during the search operation.

"The lady resisted the search party and turned violent and uttered statements glorifying violent actions of militants. She captured a video through her personal phone and uploaded it on social media platforms for dissemination ● More On P10

## Incessant Rain Turns Weather Cold In Kashmir

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Fresh snowfall in the upper reaches and incessant rains in plains brought a considerable drop in the mercury in Kashmir valley, even as the weather department Friday predicted more downpour in the coming days.

A meteorological department official said that Srinagar received 10.7mm of rainfall in the last 36 hours till 5:30 p.m. The minimum temperature settled at 7.9 degree Celsius against 7.8 degree Celsius on the previous night while the ● More On P10

## Mehbooba Terms Police Action 'Cruelty'

**SRINAGAR:** Police on Friday arrested three people, including a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Panch from Sopore town of Baramulla district on charges of extortion.

According to a police spokesperson, Mudassir Ahmad Sheikh of Panzipora filed a complaint with the police alleging that during the intervening ● More On P10

DP chief Mehbooba Mufti on Friday said when it comes to cruelty "even women aren't spared in Naya Kashmir" as she reacted to the arrest of a woman special police officer (SPO) from Kulgam district for allegedly glorifying militancy. Saima Akhter, a resident of Frisal area of the south Kashmir district and working as SPO, was terminated from service for "obstructing" government officials in the discharge of their duty and ● More On P10

## CCG Paints Grim Picture Of Kashmir Situation 'Kashmiris In Shock, Journalism Virtually Criminalised; No Space For Dissent Or Criticism Of Govt Policies'

Press Trust Of India

**SRINAGAR:** Kashmir seems to have returned to normalcy, but people have refused to accept the Centre's 2019 decision of revoking Jammu and Kashmir's special status, says a report released by the Concerned Citizens'

Group led by former Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha.

The Group visited Kashmir from March 30 to April 2. It was its third visit to the Union territory after the central government revoked the special status of the erstwhile state and the eighth since violent protests

erupted in the Valley following the killing of militant leader Burhan Wani in July 2016.

The Concerned Citizens' Group (CCG) met with a cross-section of representatives of civil society groups, businessmen, politicians, newly-elected members ● More On P10

## J&K Sees 1144 New Cases, 2 Corona Deaths

Observer Monitoring Desk

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir reported on Friday 1144 new cases of coronavirus, the second highest single day spike in the infections this year, even as two more people succumbed to the deadly disease during the last 24 hours.

According to officials, Kashmir Valley reported a maximum of 730 new cases of Covid-19, while the remaining 414 were detected in Jammu division, taking the total number of people infected since the outbreak of pandemic in J&K last year to

144021.

Giving district wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 407, Baramulla 89, Budgam 97, Pulwama 45, Kupwara 11, Anantnag 30, Bandipora 12, Ganderbal 5, Kulgam 33, Shopian 1, Jammu 223, Udhampur 29, Rajouri 33, Doda 10, Kathua 32, Samba 23, Kishtwar 4, Poonch 6, Ramban 11 and Reasi 43 fresh cases of coronavirus.

Regarding the fresh deaths, officials said one each was reported from Jammu and Kashmir—a 77-year-old man from Bemina, Srinagar—, taking ● More On P10

## Polytechnic Exams Put Off For Now

A mid spike in COVID-19 cases across Jammu and Board, the Board of Technical Education (BOTE) on Friday postponed all examinations till further orders. "All principals and students are notified that the examinations in all polytechnic colleges of 1st, 3rd, 5th and 6th semesters scheduled as per the already notified date sheet is

## Covid-19 Positive Shopkeeper Booked

The authorities on Friday booked a shopkeeper in north Kashmir's Bandipora for running his business as usual despite being advised by doctors for home isolation after he tested positive for coronavirus. A senior health department official said that ● More On P10

## No Hajj Without Two Vaccine Doses

Agencies

**MUMBAI:** In a major development, the Hajj Committee of India (HCI) has said that no Indian Muslims shall be allowed to go for the annual Hajj pilgrimage unless they have taken the two vaccine doses.

The HCI CEO Maqsood Ahmed Khan made the announcement late on Thursday following the latest directives from the Saudi Arabian Health Ministry and the Indian Consulate-General in Jeddah.

Accordingly, he advised those who have applied for the Hajj 2021 to take the first dose of the vaccine on their own now so they can be administered the second dose before departure.

However, Khan made it clear that there is no official communication on the status of the Hajj pilgrimage yet from the Saudi Arabian authorities ● More On P10

## Kashmiri Pilgrims Told To Take Vaccine Jab

Jammu and Kashmir Hajj Committee on Friday said that there was no official communication regarding Hajj-2021 from Hajj Committee of India or Saudi Government. However, the Hajj committee has asked the intending pilgrims who have applied for Hajj-2021 to take the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine on their own. A notification issued by Dr. Abdul Salam Mir Executive Officer J&K Hajj ● More On P10



# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

## Lt. Governor Echoes Voice of Public on Good Governance



### SHRI MANOJ SINHA

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, J&K

# Quwaam Ki Quwaaz

FIRST EPISODE

18<sup>th</sup> APRIL - 11 AM

ALL CHANNELS OF AIR STATIONS IN J&K  
DD KASHIR & DD JAMMU

SPEAK TO US:

1800-5722-327 (Jammu) 1800-5722-328 (Kashmir)

welisten-akb@jk.gov.in

@air\_jammu  
@DDKashirChannel  
@KashmirRadio  
@airkathua

Akashvani Jammu  
DD Kashir  
All India Radio Srinagar  
All India Radio Kathua

Akashvani Jammu  
DD Kashir  
All India Radio Srinagar  
102.2 AIR FM-Kathua



# New research shows people tend to trust computers more than humans

Agencies

Despite increasing concern over the intrusion of algorithms in daily life, people may be more willing to trust a computer program than their fellow humans, especially if a task becomes too challenging, according to new research from data scientists at the University of Georgia. The findings of the study were published in the journal 'Nature's Scientific Reports'.

From choosing the next song on your playlist to choosing the right size of pants, people are relying more on the advice of algorithms to help make everyday decisions and streamline their lives. "Algorithms are able to do a huge number of tasks, and the number of tasks that they are able to do is expanding practically every day," said Eric Bogert, a Ph.D. student in the Terry College of Business Department of Management Information Systems.

Bogert added, "It seems like there's a bias towards leaning more heavily on algorithms as a task gets harder and that effect is stronger than the bias towards relying on advice from other people." Bogert worked with management information systems professor Rick Watson and assistant professor Aaron Schecter on the paper, "Humans rely more on algorithms than social influence as a task becomes more difficult."

Their study, which involved 1,500 individuals evaluating photographs, is part of a larger body of work analysing how and



when people work with algorithms to process information and make decisions. For this study, the team asked volunteers to count the number of people in a photograph of a crowd and supplied suggestions that were generated by a group of other people and suggestions generated by an algorithm.

As the number of people in the photograph expanded, counting became more difficult and people were more likely to follow the suggestion generated by an algorithm rather than count themselves! or follow the "wisdom of the crowd," Schect-

er said. Schecter explained that the choice of counting as the trial task was an important one because the number of people in the photo makes the task objectively harder as it increases. It also is the type of task that laypeople expect computers to be good at.

"This is a task that people perceive that a computer will be good at, even though it might be more subject to bias than counting objects," Schecter said. "One of the common problems with AI is when it is used for awarding credit or

approving someone for loans. While that is a subjective decision, there are a lot of numbers in there -- like income and credit score -- so people feel like this is a good job for an algorithm. But we know that dependence leads to discriminatory practices in many cases because of social factors that aren't considered." Facial recognition and hiring algorithms have come under scrutiny in recent years as well because their use has revealed cultural biases in the way they were built, which can cause inaccuracies when matching faces to identities or screening for qualified job candidates, Schecter said.

Those biases may not be present in a simple task like counting, but their presence in other trusted algorithms is a reason why it's important to understand how people rely on algorithms when making decisions, he added. This study was part of Schecter's larger research program into human-machine collaboration, which is funded by a USD 300,000 grant from the U.S. Army Research Office.

"The eventual goal is to look at groups of humans and machines making decisions and find how we can get them to trust each other and how that changes their behavior," Schecter said. "Because there's very little research in that setting, we're starting with the fundamentals." Schecter, Watson and Bogert are currently studying how people rely on algorithms when making creative judgments and moral judgments, like writing descriptive passages and setting bail of prisoners.

**از نیابت سولپور**  
عنوان: حضور درخواست غلام محمد الدین بھار ولد محمد اسماعیل ساکنہ امر گڑھ  
برادر عطا بگٹی OBC سرٹیفکیٹ تحت SRO294

**اشتہار برادر آگاہی ہر خاص و عام**


مجاہد مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل نے ایک درخواست برادر OBC سرٹیفکیٹ پیش کی ہے۔ جو کہ فخر بڑا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اور اجزا کرنے مطلوب ہے اس ضمن میں پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل واقع بھار ذات سے تعلق رکھتا ہے کتبہ ذیل افتاد پر مشتمل ہے

50 سال	غلام محمد الدین ولد محمد اسماعیل بھار مزدوری
48	تکلیف بگٹی زوجہ غلام محمد الدین گھریلو کام
27	مرکبتیں پیر غلام محمد الدین زیر تعلیم
24	مہوش دختر غلام محمد الدین زیر تعلیم
18	مہک دختر غلام محمد الدین زیر تعلیم

اسکے علاوہ عیب کی مہاند آمدنی درج و غیر درج 9000 سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث ادا کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا انھیں کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یکم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔


gms  
نائب تحصیلدار

**OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER KASHMIR NOTICE**



Where as an application for transfer of ownership has been received from Tariq Ahamd Mota S/O Noor ud din Mota R/O Buch Mohalla Rajoori Kadal Srinagar (Transferor) of Swift vdi bearing registration No. JK01AB-2277 chasis No: 762765 Engine No: 596906 Model 2015 in favour of Tanveer Ahmad Wani S/o Sonullah Wani R/O Mazahama Budgam (Transferee).

Now, therefore, it is notified for the information of the general, public that representation/ Objection, if any in connection with proposed transfer will be received within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer to the address of undersigned. No, representation/ objection shall be considered unless it is made writing it is made in the aforesaid period.



NOJK-RTOK 899  
Dated: 16/04/2021  
tko

Sd/-  
Regional Transport Office,  
Kashmir

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

I have lost my Migration certificate bearing Regd No: NI1341430130, 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.

  
**BMG\_R**

**Muzamil Nisar**  
D/o Nisar Ahamd Khawaja  
R/O Yagipora Magam

## 'Empty middle seats may reduce COVID-19 exposure on flights'

Press Trust Of India

Leaving middle seats open could provide airline passengers more protection from the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, a laboratory modelling study has found.

The researchers, including those from U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), noted that air-

craft can hold large number of people in close proximity for long periods, which are conditions that can increase the risk for transmitting infectious diseases.

Based on laboratory modelling of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 on single-aisle and twin-aisle aircraft, exposures in scenarios in which the middle seat was vacant were reduced by 23 per cent to 57 per cent, compared with full aircraft occupancy, the researchers noted.

Lately, airlines have abandoned the pandemic practice of blocking seats to maintain physical distancing between the travellers "Physical distancing of airplane passengers, including through policies such as middle seat vacancy, could provide additional reductions in risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2 on aircraft," the researchers concluded.

The team of researchers from CDC and Kansas State University (KSU) in the US used a bacteriophage – a vi-

rus that infects bacteria -- as a surrogate for airborne SARS-CoV-2.

They modelled the relationship between SARS-CoV-2 exposure and aircraft seating proximity, including full occupancy and vacant middle seat occupancy scenarios.

"Compared with exposures in full occupancy scenarios, relative exposure in vacant middle seat scenarios was reduced by 23 per cent to 57 per cent depending upon the modelling approach," the researchers said.

A 23 per cent exposure reduction was observed for a single passenger who was in the same row and two seats away from the SARS-COV-2 source, rather than in an adjacent middle seat, they said.

When quantifying exposure reduction to a full 120-passenger cabin rather than to a single person, the study predicted exposure reductions ranging from 35 per cent to 39.4 per cent.

**OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER KASHMIR NOTICE**

Where as an application for transfer of ownership has been received from Govind Kumar Singh S/O Hukuvr Singh R/O Shri Ram Park Village Mangrol (Transferor) of Swift bearing registration No. DL8CAJ- 3476 chasis No: 866595 Engine No: 1567091 Model 2015 in favour of Aqeel Mansoor Bhat S/O Mansoor Hamid Bhat R/O Hamdaniya Colony Bemina (Transferee).


Now, therefore, it is notified for the information of the general, public that representation/ Objection, if any in connection with proposed transfer will be received within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer to the address of undersigned. No, representation/ objection shall be considered unless it is made writing it is made in the aforesaid period.

NOJK-RTOK 878  
Dated: 16/04/2021  
fko

Sd/-  
Regional Transport Office,  
Kashmir

**The Jammu And Kashmir State Board Of School Education, BRANCH OFFICE SOPORE**

The candidates whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost the original marks certificate of 12th under Below mentioned particulars  
Name : Aadil Habib  
Fathers : Habibullah Tanzoo  
Mothers Name : Rafeeqa Begum  
Roll No 3204526  
Session /Year : Bi-annual 2020  
Now the candidate has applied for Duplicate Marks Card. Anybody (if) having any objection may file the some before undersigned with (07) Seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides, the original marks card is teated as cancelled.

  
**Sd/ Assistant Secretary**  
**Branch Office Sopore**

gms

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION (KPDCL) SOPORE**  
Fax No:- 01954-222626 email:- xenstdsopore@gmail.com

**NIT No.-STDS/04 of 2021-22 Dated: 10/04/2021**

**Notice Inviting Tender**

1. **INVITATION:-**  
For and on behalf of the Governor, Jammu and Kashmir State, e-Tenders (In Two Cover System) are hereby invited from registered A or B class Electrical Contractors registered with J&K state Government, Central Public Works Department, Railways and other state or central governments or any other relevant Government agency enlisted with CPWD, MES, Railway, DGBRO of appropriate class, ANNUAL RATE CONTRACT FOR "REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE OF 33/11 KV RECEIVING STATIONS FALLING UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION (District Baramulla and Kupwara) FOR THE YEAR 2021-22 OR TILL NEXT RATE CONTRACT, as per terms, conditions, technical specifications, Drawings and schedules forming part of this tender document.

Intending bidders are requested to submit their offer along with terms, conditions, technical specifications and annexures forming part of this tender document

1. Bidders are advised to study the Bidding Document carefully. Submission of e-Bid against this SBD shall be deemed to have been done after careful study and examination of the procedures, terms and conditions of the Standard Bidding Document with full understanding of its implications.

2. The tender document is available at website <http://ktenders.gov.in>. Interested bidders may view, download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bid online up to the date and time mentioned in the table below:

A	Date & Time of down loading of Standard Bidding Document	12 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 : 04:00 pm
B	Sale of Bid Document (Start)	12 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 : 05:00 pm
C	Sale of Bid Document (End)	30 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 : 04:00 pm.
D	Clarifications start date	12 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 : 11:00 am
E	Clarifications end date	19 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 : 04:00 pm
F	e-Bid submission (start) date & time (Submission of e-tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	19 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 : 04:30 pm
G	e-Bid submission (end) date & time (Submission of e-tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	30 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 : 04:00 pm.
H	Online Bid opening and Technical e-Bid opening date & Time	3 <sup>rd</sup> of May 2021: 02:00 pm
I	Online financial e-Bid opening date & time (Only of the Commercial & technical qualified bidders)	Will be communicated to the Commercial & Technical Qualified Bidders
J	Venue of opening of technical & financial e-Bids	Office of the Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division Sopore
K	Cost of e-Bid document	Rs.1000.00 (Rupees one Thousand only) (Non-refundable).
L	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	Rs 25000.00 (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand only)
M	Estimated amount	Rs. 2000000.00 (Rupees Twenty lacs only)

3. The Successful bidder need to submit the proof/cost of e-Bid document as stated in the above table through Demand Draft (Preferably State Bank of India/ J&K Bank) pledged to Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division Sopore, payable at Sopore. The scanned copy of the Demand Draft must be enclosed along with the e-Bids but the original Demand Draft should reach to the office of Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division Sopore after opening the financial bid.

4. The bidder has to upload the successful completion certificates from last three years duly verified, including this Division if any, by the DDO / Executive agencies along with the details of the works currently under execution. The certificates to the effect that the bidder has completed the work to the satisfaction of the department and is not a defaulter.

5. All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR/FDR/Bank Guarantee only, pledged to the Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division Sopore. No interest would be payable on Earnest Money deposited with the Department.

6. An ink signed and stamped hard copy of the complete SBD document including Technical Specifications, Drawing and Schedules is required to be submitted along with Bid documents to the office of Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division Sopore by Registered post/Courier/By Hand only from the bidder who is declared L1 after opening of financial bids.

7. The date and time of opening of Financial-Bids shall be notified on Web Site <http://ktenders.gov.in>. This is conveyed to the qualified bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The Financial-bids shall be opened accordingly online on the same Web Site at Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division Sopore.

8. The e-Bids will be electronically opened in the presence of bidder's representatives, who choose to attend at the venue, date and time mentioned in the above table or any subsequent day to the convenience of the Tender Opening Committee. An authority letter of bidder's representative will be required to be produced.

9. The Department reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids/ the e-Bid process without assigning any reason thereof. The decision of department will be final and binding.

10. In the event of date specified for e-Bids opening being declared a holiday for department's office then the due date for opening of e-Bids shall be the following working day at the appointed time and place.

11. All the required documents including Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded by the e-Bidder electronically in the PDF format, whereas Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded electronically in the same BOQ sheet provided with the SBD.

12. To participate in e-bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' class III(b) as per Information Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding.

13. An ink signed and stamped hard copy of the complete SBD document including Technical Specifications, Drawing and Schedules is required to be submitted along with Bid documents to the office of Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division Sopore by Registered post/Courier/By Hand only from the bidder who is declared L1 after opening of financial bids.

14. Improvement works in Existing receiving Stations under Capex might be taken up in this e-Nit subjected to condition that rates quoted are within the DPR Rates.

The name of the bidder and NIT No. shall be clearly written on the cover of ink signed copy.

It may be noted that the hard copy shall be an exact replica of the uploaded offer documents. For evaluation purposes the uploaded offer documents will be treated as authentic and final. The hard copy shall be used only for reference purpose. Any documents submitted in hard copy but not uploaded on the website shall be treated as irrelevant.

Executive Engineer  
Sub Transmission Division Sopore (KPDCL)

NO: STDS/TS/ 58-61  
Dated: 10-04-2021

**DIPK-NB-311/21**

**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](mailto:ceojakbopee@gmail.com)

Subject: - Provisional merit list of the candidates who have applied for admission to B.Ed. (Kashmir in IASE) / B.Ed. (Special Education in CRC) Courses Srinagar-2021: objections, thereof.

Reference: i) Notification No. 033-BOPEE of 2021 dated 06-03-2021;  
ii) Notice No.037-BOPEE of 2021 dated 30-03-2021 &  
iii) Notice No.038-BOPEE of 2021 dated 05-04-2021;

**Notification No: 053-BOPEE of 2021 Dated: 15-04-2021**

The Board vide Notification No. 033-BOPEE of 2021 dated 06-03-2021 read with Notice No.037-BOPEE of 2021 dated 30-03-2021 & Notice No. 038-BOPEE of 2021 dated 05-04-2021, invited online applications from the eligible candidates of UT's of J&K/ Ladakh for admission to B.Ed. in Institute of Advance Studies in Education (formally Govt. College of Education) M.A Road, Srinagar & B.Ed. (Special Education) in Composite Regional Centre (CRC) Bemina, Srinagar 2021. Since, the response of candidates for the said course is poor, so the Board has decided to provisionally select the candidates on the basis of merit secured by eligible candidates in the qualifying examination along with their preferences. The provisional merit list in this regard is annexed as Annexure "A" - so this Notification with deficiencies and is available on official website of the Board ([www.jlbopee.gov.in](http://www.jlbopee.gov.in)) only. The candidates, if any, who intent to submit representation/ remove deficiency against his/her position can do so up to 26th April, 2021 (04:00 P.M) failing which no claim whatsoever shall be entertained under any circumstances later on. The interested candidates can deposit their representations at BOPEE Office, Jammu/Srinagar physically within the prescribed date.

**NOTE:**

- The representations / deficient documents, if any, shall not be entertained through e- mail.
- The provisional merit list of the candidates has been prepared on the basis of aggregate marks obtained in the qualifying examination i.e. (10+2+3) pattern. In case of tie between candidates, same has been resolved by taking into account marks obtained by candidates in qualifying examination first, followed by candidate's DOB i.e. candidate older in age is preferred first & further tie is resolved by first alphabet of candidate's name.
- In case no objection(s) are received within the prescribed date and time by the Board, this provisional merit list shall be deemed to be treated as final.
- The candidates who have not submitted their Domicile Certificates as on date are advised to produce the same at the time of admission to the concerned College(s).
- Board has provisionally approved forms of candidates who have uploaded Date of birth other than 10th class examination certificate & PRC as domicile certificate but they have to produce D.O.B. certificate issued by Board & domicile certificate at the time of admission to respective College(s), if selected
- The other terms and conditions as laid-down in the Notifications/Notices on the subject shall remain the same.

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

E & OE  
**DIPK-NB-303/21**

No. BOPEE/Exam-03/2021 Dated: 15-04-2021



## LAWLESSNESS AT KASHMIR LAW COLLEGE

## Ragging Triggers Protest, Property Vandalised

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Students from Kashmir Law College Friday hit streets to protest the alleged ragging of juniors by 3rd-semester students, stating that the latter brought "goons" who vandalized college property and beat students.

Protesting students alleged that erring 3rd-semester students besides harassing their juniors also brought some rented goons who vandalized college furniture, beat students to a pulp, and threatened the staff.

The students including girls assembled at Press Enclave to lodge their protest against the bullying of junior students at Kashmir Law College Nowshera.

The slogan-shouting students carrying pictures of alleged rented goons holding 'knuckle punches in their hands demanded stringent action against erring students, who they allegedly broke all records of 'rowdiness'.

Zakariya Ashraf, an 8th-semester student said some 1st-year law students brought the issue of alleged bullying by 3rd-semester students a few days back which became the cause



of disagreement between the two sides.

He said the 3rd-semester students who were exposed after the recent episode of hooliganism at Kashmir Law College are now trying to put blame on 8th-semester students for the mess.

"Some 1st-semester students came to us and informed us that they are being bullied by their seniors, we assured them that ragging will not be allowed in this college and we took the issue up with erring students, who instead of feeling sorry,

started beating us," Zakariya told reporters.

He also said that the parents of erring students also joined them in beating students while rented goons played their part by vandalizing college property, abusing students and staff and threatening the college head.

He said the entire college administration and other students stand by their side to come to the rescue of some juniors who were being bullied by erring 3rd-semester students.

"Had we done anything wrong, college administration, faculty and students would not have supported us. We want the students who uploaded a fake video on social media to gain public sympathies and those who were hired by them to create ruckus in the college be brought into the book,"

Earlier, a third-semester student of Kashmir Law College in Srinagar Friday claimed that his eardrum suffered injuries after he was ragged by

senior students of the college in the campus.

The third-semester students said the premises turned into a battleground on Thursday between the students of 3rd semester and 8th semester over ragging.

A student of the College said that the situation turned violent after two local outsiders entered the campus and started beating some senior students of the college adding that few of them received injuries during the fight.

Another student said, "The 8th-semester students always beat or thrash junior students and resort to ragging of juniors, claiming that there are seniors in the college."

An official of the College said that the college authorities have issued the showcase notice to three 8th semester students who were allegedly involved in gross misconduct within campus resulting in injuries to three students.

Meanwhile, students of BA LLB 8th semester protested in the press enclave Srinagar and said they are innocent, adding that the allegations leveled at them are baseless. (Agencies)

## 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
- PAMPORE: 01933-294133
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

## HIGHWAY STATUS



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

## This Day in History

- 1895 - Treaty of Shimonoseki is signed ending the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95)
- 1930 - Abkhazian ASSR forms in Georgian SSR
- 1932 - Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia ends slavery
- 1939 - Stalin signs British-France-Russian anti-Nazi pact
- 1941 - World War II: The Kingdom of Yugoslavia surrenders to Germany.
- 1945 - German occupiers flood Wieringermeer, Netherlands
- 1945 - Benito Mussolini flees from Salò to Milan
- 1945 - US troops land in central Mindanao, 1946 - Syria declares independence from French administration
- 1967 - Surveyor 3 launched; soft lands on Moon, April 20.
- 1970 - Apollo 13 limps back safely, Beech-built oxygen tank no help
- 1971 - Egypt, Libya & Syria form federation (FAR)
- 1979 - Four Royal Ulster Constabulary officers are killed by a Provisional Irish Republican Army van bomb in Bessbrook, County Armagh; the bomb is believed to be the largest PIRA bomb used up to that point.
- 1982 - Proclamation of the Constitution Act by Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau
- 1986 - IBM produces 1st megabit-chip
- 1986 - Netherlands & Scilly Islands sign peace treaty (war of 1651)
- 1987 - Julius Erving becomes 3rd NBA player to score 30,000 points
- 1987 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalatinsk USSR
- 1988 - Ethiopian Belayneh Densimo runs world record marathon (2:06:50)
- 1989 - 93rd Boston Marathon: Abebe Mekonen of Ethiopia 1st man in 2:09:06 and Ingrid Kristiansen of Norway 1st woman in 2:24:33
- 1989 - Polish labor union granted legal status
- 1989 - Soviet-US agreement allows Soviets to fight US pros
- 1990 - Gas explosion on passenger train in Kumrahar India, 80 die
- 2001 - A letter between Gale Norton and Jeb Bush is released, stating that the Bush administration has decided to go ahead with plans to auction 6 million acres of potentially oil-and-gas-rich seabed in the Gulf of Mexico
- 2012 - The 8th century St. Cuthbert Gospel, Europe's oldest intact book, is purchased by the British Library for 9 million pounds
- 2013 - 5 people are killed in Wana, Pakistan, by a United States drone attack
- 2013 - North Korea blocks a South Korean supply delegation from the Kaesong joint industrial zone
- 2014 - Abdelaziz Bouteflika wins a fourth term as President of Algeria
- 2015 - James Anderson becomes the highest wicket-taking bowler in England's test cricket history
- 2017 - 1st living giant shipworm at 3 ft found in the Philippines, really a type of clam

HIJRI  
CALENDAR

04

RAMAZAN  
-UL-  
MUBARAK

1442

## PRAYERS

FAJR  
4: 30  
ZUHR  
12: 32  
ASR  
5:11  
MAGRIB  
7:06  
ISHA  
8:32Poultry Dealers Dumping Waste In Open To Be Fined: SMC  
Repeated Offenders' Business Units To Be Sealed

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) on Friday directed the poultry outlets and dealers not to throw the waste in drains and water bodies, saying that those found involved in the act shall be liable to a fine of Rs 10,000/- on every such instance and sealing of business units on continued subsequent offenses.

The corporation in a bid to avoid such happenings has come up with a Poultry Waste Collection Service in Srinagar which according to the officials is available on a monthly chargeable basis.

An order under number SMC/PS/COM/759-767, dated 16-04-2021 in this regard has been issued by the SMC Commissioner Athar Aamir Khan.

"It has been observed that many of the poultry outlets & dealers are throwing their generated poultry waste either in city drains or in water bodies or over the roadsides which is an unlawful activity causing an irreversible damage to the environment and public health and

is in violation to the relevant provisions of Solid Waste Management Rules 2016, and Srinagar Municipal Corporation Solid Waste Management Bylaws 2019, and guidelines put forth by Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, so cannot be allowed to continue," the order reads.

"Through the medium of this notice all such outlet owners/dealers are informed to desist from such unlawful activity immediately, the violators shall be liable to a fine of Rs. 10,000/- on every such instance and sealing of business units on continued subsequent offenses. Chief Sanitation Officer SMC, Zonal Sanitation Officers, Ward Officers and Sanitary Inspectors are directed to ensure no such violation takes place and are hereby authorized for imposition of this fine," the order added.

"Srinagar Municipal Corporation is also offering a Poultry Waste Collection Service in Srinagar which is available on monthly chargeable basis. The outlet owners/dealers can contact the respective Ward Offices for booking of the service," it added--(KNO)

## Fazl-ul-Haq Colony Hazratbal Without Electricity For Last Two Days

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The residents of Fazl-ul-Haq Colony in Batapora area of Central Kashmir's Hazratbal Friday said that their area is without electricity from last two days, causing severe hardships to them during the holy month of Ramadan.

Ishtiyaq Ahmad one of the residents said, "It is extremely unfortunate that at Sehri & Iftar time, we feel extreme hardships due to absence of electricity."

The locals requested the district administration Srinagar for the immediate restoration of electricity during the holy month of Ramadan to prevent further hardships to locals. (CNS)

## Teacher Who Slapped His Student Granted Bail

Auqib Javeed

**SRINAGAR:** A trial court on Friday granted bail to a teacher, who was arrested on Thursday for assaulting a student at a private coaching centre here sparking outrage among the people, including netizens.

The court noted that the plea moved by the accused person appears to be well found and the grounds argued are qualified enough to grant bail in favour of the accused person.

Chief Judicial Magistrate, Srinagar while recording so granted bail to Fayaz Ahmad Wagay, son of Ghulam Mohammad Wagay, resident of Kulgam at present Sheikhpora, Budgam with the direction to furnish surety to the tune of Rs. 30,000.

"The accused person is entitled to bail as the court is bound to guarantee the person

freedom of the accused, but the court has to keep in mind that the accused shall be free in the jurisdiction of the court and will cooperate with the investigating agency as and when required for the investigation," the bail order, a copy of which lies with Kashmir Observer reads.

The bail application was moved by Advocate Fahad, Advocate Aqib and Advocate Muneer.

The court said, "Accused need to be given an opportunity to meet the allegations of the prosecution but that will not be construed that he has every right to temper and hamper the prosecution evidence and act in a way which shall defeat the paramount measures of Criminal Jurisprudence," the order reads.

Before granting the interim bail to the accused, the court asked him to cooperate with the concerned police station

for further investigation and not to leave the jurisdiction of the court without prior permission.

The court also ordered the accused not to temper and hamper the prosecution witness/ evidence available against him. "That he will make himself available before the Investigating Officer as and when directed," the court said. The next date of hearing in the case has been placed on 22 April, 2021.

Earlier a video viral on social media showed a teacher slapping a student many times at a private coaching centre in Srinagar which evoked sharp criticism from netizens.

The student was seen getting slapped repeatedly by his Chemistry teacher at Hope Classes- a private coaching centre in Srinagar. Following the outrage, an FIR (No. 54/2021) was registered against the teacher in Police Station Saddar, Srinagar under section 352 IPC & 75 Juvenile Justice Act.

## Four Non-Local Burglars Arrested In Srinagar Gold Worth Lakhs Recovered

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir police Friday arrested four nonlocal burglars during a Naka established in Jehangir Chowk Srinagar.

The burglars were involved in a number of thefts in the state including a recent theft at Kangan where the burglars looted one gold locket and a ring from a jewelry shop.

Giving details a police officer in Srinagar said that the burglars are all residents of Uttar Pradesh and are professional thieves.

The police officer said that the directions of SSP Srinagar,

Police Station Shaheed Gang Srinagar established a Naka at Jehangir Chowk and intercepted an Alto Vehicle. After checking the police officers on the spot found the four in suspicious conditions and brought them to the police station.

He said that during the course of investigations the four revealed that the four left UP on 12 March and reached Raghunath Bazar in Jammu. In Jammu, they looted a Jewellery shop and then traveled to Udhampur where again they looted a jewelry shop.

The four left Udhampur and reached Srinagar and stayed at Dal Lake.

Later they traveled to Kangan where again they looted a jewelry shop. The four burglars revealed to the police officials that they have looted shops at many places.

The police officer said that they recovered eleven gold rings, three earrings, one broken earring, one locket, and some artificial jewelry from the burglars, besides a cash of Rupees 52000.

Upon further investigation, the police said, it came to fore that the burglars were in Jehangir Chowk to plan and target some jewelers and loot them

The police have registered a case and started further investigations.

## Two Drug Peddlers Arrested In Srinagar

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir Police Friday arrested two drug peddlers in Srinagar and recovered contraband substance from their possession.

A police spokesperson in a statement said that police officers at a checkpoint established at Shalteng in Parimpora signalled three persons to stop for checking. However, one among them fled from the spot while the two persons identified as Firdous Ahmad Sheikh son of Ghulam Nabi Sheikh and Adil Ahmad Bhat son of Bashir Ahmad Bhat, both residents of Shalteng Parimpora were apprehended. "On checking, 250 grams of heroin was recovered from their possession."

On questioning, the statement said, the duo revealed the identification of the third person as their associate Ghulam Nabi Dar son of Habib-ullah Dar, a resident of Parimpora Srinagar. "Efforts are on to nab the accused person."

The spokesperson said that a case has been registered in Police Station Parimpora and investigation initiated.



## HURRAH AUTO GARAGE

**MECHANICAL | DENTING | PAINTING  
SCANNING & SPARE PARTS**

CONTACT NO:- +91-7006962528 | 9797150060 | 8493826346 | 7006327638


MAGAM (OPP. ROYAL MARBLES GULMARG ROAD)

## PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in school records as Zeya Zahoor while my correct name is Zainab Zahoor which needs immediate correction. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Cambridge Foundation School Waripora Magam within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Zainab Zahoor  
D/O Zahoor Ahamd Wani  
R/O Lalpora Kunzer

bmg



## VIGYAN PRASAR

(An autonomous organisation of the Department of Science & Technology)

Vigyan Prasar, an autonomous organisation of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, engaged in developing communication material and strategies for Science and Technology outreach and large scale science popularisation & extension tasks, invites application on prescribed format for the following post:

Name of the Post	No of Post	Pay Level	Category	Mode of Recruitment
Scientist D	01	Pay Level-12 (Rs.78,800- 2,09,200)	OBC	Direct Recruitment/Deputation/Absorption

The last date of receipt of application will be 30 days from the date of publication of advertisement. For further details (In Hindi & English) related to Eligibility Criteria, application format and supporting documents to be submitted, please visit our website <https://vigyanprasar.gov.in>

Registrar  
Vigyan Prasar

DAVP/36103/11/0002/2122

## From KO Archives

## NEXT BUS FROM URI?

Govt says threat less if passengers travel on their own to 'safer' Uri

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR** - The authorities are considering running the second bus to Muzaffarabad from border town of Uri instead of Srinagar in view of security considerations, official sources said here today.

The idea to run the bus from Uri was discussed during a meeting of the concerned authorities as the town is "much safer" being situated in a high-sanitised zone and having virtually zero militant presence, they said.

Passengers will have to reach Uri of their own raising fears about their safety.

Public circles say if the threat perception was the reason behind government's purported rethink then in that case passengers will become more vulnerable to attacks by groups opposed to the service than they were earlier.

Official sources said other major reason for restricting the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad service to Uri - Muzaffarabad is security costs which would come down drastically in the latter case.

Militant groups Al Nasireen, Al Arifeen. Save Kashmir Movement and Farzandan-e-Millat which claimed responsibility for the attack on the tourist reception centre, have reportedly issued a threat to passengers of the second bus loo.

List of passengers swapped

As the authorities mulled running the second, Muzaffarabad-bound bus from Uri instead of Srinagar India and Pakistan today exchanged list of prospective travelers for the bus

Which will roll out on April 21.

"We have handed over the list of 47 passengers from Pakistan-controlled Kashmir who have been given clearance to travel (to Srinagar) on the bus." Regional Passport Officer John S Shilshi said. Shilshi who returned here from Uri after exchanging the list, said the Pakistani side had cleared 32 passengers to travel on the second bus from the Indian side.

A maximum of 30 passengers from each side would board the bus as agreed between Indian and Pakistani authorities, he said.

(Kashmir Observer, 17 April, 2005)



## IFRC: South Asia Fast Becoming New Global Epicentre Of Covid-19



Agencies

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has said a humanitarian calamity is engulfing South Asia as Covid-19 skyrockets across several countries setting new records, with over 200,000 people getting infected everyday.

South Asia is fast becoming the new global epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic, said IFRC on Friday.

This deadlier and more infectious new wave is overwhelming hospitals and social systems, heaping more distress on hundreds of millions of people already experiencing poverty and hardship.

On April 15, India recorded more than 200,700 cases in just one day, more than double the country's previous peak and the highest of any country in the world right now.

Bangladesh is recording almost 50% more deaths a day than its previous peak in June 2020.

Pakistan's daily cases are spiking, with the highest ever Covid-19 daily death rate.

Udaya Regmi, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) head of delegation, South Asia, said the speed with which the virus is spreading in the region is truly frightening.

Over 1.5 million people are sick with Covid-19 in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan combined and that is 50 times how many were

sick one month ago, said Regmi.

"Thousands of lives are being lost, this is a tragic warning to all countries, that every effort must be maintained and we cannot afford to relax in containing this deadly coronavirus," said IFRC South Asia head.

"The impact on frontline workers is catastrophic. Thousands of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers have stepped up efforts to help the elderly and those most at risk with access to lifesaving medical care, testing and vaccinations. Millions already face extreme poverty and we're helping with food, water and other relief."

There is growing evidence from health authorities that more virulent Covid-19 variants are fuelling this current surge in South Asia, said the IFRC.

Dr Abhishek Rimal, IFRC's Asia Pacific coordinator for Emergency Health, said several countries in South Asia have already reported the B.1.1.7 and B.1.351 variants of concern from the UK and South Africa, which are more infectious and are increasing hospitalization, putting a massive burden on the health system.

"As we enter the second year dealing with the pandemic, it's understandable that many people are sick of the restrictions and want to resume normal life. We must redouble our efforts to contain this disease as too many lives are at stake."

## Two Covid-19 Vaccine Doses Mandatory For Pilgrims Going On Hajj

Agencies

The Hajj Committee of India has informed that all Muslims intending to go on Hajj this year have to get both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine before leaving for Saudi Arabia.

Last year, Saudi Arabia had cancelled entry for outsiders to perform Hajj, instead allowing Muslims living in the kingdom to perform the pilgrimage.

The Times of India on Friday quoted Hajj Committee CEO Maqsood Ahmed Khan as saying, "It is informed that as per health minister of Saudi Arabia and an email from consulate-general of India, Jeddah, pilgrims visiting the kingdom need to get two doses of the vaccine before departure for Saudi Arabia."

"In case Indian pilgrims perform Hajj 2021, outgoing flights will start from mid-June. Those who have applied for Hajj 2021 are advised to take the first dose of the vaccine now on their own, so that at the time of departure, the second dose is also given to them," The Times of India reported.



The Hajj this year is supposed to be held from July 17.

Khan noted that the Saudi government had not provided any communication on the Hajj pilgrimage yet. He added that those pilgrims travelling for Umrah would have to be vaccinated.

Earlier this month, the Saudi ministry of Hajj and Umrah had issued a statement giving guidelines for who could perform Umrah. Al Jazeera reported "These [pilgrims permitted to perform Umrah] include individuals who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, those having received one dose of the vaccine at least 14 days before performing the pilgrimage, or a person who has recovered from the virus."

## As Nuclear Deal Talks Go On, Iran Enriches Uranium To 60%, Its Highest Level Ever

Agencies

TEHRAN, IRAN (AP) - Iran began enriching uranium Friday to its highest level ever, edging closer to weapons-grade levels to pressure talks in Vienna aimed at restoring its nuclear deal with world powers after an attack on its main atomic site.

A top official said only a few grams an hour of uranium gas would be enriched up to 60% purity — triple the level it once did but at a rate far slower than what Tehran could produce. International inspectors already said Iran planned to do so above-ground at its Natanz nuclear site, not deep within its underground halls hardened to withstand airstrikes.

The move is likely to raise tensions even as Iran negotiates in Vienna over a way to allow the U.S. back into the agreement and lift the crushing economic sanctions it faces. However, its scope also provides Iran with a way to quickly de-escalate if it chose.

The announcement also marks a significant escalation after the attack that damaged centrifuges at Natanz, an attack this past weekend suspected of having been carried out by Israel. While Israel has yet to claim it, it comes amid a long-running shadow war between the two Mideast rivals.

Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Iran's parliament speaker, announced the move in a Twitter post later acknowledged by Iranian state television.

"The young and God-believing Iranian scientists managed to achieve a 60% enriched uranium product," Qalibaf said. "I congratulate the brave nation of Islamic Iran on this success. The Iranian nation's willpower is miraculous and can defuse any conspiracy."

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, the country's civilian nuclear arm, later acknowledged the move to 60%, according to state TV. Ali Akbar Salehi said the centrifuges now produce 9 grams an hour, but that would drop to 5 grams an hour in the coming days.



"Now, any enrichment (level) is possible if we decide it," Salehi said.

It wasn't clear why the first announcement came from Qalibaf, a hard-line former leader in the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard already named as a potential presidential candidate in Iran's upcoming June election.

While 60% is higher than any level Iran previously enriched uranium, it is still lower than weapons-grade levels of 90%.

Iran had been enriching up to 20% — even that was a short technical step to weapons grade. The deal limited Iran's enrichment to 3.67%.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which monitors Iran's nuclear program, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Earlier this week, it sent its inspectors to Natanz and confirmed Iran was preparing to begin 60% enrichment at an above-ground facility at the site.

The heightened enrichment could inspire a further response from Israel amid a long-running shadow war between the nations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed never to allow Tehran to obtain a nuclear weapon and his country has twice preemptively bombed Mideast nations to stop their atomic programs.

Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful, though the West and the IAEA say Tehran had an organized military nuclear program up until the end of 2003. An annual U.S. intelligence report released Tuesday maintained the American

assessment that "Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities that we judge would be necessary to produce a nuclear device."

Iran previously had said it could use uranium enriched up to 60% for nuclear-powered ships. However, the Islamic Republic currently has no such ships in its navy.

The threat of higher enrichment by Iran already had drawn criticism from the U.S. and three European nations in the deal — France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The 2015 nuclear deal, which former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from in 2018, prevented Iran from stockpiling enough high-enriched uranium to be able to pursue a nuclear weapon if it chose in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

The weekend attack at Natanz was initially described only as a blackout in the electrical grid feeding both its above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls — but later Iranian officials began calling it an attack.

Alireza Zakani, the hard-line head of the Iranian parliament's research center, referred to "several thousand centrifuges damaged and destroyed" in a state TV interview. However, no other official has offered that figure and no images of the aftermath have been released.

Satellite images from Planet Labs Inc. obtained by The Associated Press show no apparent above-ground damage at the facility.

## Pak Orders "Complete Blocking" Of Social Media Temporarily After Protests

Agencies

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government on Friday ordered an hours-long shut down of social media and instant messaging platforms, after days of violent anti-France protests.

In a notice to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, the Interior Ministry requested a "complete blocking" of Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and Telegram until 3pm (1100 GMT).

It gave no reason for the ban, but it comes a day after French nationals and companies in Pakistan were advised by their embassy to temporarily leave in the wake of the rallies led by an extremist party that paralysed large parts of the country and left two police officers dead.

baik Pakistan supporters spilled onto the streets after their leader was detained Tuesday following his calls for the expulsion of the French ambassador.

Anti-French sentiment has been festering for months in Pakistan since President Emmanuel Macron threw his support behind a satirical magazine's right to republish cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed — deemed blasphemous by many Muslims.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's government has struggled to bring Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan to heel over the years, but this week announced an outright ban against the group, effectively labelling it a terrorist outfit.

Extra security personnel have been deployed to the French embassy — inside a guarded



Political parties frequently use social media platforms to rally supporters.

Thousands of Tehreek-e-Lab-

diplomatic enclave closed to the public — and additional ship- ping containers placed as fortifications around its outer wall.

## Pakistan Cabinet Reshuffle: Shaukat Tarin Fourth Finance Minister In Two Years



Agencies

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday appointed a new finance minister, its fourth in two years, in a shake-up of the government's economic team, the prime minister's office said, as the government enters a key period of budget-making and implementation of IMF reforms.

Shaukat Tarin, a former banker, was named as the new finance minister. He had held the finance minister portfolio in a previous government. His predecessor, Hammad Azhar, held the portfolio for less than three weeks.

Shibli Faraz who interchanged his portfolio with Fawad as science and technology minister, according to PM Office.

Hammad Azhar, previously the industries and productions minister, will now be holding the position of Minister for Energy. He has replaced Omar Ayub Khan who has now been appointed as economic affairs minister. In place of Hammad Azhar, the prime minister appointed Chaudhry Fawad Hussain as Minister for Information and Broadcasting, replacing Senator

**SHAUKAT TARIN,** a former banker, was named as the new finance minister. He had held the finance minister portfolio in a previous government. His predecessor, Hammad Azhar, held the portfolio for less than three weeks.

Shibli Faraz who interchanged his portfolio with Fawad as science and technology minister, according to PM Office.

Hammad Azhar, previously the industries and productions minister, will now be holding the position of Minister for Energy. He has replaced Omar Ayub Khan who has now been appointed as economic affairs minister. In place of Hammad Azhar, the prime minister appointed Chaudhry Fawad Hussain as Minister for Information and Broadcasting, replacing Senator

## "China Poses Biggest Geopolitical Test For US In 21st Century": CIA Chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON: China poses the single biggest geopolitical test for the US in the 21st century, CIA Director William Burns said, stressing that this threat is more serious than those from Russia during the Cold War.

Burns made the remarks to members of the House Select Committee on Intelligence during a Congressional hearing on worldwide threats on Thursday.

"I think China poses the single biggest geopolitical test for the United States as far out into the 21st century as I can see," Burns said.

"What distinguishes that challenge from an increasingly adversarial Chinese Communist Party from, for example, the challenge we faced with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, is that this challenge



unfolds across a whole range of areas from military to ideological in terms of our values, economic and especially at its core competition and technology as well," Burns said.

The US and China are at odds over a range of issues from trade to human rights in Tibet, Hong Kong and China's western Xinjiang region, as well as over Taiwan, Beijing's assertiveness in the South China Sea

and the coronavirus pandemic.

Responding to a question from Senator Peter Welch, Burns said that certainly, there are going to be some areas where it's in their mutual self-interest to work together. Climate change and nuclear nonproliferation are a few of those areas.

But there are an increasing and growing number of areas in which China poses a real challenge, he said.

During the hearing Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, the only Indian-American in the House Intelligence Committee, said China possesses substantial cyber-attack capabilities that have been identified with localised infrastructure disruptions in different countries, for instance, following the clashes between China and India on the Line of Actual Control.

### NEWS MAKERS

## Russian Jet Fighter Intercepts Another US Spy Plane Over Pacific Ocean

Agencies

Russia says a MiG-31 jet fighter has intercepted a US RC-135 strategic reconnaissance plane over the Pacific Ocean while approaching Russia's territorial waters, forcing the spy aircraft to veer off course.

Russian radars detected an air target approaching the state border over the Pacific Ocean along the coast of Kamchatka, said the defense ministry on Friday, adding the US spy plane had not violated Russia's border.

"A MiG-31 fighter took off from an airfield in the Kamchatka Region to identify and escort it," said a defense ministry official.

"The fighter crew identified the air target as an RC-135 strategic reconnaissance aircraft of the US air force. After the foreign military aircraft turned



away from the Russian Federation's state border, the Russian fighter returned safely to its home airfield."

The latest aerial confrontation between the two rival powers came just days after another Russian jet fighter intercepted a US spy plane that had violated the country's airspace.

The Russian National Defense Control Center announced in a

Saturday statement that it had dispatched a MiG-31 fighter jet the Black Sea to "identify the air target and prevent violation of the Russian state border."

The US spy plane involved in the incident was also identified as a RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft that was also flying off the Far East coast of the Kamchatka peninsula.

Despite Russia's repeated warnings against the violation

of its airspace, the US and the Europeans have escalated their activities near Russian borders since the end of last year.

The latest intrusion of the Russia airspace also came amid growing media reports about US contemplation of deploying warships to the Black Sea in the coming weeks.

Citing anonymous Pentagon officials, CNN reported last Friday that Washington was seeking to send an explicit message to Moscow through the military buildup that US is closely monitoring its activities.

The latest aerial encounter came two days after Moscow accused the US and other NATO countries of deliberately turning Ukraine into a "powder keg" by increasing arms supplies to Kiev and inflaming tensions in the country's volatile eastern region.

## Egyptian Architects Win Mosul Mosque Competition

Agencies

Eight Egyptian architects have won an international competition for the reconstruction of the historic al-Nouri Mosque complex in Mosul, Iraq, selection organiser UNESCO said Thursday.

The complex was severely damaged by conflict in 2017, and the rebuilding of the mosque is part of the organisation's project for the rehabilitation of the ancient city.

The mosque, built in the 12th century and famous for its leaning minaret, suffered badly in fighting between the ISIL (ISIS) group and US and Iraqi forces, known as the Battle for Mosul.

ISIL has been accused of blowing up the site before it was



captured by government forces.

Selected from among 123 entries, the winning design is called, "Courtyards Dialogue".

The reconstruction "will be a landmark in the process of advancing the war-torn city's reconciliation and social cohesion", said UNESCO Direc-

tor-General Audrey Azoulay.

"Heritage sites and historical monuments are powerful catalysts for people's sense of belonging, of community, and identity," she added.

"They are key to reviving the spirit of Mosul and of Iraq as a whole."



## PSAJK Appeals Parents To Pay Fee ‘Can’t Expect Unpaid Teachers To Conduct Online Classes’

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Private Schools Association of Jammu and Kashmir (PSAJK) Friday appealed the parents whose wards are studying in various private educational institutes to pay the school fee as most of the schools are on the verge of closure due to the financial crunch.

The Association said that the fee paid by a student is the only source of income for a school and if that income won't come on time then it creates a survival issue for the educational institute itself. "As of now the physical classes in the schools are closed but every school is trying its best to compensate the loss by way of conducting online classes. Teachers have to do twice as much work to conduct these online classes," said GN Var, president PSAJK. "When the same teacher can't be paid on-time how can we expect him or her to teach the students. We know that online classes are no match to physical classes but still it provides something to rely on."

The Association said that there are recurrent costs for school but the income is either stagnant or has drastically gone down. "Number of our schools are on the verge of closure. If the schools get closed in the absence of collection of fee, it will destabilise entire education sector. All our progress achieved during the last three decades will be lost,"

said Var. "The future of lakhs of students will be in jeopardy and livelihood of more than 60,000 persons will be lost."

The Association said that it is a social issue and the society needs to come forward at this juncture. Lamenting the role of government in saving the educations sector, the Association said that there seems to be no roadmap with the government. "All packages, policies, guidelines etc seem to be on paper only. We are yet to see government work on ground for saving the education sector especially securing the future of students and livelihood of more than 60000 teachers and other staffers," said Var. "It seems education is of their least priority for the current officials at helm."

The Association said that despite promises there has been no relaxation for schools with regards to official paperwork. "There was promise of grant of extension of registration and other NOCs but in reality every-day schools are being forced to get the certificates regarding affiliation, registration etc. Penalties are being levied on us. There is no relaxation in taxation too. In short there is no relaxation given to schools and in return every school is being forced to teach students free," said Var. The Association demanded that current registrations should be extended to 2022 due to the extraordinary situations we are facing.

## IUST Hosts Training Programme On One District One Product



Observer News Service

**AWANTIPORA:** Ten days training program on One District One Product (ODOP) for Fruit and Vegetables organised by the Department of Food Technology, Islamic University of Science and Technology concluded on Thursday. The programme was organised for Horticulture Development Officers from Department of Horticulture, Planning & Marketing J & K during which Six officers from Jammu division and twelve from Kashmir division were trained for the implementation of ODOP Scheme.

During the training the trainees were exposed to food processing machinery and their functioning, product development, DPR formulation and Food Safety and Quality Control by the resource persons from Food Industry, IUST and SKUAST-K. During the training, the trainees were facilitated with Industrial Visit to Iassipora, Anantnag and SKUAST-K, where-in they interacted with food processing industry, CA Stores and Walnut Processing experts. The

trainees interacted for different requirements of training to implement the scheme properly. Various issues were raised by the officer's trainees during interactions which were deliberated upon to take them to the logical conclusion.

The program was inaugurated on April 5, with welcome note by Er. Tariq Ahmad Ganai. While addressing the participants Dean Academic Affairs, Prof AM Shah highlighted the importance of industry viz-a-viz branding. Dean Research IUST, Prof H R Naik emphasised on continuous follow up of new industrial units to be established under ODOP scheme. Director Agriculture Kashmir, Iqbal Chaudhary, who was the chief guest highlighted the availability of raw material for food industry and prevention of post-harvest losses. State Nodal Officer, PMFME, J&K briefed about the PMFME scheme, its implementation and role of partner Institutes. Master Trainer, Dr Darakshan Majid, Master trainer for PMFME scheme presented Vote of Thanks.

## Mainstream Leaders Demand Release Of Mirwaiz Umar

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Senior National Conference leader and Member Parliament Justice Hasnain Masoodi Friday said that stopping Mirwaiz from offering prayers reflects the situation is not normal in Kashmir.

Speaking to KNS, NC leader said, "By not allowing religious leader like Mirwaiz to move out to perform his religious duties openly indicates that the tall claims made by the central and local government are falling flat," he said.

He urged the government to set Mirwaiz free so that he can perform his religious obligations.

CPIM leader, Mohammad Yousuf Taragami said, "On one side Government is saying that no one is under detention now in Kashmir, even the claim was made from the floor of the parliament but on the other hand the influential religious leader like Mirwaiz is not allowed to lead the prayers at historical Jamia Masjid even in the Holy month of Ramadan."

He added: "The government is contesting its own claims that no one is under detention here now. Everything is normal, but the same government is not allowing Mirwaiz to move out."

He asked for the restoration of democratic rights in Jammu and Kashmir without any excuse.

The treatment of the administration towards the Mirwaiz is unacceptable, unjustified, he added. Reacting to the continued detention of Mirwaiz, PDF chairman Hakeem Yaseen said, "Our constitution has given us right to express and operate peacefully. The administration should allow Mirwaiz to lead the prayers at Jamia Masjid in this holy month."

Jammu and Kashmir Civil Society Forum (JKCSF) chair-



### Unfortunate That Pulpit Of Jamia Masjid Forcibly Kept Silent: APHC

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** All Parties Hurriyat Conference Friday said that it is extremely unfortunate that even on the first Friday of the blessed month of Ramadan, the pulpit of Jamia Masjid in Srinagar continues to remain silent, as Kashmir's chief cleric and chairman of Hurriyat Mirwaiz Umar Farooq continues to be kept under "arbitrary house detention".

In a statement, APHC said that the Pulpit of Jamia Masjid in the holy month of Ramadan reverberates with spiritually, uplifting waz-o-tableeg, supplications and fervent prayers to almighty Allah, providing solace and nourishment to the souls of those participating in it.

APHC asked that if the

basic human right to seek spiritual solace in prayers and supplications is a threat to the "peace" in the valley?

"At a time of this deadly pandemic when the need to seek refuge from it by praying to the almighty is all the more urgent, the pulpit of Jamia Masjid is forcibly kept silent."

The statement said that it has been more than twenty months now that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is "arbitrarily and forcibly" detained at his home and not allowed to fulfil his responsibilities even as the Mirwaiz.

APHC said that this "high-handedness" of the authorities is regrettable and condemnable. "Such tactics only further alienation, while strengthening our belief in steadfastness and patience."

man Qayoom Wani said "Since the beginning, I am saying that Mirwaiz is a religious scholar. In this auspicious month of Ramadan, the detention of

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is very unfortunate. The government

should set free the Mirwaiz at the earliest. The government should not interfere in religious obligations", he said.

The government should release all political prisoners in view of Ramadan, he added.

## ‘Surge In Admissions Of Critically Ill Covid Patients In Kashmir Hospitals’ Need More ICU Beds To Save Critically Ill Patients: DAK



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) Friday said more intensive care unit (ICU) beds are needed to save severely ill Covid-19 patients.

"We need to increase the number of ICU beds in hospitals to prevent corona deaths," said DAK President Dr. Nisar ul Hassan in a statement.

He said hospitals in Kashmir

are witnessing an increase in admissions of severe and critically ill Covid-19 patients over

the past two weeks. And many of them need intensive care ventilator support, he said.

"At SMHS hospital, we receive 20-30 severe cases every day, and many of them are critical. They come in with ravaged lungs and oxygen levels as low as 50-60. They need ICU beds."

He said the patients don't get ICU beds because all ICU beds are occupied. "The situation is same in other hospitals where patients are struggling to get ICU beds."

With the resurgence of Covid-19, hospitals across Kashmir have run out of ICU beds. "Lack of ICU beds is turning into a nightmare, with critically ill patients kept in general wards on regular beds."

"The next few weeks could be challenging as cases are expected to rise further because enough people are still susceptible to the virus," he said.

"The situation can be kept under control if vaccine is opened up for more people and Covid-19 protocols are strictly adhered to," he said.

**AT SMHS HOSPITAL, WE RECEIVE 20-30 SEVERE CASES every day, and many of them are critical. They come in with ravaged lungs and oxygen levels as low as 50-60. They need ICU beds."**

## Repeated Power Cuts During Ramadan Irk Khrew Residents

Observer News Service

**PULWAMA:** Even though the spring season has already started across the Kashmir, people in Khrew belt of Pampore of Southern district of Pulwama Friday expressed their resentment against the PDD's decision of supplying electricity as per old schedule and that too with frequent cuts in the holy month of Ramadan.

Locals from area said, that their area isn't even getting power supply as per the winter schedule which was announced and implemented in 1st week of November last year.

"Winter is over but our power woes continue. We are still getting the power supply worse than the winter schedule, said Aadil Ahmad a resident of Khrew.

He said that unscheduled and frequent power cuts still persist in the entire region despite the arrival of spring season.

"Since November snowfall, the power development department has failed to ensure proper power

supply as per their curtailment schedule which affects the residents quite badly," said Shoaib Ahmad, a resident of Shaar Shali are of Khrew, Pampore. "Our area reels under darkness in the evening. Despite arrival of spring season and considerable improvement in weather, the power supply is snapped as per winter schedule and pesky power cuts are still prevalent."

Since January, the power development department had failed to ensure proper power supply as per their curtailment schedule which affects residents as well businessmen and industrialists, said another resident. Locals said that PDD has failed to provide power supply in the area at Ifitari and Sehri time as well due to which locals are suffering.

"We took up the issue with authorities who are assuring us of improvement in the power schedule, but on ground nothing happens," they said

They requested concerned higher ups to look into the matter at an earliest so that locals can heave a sigh of relief—(KNO)

## Keeping Darbar At Jammu Unwise Decision: RTI Movement ‘It Has Nothing To Do With Spread Of Covid-19’

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement Friday urged Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to rethink on not undertaking bi-annual Durbar Move.

In a statement Chairman RTI Movement Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat said that it was an unwise decision which should be revisited as durbar move has no relation with spread of COVID 19.

"The UT administration has claimed that due to sudden upsurge in the COVID-19 the bi-annual durbar move has been stalled. The offices won't be shifted from Jammu to Srinagar for summer session until further notice. If this was the case why was the durbar move undertaken last year in October when the move offices particu-

larly civil secretariat was closed in Srinagar and opened in Jammu in November 1st week. During that time also COVID 19 was at peak. This is unacceptable to people of Kashmir which goes against the traditions and culture of J&K" said Dr Raja Muzaffar.

"The officials will be travelling in their private cars or hired vehicles. They won't be coming to Srinagar in a procession or a jam packed train or trucks. How can COVID 19 spread by allowing offices to shift from Jammu to Srinagar. Not asking all the offices to move to Srinagar will also have an impact on the economy of hoteliers and guest house owners where the employees are kept for 6 months by the J & K Estates Department " the statement adds.

## Frequent Traffic Jams Irk Commuters In Bandipora

Observer News Service

**BANDIPORA:** Daily commuters, particularly employees and businessman, in North Kashmir's Bandipora district, are facing a tough time due to frequent traffic jams at peak hours.

A group of commuters said, that authorities have failed to regulate traffic in the main town Bandipora particularly from Kuloosa to Gulshan chowk.

They also allege that traffic jams go from bad to worse each day while the administration is still operating in the same way as it did a decade ago.

Locals said in the absence of proper traffic regulation, vehicular movement frequently comes to standstill at the vital intersection on the Kuloosa-Nowpora road.

Locals also complained that the lack of parking lots in the market increases their problems.

The commuters said that residents mostly keep the vehicles parked on the roads, leading to chaos and frequent traffic jams while the authorities are watch-

ing as mute spectators.

"Encroachers have randomly occupied footpaths leaving no space for the movement of pedestrians and the moving vehicles even on the main streets of the town thereby also result in a massive traffic jam," they said.

Junaid Ahmad said that he had a medical emergency but was stuck in a traffic jam at the main market for around 20-25 minutes.

"The distance could be easily covered in 5 minutes. Unfortunately, no traffic official was present there," he said.

Saleem another local said that the failure of the authorities to ensure smooth flow of traffic has evoked strong resentment from the commuters.

"Frequent unending traffic jams have drastically affected our lives and business," he said.

The worst affected are the government employees and businessman who reach late to the offices and other sectors," he said. Meanwhile, the locals have appealed to the district administration to resolve the issue as soon as possible—(KNO)

### NEWS MAKERS

#### Kupwara Woman Gives Birth To Triplet

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** A woman from North Kashmir's Kupwara district delivered a triplet, all girls on Friday.

The 29-year-old woman, wife of Nisar Ahmed, a resident of Lolab Kupwara gave birth to triplets at a private nursing home here in Srinagar. The mother had normal delivery, Dr Asmat Suhail Khanday, the attending doctor said. All babies and their mother are doing fine, she said. She said it was the second delivery of the woman. Earlier, she had given birth to a baby boy. (KNT)

#### Three Commercial Establishments Sealed In Jammu

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Jammu Municipal Corporation Friday sealed three municipal commercial establishments for non-payment of rent.

On the instructions of Commissioner, JMC, Avny Lavasa and under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner (R), JMC, Sudhir Bali, the commercial establishments at Gumat Steps, Jammu were sealed as the allotted did not pay the rent dues. The allottees were served several notices to deposit the rent arrears accumulated against them but despite lapse of stipulated time period they have failed to deposit the same.

Further, Jammu Municipal Corporation has appealed to all municipal allottees Commercial/Residential to deposit rent dues along with GST up to 31st March 2021 to avoid legal action i.e. sealing of their premises and cancellation of allotment order.

## LG Calls For Synergy Between Agencies For Making J&K Power Surplus

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Friday took a comprehensive review of the status of various projects of Chenab Valley Power Projects Pvt Ltd. (CVPPPL) in Jammu and Kashmir in a meeting at the Raj Bhavan.

Managing Director, CVPPPL, A.K Choudhary briefed the Lt Governor regarding the present status of the power projects in the UT viz:- Pakal Dul HE Project (1000 MW), Kiru HE Project (624 MW), Kwar HE Project (540 MW), Kirthai-II HE Project (930 MW).

Cumulatively, the upcoming power projects will generate 3094 MW at the cost of an estimated Rs 23000 crores, substantially enhancing the generation capacity in the region.

The chair was briefed about the status of ongoing works, besides the to-date position of requisite approvals at various levels. Various other important issues to facilitate the smooth and timely implementation of projects were also

discussed during the review meeting.

Taking stock of the local employment being generated in these power projects, the Lt Governor asked the project executing agencies to ensure maximum local employment while implementing the projects and undertaking short-term skill enhancement initiatives for the local youth.

The Lt Governor issued on-spot directions to concerned officers for removing any bottlenecks hampering the completion of ongoing projects and called for better synergy between agencies for making J&K a power surplus region in the country.

Stressing on speedy completion of the projects, the Lt Governor directed the concerned officers for completion of all projects within the set timelines. He also asked the CVPPPL functionaries and the officials of the executive agencies to ensure employment of locals in the projects.

The Lt Governor enquired about

the CSR works being carried out by the executing agencies in the field of Healthcare, Education, Swachh Bharat, and Vocational Training and called for amplifying such socio-economic initiatives under CSR to benefit the people of the region and making positive changes in their lives.

BVR Subrahmanyam, Chief Secretary; Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Lt Governor; A.K Choudhary, Managing Director, Chenab Valley Power Projects (CVPPPL); Rajan Kumar, CGM, NHPC Regional Office, Jammu, and Nirmal Singh, GM, Dulhasti Power Station were present.

Senior functionaries of the various executing agencies including Rajendra Chopde, Zonal Head M/s Patel Engineering Ltd; Sh. Rajendra Kumar, Project Controller AFCONS; Sunil Sharma, Executive Vice Chairman, Jaiprakash Associates Ltd; T. Krishna Vice President & Head, Hydrel & Tunnels Business Unit L&T also attended the meeting.

#### Five Draft Mining Plans Approved In Anantnag

Observer News Service

**ANANTNAG:** The District Level Mining Plan Approval Committee (DLMPAC) under the chairmanship of District Development Commissioner (DDC) Anantnag, Dr. Piyush Singla Friday granted approval to 5 Draft Mining Plans for Minor Mineral Blocks at DC office here.

Pertinently, the auctioning of 20 identified minor mineral blocks was done through online mode and the committee had approved draft plans for 13 minor mineral blocks earlier.

Stressing on smooth execution of the leases, the DDC directed the concerned officers to take steps for facilitating the leases besides ensuring strict monitoring by district level task forces.

He also called for adherence to all project guidelines besides environment protection steps like plantations, safeguarding embankments etc by the executioners as given under the plan.

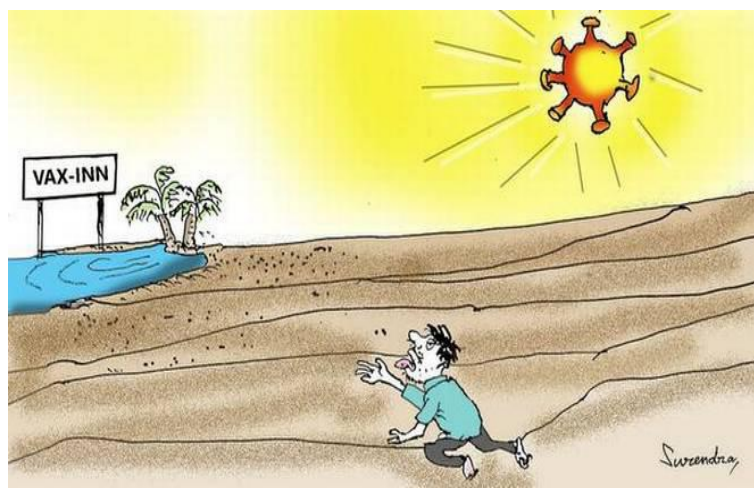
Emphasising on protection of local interests, Dr. Singla enjoined upon the officers of Geology and Mining to ensure the project proponents utilise their CSR component for this purpose.



KASHMIR  
OBSERVER

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of the Kashmir Observer LLP  
Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001  
Printed at: KT Press Pvt. Ltd, Rangreth Ind Area, Srinagar.  
RNI Registration No: 69503/98  
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16  
Editor-in-Chief : Sajjad Haider  
Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja  
Switchboard: (0194) 2106304  
Editorial: (0194) 2502327  
Email editorial: editor@kashmirobserver.net

## NO HOLDS BARRED



Despite failing to catch up with the all India growth story post 1991 liberalization and lagging in almost all macro-economic variables, the paradoxical performance of socio-economic variables in J&K is a riddle worth studying. Barring employment, J&K's performance in HDI, poverty, literacy, life expectancy and infant mortality rate shows a healthy pattern

## ECONOMY CENTRAL

## J&amp;K's Socio-Economic Irony

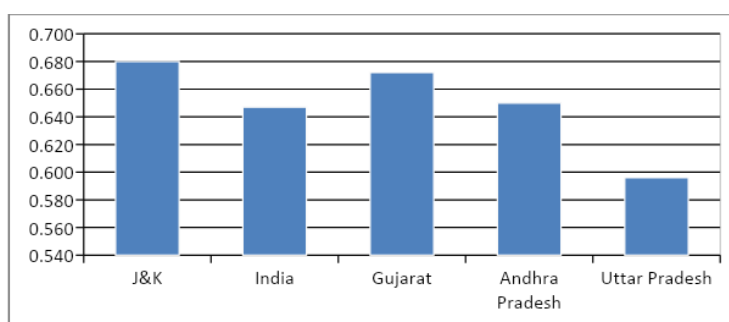
## J&amp;K Economy from the rear view-Part IV

EJAZ AYOUB

This is the fourth piece in a Four-part series that outlines the processes of change in J&K Economy since 1996-97

The mainstream debate on economic development is often confined to quantitative aspects depicted by hard numbers like Gross Domestic Product, per capita incomes, tax growth, investment rate, credit expansion, exchange rates and inflation. The obsession with these numbers often overshadows the essential and importantly more meaningful dimensions of human progress. The problem with selective statistical methods like averages is that it blurs out some essential insights. Take for example the growth in per capita income. By averaging out the wide range incomes with population size, it totally conceals the dangerous rise of wealth inequality. It was in this backdrop that the United Nations introduced the Human Development Index (HDI) as a more relevant measure of effectiveness of economic policies.

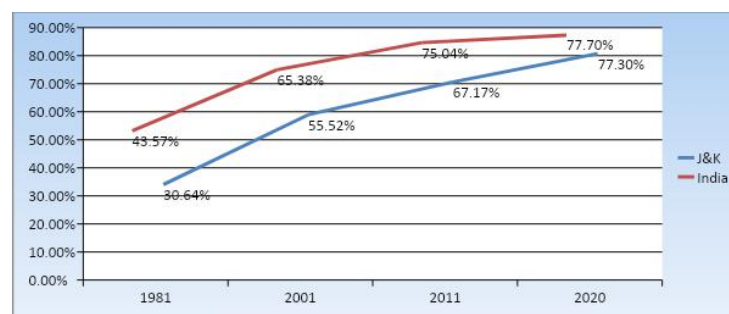
As per United Nations Development Programme (UNDP's) official website, the HDI has been created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. The HDI, as per UNDP, can also be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of per capita income can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts, as per UNDP, can stimulate debate about government policy priorities. The HDI captures achievement in key dimensions of human development i.e. a long and healthy life, education levels and standard of living by factoring incomes levels. The last data available for HDI is that of 2018. J&K's HDI in that year stood at 0.68 bettering all India average of 0.647. Pertinently, industrially developed states like Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, with huge economic output and substantially higher per capita incomes than J&K, rank much lower with an HDI of 0.672 and 0.65 respectively.



So far this four part series on the last three decades of J&K's economy has been focusing on the hard data points of macro economy including economic output in terms of GDP, per capita incomes, tax & debt trajectories, movement in savings, credit expansion and loan defaults. This fourth and final piece of the series shall outline the changes in J&K's socio-economic indicators like literacy, life expectancy, infant mortality rate, poverty, and employment. These qualitative indicators can provide key insights about the progressive changes in the crucial variables which actually determine the well-being of the people.

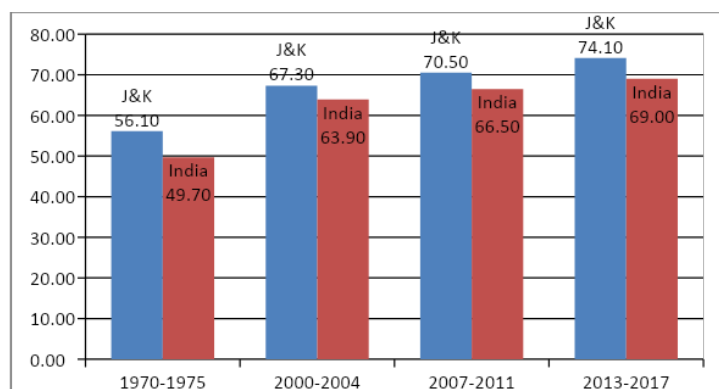
## Literacy:

It's an established fact that if there is anything that can unleash the potential of a community and amplify its ability to create value in the most efficient ways, it's the investment on providing quality education to its people. Although "literacy" is a very basic measure of a much wider term "education", however, its performance does provide an insight about the progress or lack of it in this essential segment. Data available from the 1981 census shows that J&K's literacy percentage at that point in time was around 30.64% much behind the all India average level of 43.57%. With growing public consciousness towards education as a means for securing stable Govt. jobs in the region, there has been a gradual improvement in this very essential socio-economic parameter. After two decades, the 2001 census data recorded J&K's literacy levels jumping to 55.52%. All India percentage for the same period was still ahead at 65.38%. As per 2011 census, J&K's literacy levels crossed 67% for the first time compared to all India level of 74.04%. The latest data for 2020 shows J&K's literacy rates reaching an impressive 77.30%, almost touching the national figure of 77.70%.



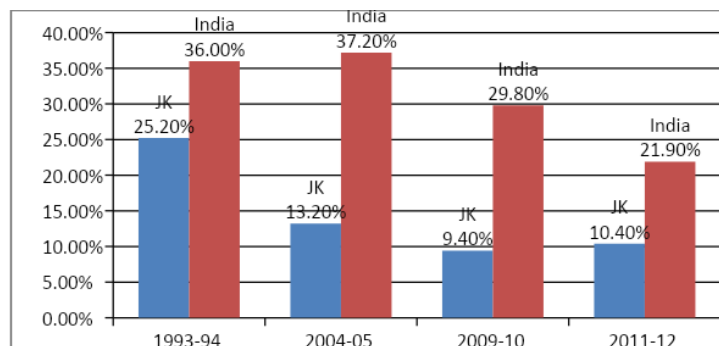
## Life Expectancy:

Life expectancy as a socio economic indicator reflects, among other things, improvements in nutrition, health and, above all, a decrease in mortality. It also allows us to extrapolate at a glance the living conditions of populations in general. J&K's average life expectancy has always remained higher than the national average. Compared to a national average of only 49.70 years, J&K's life expectancy was way ahead at 56.1 years during the 1970-75 period. In sync with the global improvements in healthcare, nutrition and other ease of living parameters, this indicator has shown a remarkable growth in J&K as well. 2013-17 data shows J&K's average life expectancy at birth crossing 74 years. The national average has also improved to 69 years, but continues to lag behind J&K by almost a constant margin.



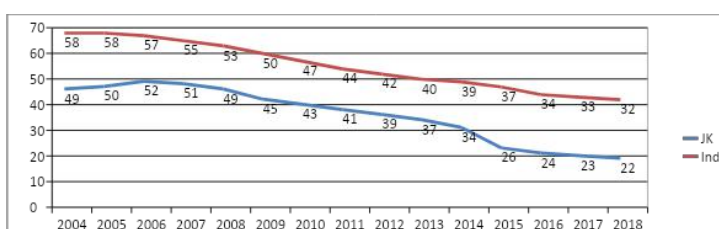
## Poverty

Besides other things, one of the major yardsticks of a region's economic performance is the percentage of people that have been alleviated from the trap of abject poverty. Although the percentage of people living below poverty line in J&K is far less compared to all India levels, however, contrary to the continuously improving national ratio, J&K's graph has started showing signs of worry. Post 2009-10, the poverty levels have again started rising in J&K. While J&K had shown remarkable progress in reduction of poverty from the early 90's to 2010's, however, there has been no further progress in this very significant socio-economic indicator. Very recent surveys on J&K's poverty are not available, but indirect data points like consumption sketch a dangerously escalating picture of poverty in J&K.



One can't help but only wonder if J&K has managed to not just survive but surprisingly outperform in many socio-economic factors despite living through a consistent vortex of political unrest, the level of economic emancipation in normal scenarios would have been at a different level altogether

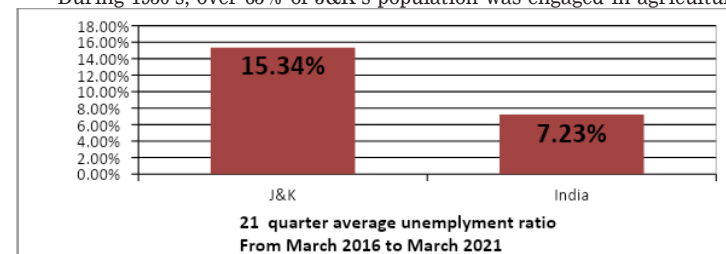
**Infant Mortality Rate:** In his widely popular book "Factfulness", author Hans Rosling says the reason he is obsessed with performance of Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), as a socio-economic indicator, is that it measures the temperature of the whole society. Children are vulnerable and there are many things that can impact their mortality like infection, poor nutrition, violence, condition of primary health care, access to safe drinking water, mothers' education, sanitation etc. In general it is a concentrated indicator of the quality of the whole society.



Data available from 2004 to 2018 shows a consistent improvement in J&K's IMR. From a high of 49 deaths per every 1000 children born in 2004 to 22 in 2018, J&K has consistently scored better than the all India average. The national average for the same time frame has come down from a whopping 58 to 32. Madhya Pradesh at 48 IMR as on 2018 continues to be the worst while Nagaland at an impressive IMR of 4 enjoys the top slot. To put things into perspective J&K's IMR at 22 is not just better than all India average (32) but better than 79 other countries including Bangladesh (31), Pakistan (67), Afghanistan (60.3), Nepal (31) & Myanmar (45). China and Sri Lanka on the other hand have an impressive IMR of 8 and 7 only.

**Employment:** Another important socio-economic factor which depicts the efficiency of the economy in creating viable jobs for its people is the employment rate. Irrespective of the growth numbers, if an economy is not creating sufficient income generating work for its workforce, there is a possibility of catalyzing poverty, worsening inequality and stimulating other harmful consequences on the human development.

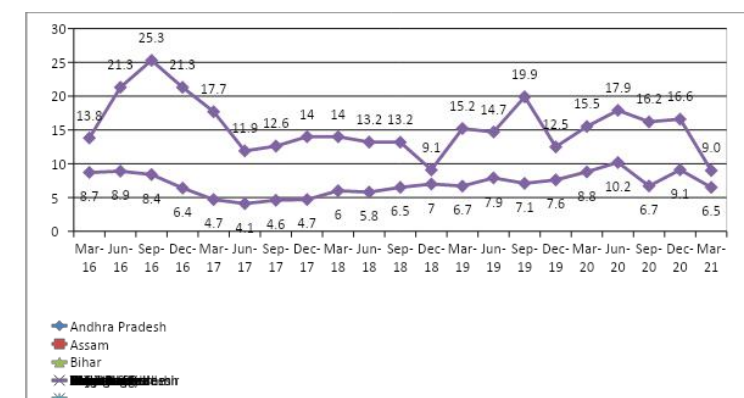
During 1950's, over 85% of J&K's population was engaged in agriculture.



Over a period of time the dependence on agriculture as a primary source of employment has been replaced by the exponentially growing services sector and to some extent by the manufacturing and construction sectors. J&K has a consumption-driven economy with 23% of its current 44 lakh labor force deriving its livelihood from the trading sector and another 7% from the transport sector. While the UT has a comparatively small manufacturing sector, it does provide employment to around 3.5% of the working population. Handicrafts sector on the other hand provides income to more than three lakh artisans (7% of the workforce). More than 10% of the labor force work as government employees. The remaining working population is mostly absorbed by the agriculture sector with dismal support from a very limited number of extension counters of the corporate sector.

Unfortunately, a sizable portion of this 44 lakh workforce often finds it difficult to get any paid work. The percentage of such workers is what is indicated by the unemployment ratio. During the last 21 quarters i.e. from March 2016 to March 2021, J&K's average unemployment rate has hovered above 15% while as the average all India unemployment ratio for the same period has remained only around 7%.

J&K's last three decades have been marred with unprecedented political



turmoil leading to over 3000 days of documented shutdown. Despite failing to catch up with the all India growth story post 1991 liberalization and lagging in almost all macro-economic variables, the paradoxical performance of socio-economic variables in J&K is a riddle worth studying. Barring employment, J&K's performance in HDI, poverty, literacy, life expectancy and infant mortality rate shows a healthy pattern. Some seeds of the irony can be traced back to the disruption caused in the categorization of economic classes in 1950, when land was distributed evenly among peasants and landlords blurred class lines. This iconic decision resulted in an economically homogeneous society with majority of the people lying somewhere in the middle of the income bell curve. Land ownership has been a great leveler and this is why even today after almost seven decades, the below poverty ratio in J&K is far better than the national average. Besides this, the vibrant culture of collectively operated charity institutions has taken a deep and vital role in creating a people owned and operated social security net for the downtrodden and destitute. That's why dying due to starvation or witnessing an old age home is still an alien concept in this region. Moreover, the sustained shutdowns and tremendous difficulty to secure stable livelihood has created an increased social consciousness towards education. The fast improving numbers in literacy compliment this assumption. One can't help but wonder if J&K has managed to not just survive but surprisingly outperform in many socio-economic factors despite living through a consistent vortex of political unrest. The level of economic emancipation in normal scenarios would have been at a different level altogether.

(Data has been taken from Reserve Bank of India website, various economic surveys and state budgets. In case of conflicting data points, RBI's data has been given preference)

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer  
The author has been working in the BFSI industry in the field of Financial Risk Management, Strategy and Foreign Exchange. He can be reached at: ejaz.ayoub@gmail.com



# Mental Mess Up

## How trauma, uncertainty and isolation have affected our minds and memory

MOYA SARNER

She also suggests spending time in different rooms at home – or if you only have one room, try “changing what the room looks like. I’m not saying redecorate – but you could change the pictures on the walls or move things around for variety, even in the smallest space.”

Before the pandemic, psychoanalyst Josh Cohen’s patients might come into his consulting room, lie down on the couch and talk about the traffic or the weather, or the rude person on the tube. Now they appear on his computer screen and tell him about brain fog. They talk with urgency of feeling unable to concentrate in meetings, to read, to follow intricately plotted television programmes. “There’s this sense of debilitation, of losing ordinary facility with everyday life; a forgetfulness and a kind of deskilling,” says Cohen, author of the self-help book *How to Live. What to Do*. Although restrictions are now easing across the UK, with greater freedom to circulate and socialise, he says lockdown for many of us has been “a contraction of life, and an almost parallel contraction of mental capacity”.

This dulled, useless state of mind – epitomised by the act of going into a room and then forgetting why we are there – is so boring, so lifeless. But researchers believe it is far more interesting than it feels: even that this common experience can be explained by cutting-edge neuroscience theories, and that studying it could further scientific understanding of the brain and how it changes. I ask Jon Simons, professor of cognitive neuroscience at the University of Cambridge, could it really be something “sciency”? “Yes, it’s definitely something sciency – and it’s helpful to understand that this feeling isn’t unusual or weird,” he says. “There isn’t something wrong with us. It’s a completely normal reaction to this quite traumatic experience we’ve collectively had over the last 12 months or so.”

What we call brain fog, Catherine Loveday, professor of cognitive neuroscience at the University of Westminster, calls poor “cognitive function”. That covers “everything from our memory, our attention and our ability to problem-solve to our capacity to be creative. Essentially, it’s thinking.” And recently, she’s heard a lot of complaints about it: “Because I’m a memory scientist, so many people are telling me their memory is really poor, and reporting this cognitive fog,” she says. She knows of only two studies exploring the phenomenon as it relates to lockdown (as opposed to what some people report as a symptom of Covid-19, or long Covid): one from Italy, in which participants subjectively reported these sorts of problems with attention, time perception and organisation; another in Scotland which objectively measured participants’ cognitive function across a range of tasks at particular times during the first lockdown and into the summer. Results showed that people performed worse when lockdown started, but improved as restrictions loosened, with those who continued shielding improving more slowly than those who went out more.

Loveday and Simons are not surprised. Given the isolation and stasis we have had to endure until very recently, these complaints are exactly what they expected – and they provide the opportunity to test their theories as to why such brain fog might come about. There is no one explanation, no single source, Simons says: “There are bound to be a lot of different factors that are coming together, interacting with each other, to cause these memory impairments, attentional deficits and other processing difficulties.”

One powerful factor could be the fact that everything is so samey. Loveday explains that the brain is stimulated by the new, the different, and this is known as the orienting response: “From the minute we’re born – in fact, from before we’re born – when there is a new stimulus, a baby will turn its head towards it. And if as adults we are watching a boring lecture and someone walks into the room, it will stir our brain back into action.”

Most of us are likely to feel that nobody new has walked into our room for quite some time, which might help to explain this sluggish feeling neurologically: “We have effectively evolved to stop paying attention when nothing changes, but to pay particular attention when things do change,” she says. Loveday suggests that if we can attend a work meeting by phone while walking in a park, we might find we are more awake and better able to concentrate, thanks to the changing scenery and the exercise; she is recording some lectures as podcasts, rather than videos, so students can walk while listening. She also suggests spending time in different rooms at home – or if you only have one room, try “changing what the room looks like. I’m not saying redecorate – but you could change the pictures on the walls or move things around for variety, even in the smallest space.”

The blending of one day into the next with no commute, no change of scene, no change of cast, could also have an important impact on the way the brain processes memories, Simons explains. Experiences under lockdown lack “distinctiveness” – a crucial factor in “pattern separation”. This process, which takes place in the hippocampus, at the centre of the brain, allows individual memories to be successfully encoded, ensuring there are few overlapping features, so we can distinguish one memory from another and retrieve them efficiently. The foggy, confused sensation that many of us will recognise, of not being able to remember whether something happened last week or last month, may well be with us for a while, Simons says: “Our memories are going to be so difficult to differentiate. It’s highly likely that in a year or two, we’re still going to look back on some particu-



lar event from this last year and say, when on earth did that happen?”

Perhaps one of the most important features of this period for brain fog has been what Loveday calls the “degraded social interaction” we have endured. “It’s not the same as natural social interaction that we would have,” she says. “Our brains wake up in the presence of other people – being with others is stimulating.” We each have our own optimum level of stimulation – some might feel better able to function in lockdown with less socialising; others are left feeling dozy, deadened. Loveday is investigating the science of how levels of social interaction, among other factors, have affected memory function in lockdown. She also wonders if our alternative to face-to-face communication – platforms such as Zoom – could have an impact on concentration and attention. She theorises – and is conducting a study to explore this – that the lower audiovisual quality could “create a bigger cognitive load for the brain, which has to fill in the gaps, so you have to concentrate much harder.” If this is more cognitively demanding, as she thinks, we could be left feeling foggy, with “less brain space available to actually listen to what people are saying and process it, or to concentrate on anything else.”

Carmine Pariante, professor of biological psychiatry at King’s College London, is also intrigued by brain fog. “It’s a common experience, but it’s very complex,” he says. “I think it is the cognitive equivalent of feeling emotionally distressed; it’s almost the way the brain expresses sadness, beyond the emotion.” He takes a psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrinological approach to the phenomenon – which is even more fascinating than it is difficult to say. He believes we need to think about the mind, the brain, the immune and the hormonal systems to understand the various mental and physical processes that might underlie this lockdown haze, which he sees as a consequence of stress.

We might all agree that the uncertainty of the last year has been quite stressful – more so for some than for others. When our mind appraises a situation as stressful, Pariante explains, our brain immediately transmits the message to our immune and endocrine systems. These systems respond in exactly the same way they did in early humans two million years ago on the African savannah, when stress did not relate to home schooling, but to fear of being eaten by a large animal. The heart beats faster so we can run away, inflammation is initiated by the immune system to protect against bacterial infection in case we are bitten, the hormone cortisol is released to focus our attention on the predator in front of us and nothing else. Studies have demonstrated that a dose of cortisol will lower a person’s attention, concentration and memory for their immediate environment. Pariante explains: “This fog that people feel is just one manifestation of this mechanism. We’ve lost the function of these mechanisms, but they are still there.” Useful for fighting a lion – not for remembering where we put our glasses.

When I have experienced brain fog, I have seen it as a distraction, a kind of laziness, and tried to push through, to force myself to concentrate. But listening to Loveday, Simons and Pariante, I’m starting to think about it differently; perhaps brain fog is a signal we should listen to. “Absolutely, I think it’s exactly that,” says Pariante. “It’s our body and our brain telling us that we’re pushing it too much at the moment. It’s definitely a signal – an alarm bell.” When we hear this alarm, he says, we should stop and ask ourselves, “Why is my brain fog worse today than yesterday?” – and take as much time off as we can, rather than pushing ourselves harder and risking further emotional suffering, and

even burnout.

For Cohen, the phenomenon of brain fog is an experience of one of the most disturbing aspects of the unconscious. He talks of Freud’s theory of drives – the idea that we have one force inside us that propels us towards life; another that pulls us towards death. The life drive, Cohen explains, impels us to create, make connections with others, seek “the expansion of life”. The death drive, by contrast, urges “a kind of contraction. It’s a move away from life and into a kind of stasis or entropy”. Lockdown – which, paradoxically, has done so much to preserve life – is like the death drive made lifestyle. With brain fog, he says, we are seeing “an atrophy of liveliness. People are finding themselves to be more sluggish, that their physical and mental weight is somehow heavier, it’s hard to carry around – to drag.” Freud has a word for this: *trägheit* – translated as a “sluggishness”, but which Cohen says literally translates as “draggy”. We could understand brain fog as an encounter with our death drive – with the part of us which, in Cohen’s words, is “going in the opposite direction of awareness and sparkiness, and in the direction of inanimacy and shutting down”.

This brings to mind another psychoanalyst: Wilfred Bion. He theorised that we have – at some moments – a will to know something about ourselves and our lives, even when that knowledge is profoundly painful. This, he called being in “K”. But there is also a powerful will not to know, a wish to defend against this awareness so that we can continue to live cosseted by lies; this is to be in “-K” (spoken as “minus K”). I wonder if the pandemic has been a reality some of us feel is too horrific to bear. The uncertainty, the deaths, the trauma, the precarity; perhaps we have unconsciously chosen to live in the misty, murky brain fog of -K rather than to face, to suffer, the true pain and horror of our situation. Perhaps we are having problems with our thinking because the truth of the experience, for many of us, is simply unthinkable.

I ask Simons if, after the pandemic, he thinks the structure of our brains will look different on a brain scan: “Probably not,” he says. For some of us, brain fog will be a temporary state, and will clear as we begin to live more varied lives. But, he says, “It’s possible for some people – and we are particularly concerned about older adults – that where there is natural neurological decline, it will be accelerated.”

Simons and a team of colleagues are running a study to investigate the impact of lockdown on memory in people aged over 65 – participants from a memory study that took place shortly before the pandemic, who have now agreed to sit the same tests a year on, and answer questions about life in the interim. One aim of this study is to test the hypothesis of cognitive reserve – the idea that having a rich and varied social life, filled with intellectual stimulation, challenging, novel experiences and fulfilling relationships, might help to keep the brain stimulated and protect against age-related cognitive decline. Simons’ advice to us all is to get out into the world, to have as rich and varied experiences and interactions as we can, to maximise our cognitive reserve within the remaining restrictions. The more we do, the more the brain fog should clear, he says: “We all experience grief, times in our lives where we feel like we can’t function at all,” he says. “These things are mercifully temporary, and we do recover.”

The Guardian

## The Benefits Of Giving Yourself A Break

BARTON GOLDSMITH

Like many creative people, I sometimes get bored with my “art” and have to take a break. Stepping back can be a great way to unblock your creativity. I just did this and came back much stronger.

This process has also proved helpful to my writer and musician clients. Hopefully, it will be helpful to you in overcoming your own creative blocks. Doing this can work for almost anything you want to get better at.

I started my writing career as a musician, a singer-songwriter, wanting to be the next Cat Stevens or James Taylor. Needless to say, that didn’t work out, but I still love music and play a lot and create in my spare time.

Recently, my music was not flowing, and I felt like I wasn’t growing creatively. I was getting frustrated, and I realised I should do some-

thing different. I can’t say that I knew what would happen next, but I needed a change. The truth is that getting stuck creatively is not a permanent roadblock; it’s just a bridge that you have to figure out how to cross.

Anyway, I wasn’t growing, and I got bored, then angry, and I decided to quit and put my studio away. I took down all of my equipment, packed away everything, then closed the closet door, so I wouldn’t see it. I also barely listened to music during this period, but strangely there was almost always a song in my head.

I even stopped looking at guitars online. I honestly thought that this part of my life might be over. I’ve been working so much through the pandemic that I thought I might not ever have the time I needed to get better at my music — but I guess I never fully bought into that idea.

Last week was one of the busiest weeks I

We are all going through stuff, and if you don’t think that’s the case, you are in denial or defensive for the wrong reasons

have had in years. There is so much emotional pain right now; people are telling me that no therapists will take on new clients and are begging to be seen. Potential clients have actually burst into tears just because I was willing to listen to them on the phone. We are all going

through stuff, and if you don’t think that’s the case, you are in denial or defensive for the wrong reasons. I got mad at my music for all the wrong reasons, but then something healing happened.

I took out the guitars over the weekend, and I don’t know why. I put them in stands around me and just sat with them. At first, it was a bit of a stare-down. I took photographs and so did my wife, more as a means of reintroduction than for posterity. I rearranged my guitars several times, and then I started playing one, then another, and then I began to sing. I went through several pieces that I didn’t think I would remember, and the real kicker is that I was markedly better than when I had stopped.

And that, my friends, is the great tool (or trick) to allow your creativity to return to you. Just put whatever you’re doing aside for

a month, and see what happens. I believe you will come back on your own, and when you do, it will be better than it was before you stopped or got blocked.

We all have to put our energy somewhere, so if you need to take a break, try doing something different. For example, if you’re a writer, maybe take up a musical instrument. If you’re an actor, try writing. You get the idea. I poured myself and my creativity into my work, and that got better too, come to think of it.

I know I’m not the first to discover this, but not enough people do it. When you get blocked, learn to step away, not into nothingness but into another good avenue for your energy. When you return to your art or your work, chances are you will be better at it.

Psychology Today



# BP pills may cause skin cancers in elderly

## Agencies

Common medications used to treat hypertension (high blood pressure) may adversely raise the risk of skin cancers in people aged 66 and above, claims a new study.

Long-term intake of antihypertensive medications called thiazide diuretics, including hydrochlorothiazide, is linked with higher rates of non-melanoma and melanoma – the two major types of skin cancers, globalnews.ca

reported.

The findings have been published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ).

However, other common blood pressure drugs such as angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers, calcium channel blockers and beta-blockers, did not raise this risk, the study showed.

Hydrochlorothiazide is known to make the skin more sensitive to ultraviolet radiation and sunlight, meaning

patients can get sunburned more easily, according to Health Canada.

"The theory is that by making our skin cells more sensitive to the damage caused by ultraviolet radiation from the sun or a tanning bed, that medication might increase skin cancer risk," Aaron Drucker, study co-author and dermatologist at the Women's College Hospital, in Canada was quoted as saying to globalnews.ca.

The study included 3,02,634 patients in Ontario who

have prescribed an antihypertensive medication between 1998 and 2017.

Patients with a higher risk of skin cancer must consider other treatment alternatives, the researchers suggested, adding patients taking thiazide diuretics must periodically monitor for skin cancer.

While most skin cancers do not lead to death and can be treated with a simple surgery, an advanced squamous cell skin cancer or melanoma may put a patient's life at risk, Drucker said.

## Researchers visualise oxygen movement in ferroelectricity materials

### Press Trust Of India

A new study by an international team of researchers, including those from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), has unveiled how an unusual form of ferroelectricity arises in certain nano-sized materials.

The team included Pavan Nukala, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Nano Science and Engineering (CeNSE), IISc, and former Marie Curie Research Fellow at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands where a large part of the work was carried out as well as Tuhin Chakraborty, PhD student at CeNSE.

Using state-of-the-art atomic resolution microscopy, they showed experimentally for the first time that when an electric field is applied, ferroelectricity arises in materials called hafnia-based oxides due to the displacement and reversible movement of negatively charged oxygen atoms, Bengaluru-based IISc said in a statement.

Such materials are useful for low-power memory applications, according to Nukala, who is one of the corresponding authors of the study published in 'Science'.

"Hafnia-based ferroelectric memory devices are already in production, even though the mechanism behind their behaviour was not known," he says.

Like magnets, ferroelectric materials show spontaneous polarisation the separation of positive and negative charges which can be reversed or



switched using an electric field.

However, they are generally unsuitable for miniaturisation because they lose their ferroelectric properties when the crystal is made smaller than a particular size, it was noted.

But in 2011, scientists showed that hafnia-based oxides could exhibit ferroelectricity even when they are nano-sized, and that this ferroelectricity in fact grows stronger as the material size gets smaller, opening up numerous opportunities for microelectronics.

However, there was no clear understanding of how ferroelectricity happens in these nano-sized materials.

Some scientists have proposed compelling theories about why and how these materials switch, but they have not been experimentally proven so far, according to the statement.

Nukala and colleagues used an advanced electron microscopy technique that had recently been developed and earlier used by a research team at the University of Groningen to visualise a hydrogen atom, the lightest chemical element.

In the new study, they imaged thin films of hafnium-zirconium oxide sandwiched between two electrodes.

They were also able to track the movement of atoms, including oxygen, in real time when an electric field was applied.

The researchers found that charged oxygen atoms move from one electrode to another with the hafnia layer acting as a conduit. When the electric field was reversed, the direction of migration was also reversed.

It was this migration that contrib-

uted significantly to the materials ferroelectricity, they found.

When the conduit size was reduced (as the device is made smaller), oxygen conduction became more robust. These findings were also confirmed by X-ray diffraction studies carried out in Sweden.

Oxygen migration occurs due to imperfections or "vacancies" in the crystal structure, explains Nukala.

"These structural defects are the key to the ferroelectric behaviour, and in general give novel functions to materials."

Directly imaging the dynamics of light elements using electron microscopy has not been attempted until recently.

Among the many challenges was fabricating electron microscope-compatible capacitors made of hafnia.

The task of designing these samples was successfully led by Nukala, who believes that the protocols they have developed could help researchers perform similar experiments on other materials.

Another challenge was accurate statistical analysis of the microscopy data.

Nukala's student Chakraborty, who has been working on statistical inference in biological systems, used image processing tools to establish that the reversible oxygen migration is indeed statistically significant.

"The insights offered by the study open up new avenues for designing oxygen-conducting ferroelectric materials that could be used for miniature memory and logic devices," the statement said.

## 5 hours of moderate activity a week required to avoid midlife hypertension: Study

### AGENCIES

According to a new study, young adults must step up their exercise routines to reduce their chances of developing high blood pressure or hypertension - a condition that may lead to heart attack and stroke, as well as dementia in later life.

The findings of the study were published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

Current guidelines indicate that adults should have a minimum of two-and-a-half hours of moderate-intensity exercise each week, but the new study led by UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals revealed that boosting exercise to as much as five hours a week may pro-

60, exercise intake had slumped from a peak of approximately 560 exercise units to around 300 units, the equivalent to the minimum of two-and-a-half hours a week of moderate-intensity exercise recommended by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

This was substantially less exercise than White men (approximately 430 units) and slightly more than White women (approximately 320 units). Of the four groups, Black women had the least exercise throughout the study period and saw declines overtime to approximately 200 units.

"Although Black male youth may have high engagement in sports, socio-economic factors, neighborhood environments, and work or family responsibilities may prevent continued



test against hypertension in midlife - particularly if it is sustained in one's thirties, forties and fifties.

In the study, researchers followed approximately 5,000 adults ages 18 to 30 for 30 years. The participants were asked about their exercise habits, medical history, smoking status, and alcohol use. Blood pressure and weight were monitored, together with cholesterol and triglycerides.

Hypertension was noted if blood pressure was 130 over 80 mmHg, the threshold established in 2017 by the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association.

The 5,115 participants had been enrolled by the Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) study and came from urban sites in Birmingham, Ala., Chicago, Minneapolis, and Oakland, California. Approximately half the participants were Black (51.6 per cent) and the remainder were White. Just under half (45.5 per cent) were men.

Among the four groups, who were categorised by race and gender, Black men were found to be the most active in early adulthood, exercising slightly more than White men and significantly more than Black women and White women. But by the time Black men reached age

engagement in physical activity through adulthood," said first author Jason Nagata, MD, of the UCSF Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine.

Additionally, Black men reported the highest rates of smoking, which may preclude physical activity over time, he noted.

Physical activity for White men declined in their twenties and thirties and stabilised at around age 40. For White women, physical activity hovered around 380 exercise units, dipping in their thirties and remaining constant to age 60.

Rates of hypertension mirrored this declining physical activity. Approximately 80-to-90 per cent of Black men and women had hypertension by age 60, compared with just below 70 per cent for White men and 50 per cent for White women.

"Results from randomised controlled trials and observational studies have shown that exercise lowers blood pressure, suggesting that it may be important to focus on exercise as a way to lower blood pressure in all adults as they approach middle age," said senior author Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, MD, PhD, of the UCSF Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

## Twitter analysing harmful impacts of its AI/ML algorithms

### Agencies

In a bid to assess racial and gender bias in its artificial intelligence/machine learning systems, Twitter is starting a new initiative called Responsible Machine Learning.

Terming it a long journey in its early days, Twitter said the initiative will assess any "unintentional harms" caused by its algorithms.

"When Twitter uses ML, it can impact hundreds of millions of Tweets per day and sometimes, the way a system was designed to help could start to behave differently than was intended," said Jutta Williams and Rumman Chowdhury from Twitter.

"These subtle shifts can then start to impact the people using Twitter and we want to make sure we're studying those changes and using them to build a better product," they said in a statement late on Thursday.

Twitter's 'Responsible ML' working group is interdisciplinary and is made up of people from across the company, including technical, research, trust and safety, and product teams.



"Leading this work is our ML Ethics, Transparency and Accountability (META) team: a dedicated group of engineers, researchers, and data scientists collaborating across the company to assess downstream or current unintentional harms in the algorithms we

use and to help Twitter prioritise which issues to tackle first," the company elaborated.

Twitter said it will research and understand the impact of ML decisions, conduct in-depth analysis and studies to assess the existence of potential harms in the algorithms it uses.

Some of the tasks will be a gender and racial bias analysis of its image cropping (saliency) algorithm, a fairness assessment of our Home timeline recommendations across racial subgroups and an analysis of content recommendations for different political ideologies across seven countries.

"The most impactful applications of responsible ML will come from how we apply our learnings to build a better Twitter," the company said.

This may result in changing its product, such as removing an algorithm and giving people more control over the images they Tweet.

Twitter said it is also building explainable ML solutions so people can better understand its algorithms, what informs them, and how they impact what they see on the platform.



## Maruti Suzuki Hikes Model Prices By Up To Rs 22,500 To Offset Rise In Input Costs



**NEW DELHI:** The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Friday said it had hiked prices of most of its models by up to Rs 22,500 with immediate effect to partially offset the impact of the rise in input costs.

Barring Celerio and Swift, all the models of the company will be covered under the price increase exercise.

"The company is increasing the price for select models owing to increase in various input costs," the auto major said in a regulatory filing.

The weighted average price increase in ex-showroom prices (Delhi) across models is

1.6 per cent, it added.

The new prices are effective from Friday, MSI said.

The company sells various models ranging from Alto to S-Cross, priced between Rs 2.99 lakh and Rs 12.39 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi).

In March, the car market leader had said that over the past year, the cost of the company's vehicles has been impacted adversely due to an increase in various input costs.

On January 18 this year, the automaker had announced to hike prices of select models by up to Rs 34,000 due to a rise in input costs. **PTI**

## China's GDP Surges To Record 18.3 Per Cent In Q1



**BEIJING:** China's economy grew a record 18.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2021, riding on strong domestic and foreign demand and aided by recovery from a low base in early 2020 when COVID-19 stalled the world's second-largest economy, according to statistics released on Friday.

The gross domestic product (GDP) reached 24.93 trillion yuan (about USD 3.82 trillion) in Q1, data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

This is the highest quarterly growth rate since China first began publishing GDP data in 1993.

The double-digit growth puts the average Q1 growth of 2020 and 2021 at 5 per cent from the 2019 level, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

In the first three months, China saw a steady industrial production rebound, improvement in market sales, recovery in fixed-asset investment, and noticeable momentum in foreign trade of goods, it said.

China's economy, which was the first to be hit by the coronavirus pandemic when it broke out in central China's Wuhan city in late 2019, and early to recover from its impact, grew 2.3 per cent in 2020, registering the lowest annual growth rate in 45 years.

The GDP of the world's second-largest economy grew by 2.3 per cent expanding to USD 15.42 trillion in 2020, according to the data released by the NBS said.

In the local currency, the GDP exceeded the 100 trillion yuan (USD 15.42 trillion) threshold to 101.5986 trillion yuan.

Early this month, the IMF increased China's GDP projection to 8.4 per cent for this year, a 10-year high but cautioned that the growth is unbalanced and private consumption has not recovered as fast.

The IMF projection is higher than the over six per cent target fixed by the Chinese government for this year.

In its World Economic Outlook, the IMF also cautioned Beijing to address its high corporate debt levels resulting from the easy monetary policy put in place during the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's still very heavily reliant on public investment. And private consumption has not recovered as fast as we would have hoped," Gita Gopinath,

the IMF's chief economist and director of research, said while releasing the report.

China-US tensions that remain elevated on multiple fronts, ranging from international trade to intellectual property and cybersecurity, also got a mention in the report.

"Domestic economic disparities arising from the pandemic downturn may also prompt new trade barriers... Amid already high levels of trade restrictions, such actions would add to inefficiencies and weigh on the recovery. Furthermore, risks of protectionist tendencies surrounding technology are emerging," the IMF report said.

The IMF has also advised China to further address its high corporate debt levels that have resulted from the easy monetary policy put in place during the coronavirus pandemic.

Releasing the Q1 data on Friday, NBS spokeswoman Liu Aihua said "the economic recovery in the first quarter of this year continued, and positive factors are accumulating".

"At the same time, we must also see that the COVID-19 epidemic is still spreading globally, the international landscape is complicated and severe, the foundation for domestic economic recovery is not yet solid, and some service industries and small and micro enterprises are still facing more difficulties in their production and operation," Liu was quoted by the Hong Kong-based The South China Morning Post as saying.

Tian Yun, vice director of the Beijing Economic Operation Association, told the Global Times tabloid that the role of a sharp increase in overseas orders in shoring up China's industrial production acceleration in the first three months.

"The global economy seems to be walking out of the pandemic-induced recession, which will boost foreign demands for Chinese merchandises till at least June. This stays in contrast to last year when the recovery of the supply side outpaced that of the demand side," he said.

According to the Q1 data, China's value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, went up 24.5 per cent year on year in the first quarter this year as factory activities continued to pick up. **PTI**

## Economy Better Placed To Meet Second Covid Wave With Vaccination Drive: CEA

Agencies

**C**hief Economic Adviser K V Subramanian on Friday said that the Indian economy is in better shape to address the challenge of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic compared to last year as vaccines have been developed and vaccination drives are taking place.

"The uncertainty is much lower," said Subramanian. He was responding to a question by Raghava Rao, vice president finance and India CFO at Amazon India, about how he sees the economy recovering in the country, during the e-commerce firm's flagship Smbhav event.

On saving lives and livelihoods, Subramanian said the government was driven by the simple goal of saving lives throughout the pandemic. "If you read the Mahabharata, there is this objective very clearly mentioned, 'Saving a life that is in jeopardy is the origin of dharma,'" said Subramanian. "The essence of that was to actually save lives, which is what the government focused on at the start of the pandemic. We have sort of emerged from there."

Now there is a second covid wave, according to Subramanian, and people need to be careful about it and follow all the regulations. "Overall, compared to the previous episode, we are in a better shape because the vaccine is already out there and vaccination drives are proceeding."

One key thing that has stood out during the pandemic is the role of e-commerce and digitisation that India has embraced. "I think the most salient example of this is if you take the way in which essentials were provided to you know almost 800 million people in India," said Subramanian. This was done through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the use of Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-mobile.

Comparing such an initiative with most advanced economies like the U.S, Subramanian said that the US had to first physically print out cheques and get them signed, put them in envelopes and mail them through the United States Postal Service. After receiving

the cheques, people had to deposit them in bank ATMs and then had to withdraw the cash. "It is a process that took 45 days to two months, which India did at the click of a button," said Subramanian. "That illustrates the embracing of digital technologies by India, not only in the private sector but in the government as well."

Digital transactions have grown significantly. In many sectors including transport, digital technologies have been used. The GST (goods and services tax) platform GST platform uses a lot of analytics to track taxes.



"I think the Indian economy is really equipped to usher in significant growth, that is happening in e-commerce," said Subramanian.

He highlighted the importance of viewing 'data' as a public good, where it is about 'of the people, by the people and for the people.' That is an area where public-private partnerships can be really critical. The value-added data that can actually be generated by these public-private partnerships can be useful in healthcare, finance, trade, trade credit. Also, technologies such as blockchain would play a key role in pushing better data and at the same time take care of the privacy protocols.

"India is among the leading economies in terms of embracing this change," said Subramanian. "India will definitely benefit from this change that has been brought by the Covid pandemic."

E-commerce has a role to play in Indian small and medium businesses to reach out to customers globally and compete with other firms. Subramanian said a

key aspect that promoters and entrepreneurs must take into account is that countries such as Japan and China have grown via exports in the last 50 years. One fact that stands out very clearly is that in almost all cases, they started out by assembling in particular sectors and then integrated backwards and forwards in the value chain.

"I think the automobile sector in India is a brilliant example of that and the electronic sector now is also another example," said Subramanian.

Maruti started assembling Su-

zuki components for the car. Initially, it was only about assembly, but later the entire sector grew with a lot of small and medium enterprises, contributing to the ancillary segment. That led to a mushrooming of SMEs in this space, who produced world-class components and they were able to export them to different countries. There are a few key learning here. For a labour-intensive economy like India, companies must be looking at the potential that exists.

"We've actually talked about that potential, to contribute to the \$5 trillion economy," said Subramanian. He was of the view that companies can look to assemble in India. For example, Apple's iPhone is assembled in China.

The other learning is for SMEs to actually focus on becoming globally competitive. That is important for them if they have to compete in the international markets. "This is where the idea of self-reliant or Atmanirbhar Bharat is extremely critical."

**THE UNCERTAINTY IS MUCH LOWER," SAID SUBRAMANIAN. HE** was responding to a question by Raghava Rao, vice president finance and India CFO at Amazon India, about how he sees the economy recovering in the country, during the e-commerce firm's flagship Smbhav event.

## DLMPAC Anantnag approves 05 Draft Mining Plans

Observer News Service

**ANANTNAG:** The District Level Mining Plan Approval Committee (DLMPAC) under the chairmanship of District Development Commissioner (DDC) Anantnag, Dr. Piyush Singla today granted approval to 05 Draft Mining Plans for Minor Mineral Blocks at DC office here.

Pertinently, the auctioning of 20 identified minor mineral blocks was done through online mode and the committee had approved draft plans for 13 minor mineral blocks earlier.

Stressing on smooth execution of the leases, the DDC directed the concerned officers to take



steps for facilitating the leases besides ensuring strict monitoring by district level task forces.

He also called for adherence to all project guidelines besides environment protection steps like plantations, safeguarding

embankments etc by the executors as given under the plan.

Emphasising on protection of local interests, Dr. Singla enjoined upon the officers of Geology and Mining to ensure the project proponents utilise their CSR component for this purpose.

Earlier, the Joint Director Geology and Mining Kashmir, who is also Member Secretary of the Committee, informed the chair about the status of the e-auctioning of minor mineral blocks and the components of the plan.

The meeting was also attended by ACR, CEO MC Anantnag, EE Flood Control, District Mineral Officer and District Panchayat Officer.

### SHORT TAKES

## Businesses Owned By Women Entrepreneurs Likely To Grow Up To 90% In Next 5 Yrs In India: Study

**NEW DELHI:** Businesses owned by women entrepreneurs in India are likely to grow up to 90 per cent in the next five years, according to a new study which also notes that the uptake of government schemes supporting such entrepreneurs is quite low.

The study by prominent philanthropic organisation, EdelGive Foundation, was conducted across 13 states and Union territories (UTs).

The mapping of these areas listed almost 3,300 women entrepreneurs who were classified into three categories--those engaged in manufacturing, retail and service delivery enterprises. Out of these, 1,235 women entrepreneurs were sampled and interviewed for the study.

In addition to these entrepreneurs,



their family members, employees and clients were also interviewed. Besides in-depth interviews were carried out with 20 NGOs that directly support women entrepreneurs.

According to the study, around 80 per cent of women, from semi urban and rural India, feel a significant improvement in their socio-economic and cultural status after starting an

enterprise.

It also found out that despite several state-run schemes and policies supporting women entrepreneurship, the uptake of such initiatives is quite low.

"Only one per cent of the women entrepreneurs surveyed have availed of any government scheme and this is primarily because just about 11 per cent are aware of such programmes," the study says.

The multi-faceted study has focused on a cross-section of factors ranging from societal, financial, personal to familial to understand the overall journey of women entrepreneurs along with looking at the role of government, NGOs and corporates in the ecosystem. **PTI**

## RTGS To Remain Unavailable For 14-Hr On Sunday Due To Technical Upgrade



**T**he RTGS for high-value transactions will remain unavailable for 14 hours from midnight of Saturday due technical upgrade to further improve the disaster recovery time of the system, the RBI said in a statement. The popular National Electronic Funds Transfer or NEFT for fund transfers of up to Rs 2 lakh will continue to be operational as usual during this period.

A technical upgrade of RTGS, targeted to enhance the resilience and to further improve the Disaster Recovery Time of the RTGS system, is scheduled

after the close of business of April 17, the Reserve Bank of India said on Monday.

"Accordingly, RTGS service will not be available from 00:00 hrs to 14:00 hrs on Sunday, April 18, 2021," the RBI said.

It further said banks may inform their customers to plan their payment operations accordingly.

The RTGS facility was made available round-the-clock on all days from December 14 last year, making India one of the few countries to operate the system 24x7. **-PTI**

## Citi To Exit Consumer Banking Biz In India



**MUMBAI:** American banking major Citibank on Thursday announced that it will exit from the consumer banking business in India as part of a global strategy. The business comprises credit cards, retail banking, home loans and wealth management.

The bank has 35 branches in the country and employs approximately 4,000 people in the consumer banking business.

On Thursday, the bank announced exiting from the consumer banking businesses in 13 countries, with its global CEO Jane Fraser attributing

the decision to the absence of scale to compete in these geographies.

Contours of the exit were not immediately known and the proposed exit from the consumer banking business will also need regulatory nods.

"There is no immediate change to our operations and no immediate impact to our colleagues as a result of this announcement. In the interim, we will continue to serve our clients with the same care, empathy and dedication that we do today," Citi India's chief executive Ashu Khullar said. **—PTI**

## UK Home Ministry Clears Extradition Of Fugitive Businessman Nirav Modi

Agencies

**U**K Home Secretary Priti Patel has signed off on the order to extradite Nirav Modi, wanted in India on fraud and money laundering charges related to the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, senior Indian diplomatic sources in the UK said on Friday.

Modi, 50, who remains behind bars at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London, has 14 days to apply for permission to appeal against the Home Secretary's order in the High Court in London.

Back on February 25, the Westminster Magistrates' Court had concluded that the diamond merchant has a case to answer before the Indian courts, leaving the sign off on the order with the Cabinet minister.

He had allegedly perpetrated the fraud in the Punjab National Bank in collusion with his uncle Mehul Choksi.

After a two year long legal battle, District Judge Samuel Goode had ruled that Modi only has a case to answer in the Indian courts but that there is no evidence to suggest he would not receive a fair trial in India.

He also dismissed the human rights concerns that Modi's medical needs would not be addressed as per several Indian government assurances.

"I am satisfied that there is evidence upon which NDM



[Nirav Deepak Modi] could be convicted in relation [to] the conspiracy to defraud the PNB. A prima facie case is established," the judge noted.

A prima facie case to have been established on all counts of charges brought by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) money laundering, intimidation of witnesses and disappearance of evidence, he had said.

Under the UK Extradition Act 2003, the judge sent his findings to the Secretary of State for Home Affairs. It is the UK Cabinet minister who is authorised to order an extradition under the India-UK Extradition Treaty and has two months within which to make that decision.

The CBI had registered the case on January 31, 2018 against Modi, Choksi and others including then officials of Punjab National Bank on a complaint from the Bank on the allegations that the accused had hatched a criminal conspiracy amongst themselves to defraud the public sector Bank by fraudulently issuing Letters of Undertaking.



# HC Says No To PIL On Re-Registration Of Outside Vehicles

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Friday declined to entertain a plea regarding re-registration of outside vehicles as Public Interest Litigation even as it ordered its listing on Monday with a petition pending before its single Bench.

"List this petition along with the record of (a plea pending before court) on 19.04.2021. This petition would not be treated as PIL," a bench of Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Rajnesh Oswal said.

The petitioner, Irshad Hussain Munshi, a resident of Buchpora Srinagar, has sought directions to the concerned authorities to quash RTO Kashmir's circular dated March 27, mandating the vehicle owners who have purchased their vehicles bearing outside registration number to apply for a new registration as per the provisions of Section 47/50 of Motor Vehicle Act 1988 within a prescribed period of 15 days, failing which action as warranted shall be initiated against them.

He also sought directions also clarify by way of a circular or order on the issue of levying of tax on the vehicles purchased outside J&K if the previous owner of the vehicle has already paid the tax on the vehicle.

He also sought directions to clarify by way of circular from which period the tax is to be levied on the vehicles.

Munshi has also sought directions to the concerned not to seize or impound or fine the vehicles bearing outside registration number in pursuance of the RTO's circular.

He also sought direction to the authorities concerned to give the public ample period of time for submitting their documents for re-registration and also sought directions to



amend/relax the rules in order to avoid inconvenience to the general public.

Last week, a bench of Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey sought government's response on a petition filed by another individual. Advocate General D C Raina, questioned the maintainability of a petition challenging authority of the Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir, vis-à-vis issuance of a Circular on March 27 last.

The Advocate General further submitted that in implementation and adherence to the law and in application of Section 47 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, read with Section 50 and 54, the officials have the authority to seek registration of the vehicle which remained in the J&K for a period exceeding 12 months.

Earlier, Faisal Qadri, senior counsel for the petitioner, invited attention of the Court to section 46, 47 and 50 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, to indicate that the scheme of law provides that when a motor vehicle registered in one State has been kept in another State, for a period exceeding twelve months, the owner of the vehicle shall, within such period and in such form containing such particulars as may be prescribed by the Central

Government, apply to the Registering Authority, within whose jurisdiction the vehicle then is, for the assignment of a new registration mark.

Therefore, he submitted that it is the Central Government which can prescribe the period and form in which the vehicle is required to be registered by the registering authority.

He also submitted that in the event the RTO Kashmir's circular is given effect, it will frustrate the object of Section 47 which is sought to be implemented by the RTO Kashmir.

In support of his submissions, the senior counsel also referred to and relied upon the judgment of the High Court of Karnataka delivered— Jagdev Biradar v. State of Karnataka.

"Prima facie there appears to be a consensus over the fact that while adhering to the provisions of law, the Competent Authority can seek such response from the owners whose vehicle remains in the State other than the one from where the vehicle is purchased for a period exceeding 12 months, but the question is raised as to who that Competent Authority is?"

Subsequently, "feeling it appropriate", the court had asked that to file their response so that the controversy is set at rest. (GNS)



Devotees offer congregational prayers on the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan in the historic Jamia Masjid in the Old City: KO Photo, Abid Bhata

## As Cases Resurge, SMHS Closes OPD Again Designates 12 Wards Including Paid Rooms As COVID Designated Wards

Sheikh Danish

**SRINAGAR:** In wake of the rise in the COVID-19 cases in Jammu and Kashmir, authorities at Srinagar Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) hospital has decided to stop the Out-Patient Department (OPD) and said that only surgeries of emergency nature, malignancies and other referral cases shall be entertained. Principal Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar chaired a meeting yesterday regarding the preparedness of SMHS hospital Srinagar to deal with the COVID-19.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Masood Tanvir Professor and HOD medicine, Dr. Rouf Ahmad Professor and head ENT, Dr. Tariq Qureshi Professor and Head Ophthalmology, Dr. Ruksana Najeeb Professor and Head anesthesiology, Dr. Iffat



Hassan Shah Professor and Head Dermatology, Dr. Sajjad Ahmad Dar professor and Head Radiology, Dr. Mufti Mehmood Professor and Head Surgery, Dr. Sonaulah Kuchay Professor and head Radiation Oncology, Dr. Naveed Nazir Shah Professor and Head Chest Disease and Dr. Nazir H Chowdhary Medical Superintendent SMHS hospital.

In the meeting, it was decided that Ward number 02, 03, 3A, 04, 18, 19, 20, isolation/drug De-Addiction Centre, paid rooms, MICU, SICU, w-17 and disaster management ward shall be designated as COVID-19 wards.

"Ward number 01 shall function exclusively for ENT department, besides, ENT department shall carry out surgeries on their

designated Operation Theatre. Ward number 08 comprising 36 beds shall be operated by Medicine (30 beds) as non-COVID ward and Dermatology (06 beds) jointly as rush increases," the order issued in this regard reads.

In the meeting, it has been further decided to stop the operation of OPDs, adding that only surgeries of emergency nature, malignancies and other referral cases shall be entertained. Furthermore, the patient load vis-à-vis duty roster of doctors and paramedical staff should be regulated and rationalized, the meeting said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Nazir Chowdhary said that 203 beds have been designated for COVID beds at the hospital. He said that the rush of patients has been increasing with each passing day, saying that nearly 30 patients are being admitted at the hospital on a regular basis.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

#### Woman Cop Fired

with the intent of disrupting the search operation," the police spokesperson said.

Taking cognizance of the matter, he said, the policewoman has been arrested and subsequently terminated from service.

He further said that regarding the incident, a case FIR No 19/2021 U/S 353 IPC, 13 ULA (P) Act stands registered in Police Station Yaripora and investigation of case is in progress.

#### Mehbooba Terms

booked under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

"Saima Akhter from Kulgam has been slapped with UAPA for raising legitimate questions about searching her home repeatedly without any reasons. Saima's ailing mother understandably exacerbated her worries. When it comes to cruelty even women aren't spared in Naya Kashmir," Mufti said in a tweet. (PTI)

#### Incessant Rain

summer capital of J&K recorded a maximum of 13.2 degree Celsius against 21.1 degree Celsius normal for this time of the season.

Qazigund received 3.0mm of rain and recorded a low of 7.4 degree Celsius and maximum of 14.9 degree Celsius against normal of 20.7 degree Celsius, the official said.

Pahalgam received 10.4mm during the time while the famous resort in south Kashmir recorded a minimum of 3.4 degree Celsius and maximum of 13 degree Celsius while was 5.2 degree Celsius below normal for this time of the year, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, received 2.6mm of rain and recorded a low of 6.0 degree Celsius against previous night's 6.5 degree Celsius and maximum of 14.5 degree Celsius which was 6.0 degree Celsius below normal, the official said.

Kupwara received 22.2mm of rain during the 36 hours while the north Kashmir district recorded a low of 6.3 degree Celsius against 6.6 degree Celsius on the previous night and maximum of 10.9 degree Celsius which is 10.8 degree Celsius below normal for the area, the official said.

Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir, received 26.4mm of rain during the time and recorded a low of 1.0 degree Celsius against 0.5 degree Celsius on the previous night which was minus 1.3 degree Celsius below normal, the official said. The resort recorded a maximum of 3.5 degree Celsius which is 7.2 degree Celsius below normal for the season there, the official said.

Jammu district received 0.9mm of rain, Banihal 6.4mm, Batote 3.0mm, Katra 0.4mm, Bhaderwah 8.7mm and Kathua 0.0mm, the official added.

Director Meteorological department Sonam Lotus said that "erratic weather" shall continue till the weekend.

"Weather to remain partly to generally cloudy, turning windy towards afternoon till April 17th in both Districts," he said, adding, "Light snow is expected at isolated to scattered

places of Kargil district mainly on higher reaches mainly along Drass -Zojila etc. and at isolated places on higher reaches of Leh district," he said.

The weather department has also issued 'yellow warning for "isolated thunder/lightning with gusty wind 30- 40-kmph" for both Jammu and Kashmir divisions till April 17.

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

The weather department in a statement issued here said that dry weather is expected on April 19 while "fairly widespread rain" is expected on April 20 and widespread rains have been forecast on April 22 and 22 respectively. (With GNS inputs)

#### J&K Sees 1144

the overall toll to 2048 in J&K.

There are 10620 active positive cases in J&K—4123 in Jammu and 6497 in Kashmir, they said. (With GNS inputs)

#### Polytechnic Exams

postponed due to the present COVID-19 situation in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir," reads an order issued by BOTTE secretary, Engineer Mahmood Ahmad.

On Thursday, authorities cancelled the on-going examination of 10th standard in Jammu division and decided to promote the students to next level as per the student performance of those subjects of which exams were conducted. The government also ordered closure of all private coaching institutes and extended closure of all schools for physical academics till April-30 across Jammu and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the central government on Thursday also postponed the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) that was scheduled to be held on April-18

#### Covid-19 Positive

the shopkeeper was supposed to remain in strict isolation in his home after he tested positive; however, he was found running his own shop in Kaloosa locality of Bandipora, without caring about the wellbeing of society.

He added that the authorities immediately swung into action and sealed the shop and booked the person under the provisions of The Disaster Management Act, 2005, and Epidemic Disease Act for violating the Home Isolation norms and endangering the lives of others.

Meanwhile the official also said that the contacts of the patient are currently being tracked to curtail the spread of virus. (CNS)

#### No Hajj Without

so far and the entire process would be subject to their approval.

"In case Indian pilgrims perform Hajj-2021, outgoing flights will start from mid-June," Khan said, for the most important pilgrimage in a Muslim's life, this year falling on July 17.

It may be recalled that in 2020, the Hajj pilgrimage was out of bounds for the Muslim faithful from India as it came during the surging peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in late-July, and this year, the country is witnessing a second and much deadlier Covid wave.

#### Kashmiri Pilgrims

Committee, reads that "In pursuance to Circular No.4 Dated: 15-04-2021, issued by Hajj Committee of India, the intending pilgrims who have applied for Hajj-2021 are advised to take first dose of vaccine on their own, so that at the time of departure during Mid-June the second dose of vaccine is taken accordingly.

As per Health Ministry of Saudi Arabia, pilgrims visiting the Kingdom need to get two doses of vaccine before their departure to Saudi Arabia."

"However, it is clarified that no official communication regarding Haj-2021 stands received yet from Hajj Committee of India/Saudi Government," it added

#### CCG Paints Grim

of district development councils, human rights activists, representatives of Kashmiri Pandits, Shia leaders and political leaders, especially those who had been released after being jailed in the wake of the developments of August 5, 2019, the group said in a statement.

The report said Kashmir seemed more normal than what the situation was during the group's earlier visits.

On the face of it, Srinagar seemed peaceful. People were seen going about their daily chores. Life seemed more 'normal' compared to our earlier visits, it said.

The group, however, claimed that people were still not ready to accept the Centre's decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

When asked about the apparent 'sense of normality', people said that life had to go on even after two years of the lockdown. They claimed they had to work for their living and think of their children's future. However, they were also quick to point out that this should not be taken as acceptance by them of the August 5, 2019 decisions, the report said.

In the report, the CCG also mentioned that there is no space for any dissent or criticism of the government policies and police action on any platform - be it social media, print or electronic media.

Journalism has been virtually criminalised. No protests by civil society are allowed, nor are rallies by political parties permitted. The police do not hesitate to summon journalists and ordinary citizens and even lock them up under the Public Safety Act," it said.

It suggested that state actors and political parties address the sense of defeat and anger amongst the Kashmiris by opening up the democratic space for people to express themselves.

The group members also suggested that security forces not blow-up the houses of villagers occupied forcibly by militants for shelter or for using them tactically against the security

forces, and allow civil society organisations to function by holding meetings, seminars and discussions which would allow the people to vent their emotions and relieve the psychological pressure on them.

It also said that media persons be allowed to freely report from the ground.

Do not impose artificial political processes on the Kashmiris which seem democratic outwardly but are bereft of any democratic muscle. Allow the national opposition political parties to visit Kashmir, move around freely and meet local political leaders and civil society actors, the group suggested.

The group said there were fewer bunkers and roadblocks, and the deployment of the police and para-military forces appeared slender in the Union territory now.

during our three-hour up and down road trip to Kulgam from Srinagar, we were not stopped even once by security personnel. There were, however, short traffic stoppages -- never longer than five minutes -- to allow Army convoys to pass, it said.

Referring to the status of businesses in the Valley, the report said after nearly two years of virtually no business, the visiting group found that tourist arrivals had picked up momentum and many of the hotels and guest houses claimed that they have had continuous flow of tourists since the winter.

The Sinha-led group said it seemed that the anger, despair and alienation of Kashmiris that we had witnessed first-hand during our six previous visits to the valley, persisted.

However, the Centre's virtual obliteration of the political mainstream, nullification of Article 370, abrogation of Article 35A, bifurcation of the state and the enactment of the new domicile laws seemed to have increased the all pervasive sense of fear, humiliation and hopelessness among the Kashmiri population," it said.

People are still in shock and seemed psychologically disturbed showing heightened anxiety and paranoia about the future, it added.

Apart from Sinha, other members of the group comprise executive secretary, Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation, Delhi. Sushobha Barve; former chairman of the Minorities Commission and the first chief information commissioner of India, Wajahat Habibullah; Vice Marshal (Retd) Kapil Kak; and former editor and independent journalist Bharat Bhushan.

#### BJP Panch Among

night of April 3-4, some unidentified persons barged into his in-laws' house at Nadihal along with weapons and asked them to drop the same at south Kashmir. The complainant also alleged that the unknown men also took away two mobile phones and threatened the family not to disclose this to anyone.

Srinagar's commercial hub, The Poloview has become an eye-catching site for an ironic commercial.

A number of advertising hoardings asking Kashmiris to "Invest in Turkey" has come up

amid strained diplomatic ties between India and Turkey.

The departure from the usual sight has already set the speculations rife with many wondering, "Is it a new beginning in the ties of the two hostile nations locking horns over Kashmir till yesterday?"

The hoardings have been placed by New Delhi-based Immigration Consultancy, "Olives & Figs"—a boutique firm offering advisory service across three regions: UAE, Turkey and India.

The Consultancy offers a number of benefits including Turkish Residence, Free Healthcare, Free Education and Visa-Free Travel.

A woman executive of the company told Kashmir Observer that they have placed the hoardings first in Mumbai and then in Srinagar, with an aim to help people to get benefits.

When asked who gave the permission for installing these hoardings across the city, the official said, "The management committee of the company must know about this."

The upper ladder of the company, however, stayed tight lipped about the Srinagar spectacle.

Meanwhile, feigning ignorance over the matter, an official from Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) said that they are not aware of such hoardings.

"We have given the contract of putting the hoardings to Alpine company and their contract was over on April 14, 2021," Sofi Mohammad Akbar, Chief Revenue Officer, SMC told Kashmir Observer.

"We will remove all the hoardings in the coming days," he added.

Notably, India and Turkey enjoyed good bilateral relations over decades before tensions rose due to Ankara's constant support to Islamabad on various issues, including on Kashmir.

The bilateral ties further plummeted after the Narendra Modi government scrapped Article 370 in August 2019, withdrawing the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Soon after throwing his government's weight behind Imran Khan's "Kashmir's global ambassador" campaign, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in February 2020 compared the struggle of Kashmiris with the Ottoman Empire's World War I showdown.

"The troubles our Kashmiri brothers have suffered for decades have been exacerbated by the latest unilateral steps," Erdogan said.

The statement drew a sharp retort from external affairs ministry: "These remarks reflect neither an understanding of history nor of the conduct of diplomacy."

"These hoardings have come up at a time when Kashmiris are facing hounding for their Turkey trips," said a newsmen whose Istanbul trip last year fared on the police radar.

"It's like running with the hare and hunting with the hounds."

Interestingly, among those summoned for their Istanbul trip was the grandniece of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the former Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, apart from some scribes and students.



## Rajasthan Royals Skipper Samson Says He Had Lost Hopes Of Win



Press Trust of India

**CHENNAI:** Even the presence of proven performers David Miller and Chris Morris was not assuring enough for Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson, who thought the two destructive batsmen may not be able to win their IPL match against Delhi Capitals in Mumbai on Thursday.

Chasing 148 for their first win of the season, the Royals were reeling at 42 for five but the South African players pulled off a three-wicket win with Miller hitting 62 and Morris producing a breath-taking 36 off 18 balls.

"To be very honest, I thought that it was tough from 40 for 5. We had Miller and Morris, but I thought it was tough," Samson said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

"It's about reading the conditions. It was a little sticky at the start. Taking pace off is the strength of our fast bowlers and that worked out," he said.

Morris said the Capitals batsmen did not handle the bounce well but their bowlers hit the right length.

"That happens every now and then in the game of cricket, I thought Delhi played really well. Dave played a great hand and it

went out way.

"I think the dew plays a part here. I think they hit the length a lot better than we did and they got a lot of guys skying with the extra bounce. But we would have taken a chase of 140-odd."

Morris said it was nice to know that his side can win from anywhere after being down in the dumps.

"There are guys that get paid to bat and guys that get paid to slog, and I know which I am. That's why I play so much golf," he said.

"I think the last game, that close game, we took a lot as a team. For us to get as close on the day, we took a lot out of that first game of ours."

The Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant said his side did a good job but "we let them get over us in the end."

He said dew also played a role in the result of the match.

"We could have bowled better. Dew got the better of us. I think we were 15-20 runs short. But there is something to gain from this match, the bowlers did well at the start. Hopefully in the future we can pull things off."

"In the second innings there was more dew than the first innings so we had to be doing our part, because the slower ball wasn't stopping," he said.

## Ben Stokes To Have Surgery, Out For 12 Weeks: ECB Informs Rajasthan Royals

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** England all-rounder Ben Stokes will be out of action for "up to 12 weeks" as his fractured left index finger will require surgery that will take place in Leeds on Monday.

A repeat X-ray and CT scan revealed that the 29-year-old has a fracture in his left index finger, an injury that he picked up during the ongoing IPL. Stokes, who is currently in India with his franchise Rajasthan Royals, will fly home on Saturday.

"Ben Stokes will be out for up

to 12 weeks...He will have surgery in Leeds on Monday," read a statement from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Friday.

The injury occurred while Stokes was fielding during Royals' opening match against Punjab Kings on Monday when he completed a catch in the deep to see off Punjab Kings batsman Chris Gayle.

While Stokes is ruled out of the entire tournament, it remains to be seen if another key Royals player, Jofra Archer, can recover in time from a hand injury to take part in the later stages of the IPL.



## Government College of Education Organises 1-Day Trekking Programme

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Government College of Education, Srinagar on Friday organised a one-day Trekking programme for its students from Nehru Park to Shankaracharya Hills and then up to the temple.

The programme was flagged off by two senior officials of the College Dr. Kounsar Bhat and Prof. Ru-

beena Khateeb at 10.30am.

A total of 44 students including 20 girls and 24 boys besides 4 officials participated in the trekking programme.

In addition to pre-service students around 10 in-service students made the said programme very vibrant. In spite of the age barrier they actively participated in the trek.

However, the track was very difficult but participants enthusiastically completed the short hike and reached the destination point at around 1.00pm. The group was back to College at 3.30pm.

The trekkers were accompanied by Director, Physical Education Mohammad Ayoub and Assistant PTI Daljeet Kour besides two other staff members.

## Budgam Police Felicitates Meritorious Sports Persons Of The District

Observer News Service

**BUDGAM:** Police in Budgam on Friday felicitated meritorious sports persons of district Budgam who have excelled in various sports categories. The event was organised at District Police Headquarters, Budgam.

The event was attended by SSP Budgam Shri Tahir Saleem-JKPS, DySP Hqrs Budgam, and other senior police officers of the District.

SSP Budgam while interacting with the sports persons congratulated the achievers for making the feat and hoped that they would inspire other youth also in engaging them in sports activities. He also said that the sports play an important role in the overall personality development of an individual and is important for channelization of youth energy to keep them away from negative forces.

While appreciating their role, SSP Budgam presented mementos & appreciation letters among participants.



He also emphasised on youth to take advantage of sports events organised by Budgam Police on a regular basis.

The sports achievers who were felicitated during the event include Tajamal Ahmad Khan (Karate/Kick boxing), Dua Mukhtar (Kick Boxing), Tanzeela Na-

zir (Kick Boxing), Majid Magray (Kick Boxing) Ganish Gulzar (Kick Boxing), Furqan Jehangir (Karate/Kick Boxing), Aijaz Ahmad Parra (Karate/Kick Boxing), Faizan Sof (Karate/Kick Boxing), Bilal Ahmad (Karate/Kick Boxing) and Kousarah (Karate/Kick Boxing).

### IPL 2021, SRH VS MI, PREVIEW

## Sunrisers Fret Over Right Combination Against Formidable Mumbai

Press Trust of India

**CHENNAI:** Getting the combination right would be topmost on Sunrisers Hyderabad's to-do list when they take on a qualitatively superior Mumbai Indians in an IPL encounter here on Saturday, trying to arrest an early slide after back-to-back defeats.

To make matters worse, the nature of the Chennai track is not great news for the David Warner-led 'Orange Army' that failed to chase down a total which was less than 150.

Chasing has been Sunrisers' Achilles' heel during the first two matches, once again bringing under scanner, their lack of depth in the playing XI and below-par Indian bench strength.

In these circumstances, facing a formidable team like Mumbai Indians, fresh from their 'Houdini Act' against Kolkata Knight Riders, would be a difficult proposition.

For skipper Warner, there are some serious questions about the choice of the playing XI, which many believe hasn't been well thought out and the results also back that assessment.

Using two wicketkeepers -- Jonny Bairstow and Wriddhiman Saha -- in the same XI hasn't served any tangible purpose with the veteran Indian looking completely out of sorts as an opener.

Saha has been playing IPL from the first edition (2008) and a closer look at his record indicates that he has not been consistently successful in scoring runs.

With a seasoned man like Kedar Jadhav in the dug-out, along with two talented youngsters Priyam Garg and Abhishek Sharma, Saha is on borrowed time as far as his place in the side is concerned.

In case of Kedar and Abhishek, they also provide the option of slow bowling -- off-breaks for the veteran and slow left-arm orthodox for the youngster.

With only Warner and Rashid

Khan being certainties among the overseas players, a fit Kane Williamson is a must for SRH, factoring in his prowess against spin bowling.

The manner in which the likes of Manish Pandey and Abdul Samad played cross-batted shots against RCB left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed left Warner far from amused.

And Krunal Pandya, who bowls a much flatter trajectory and also a few clicks quicker than Shahbaz, can make matters even worse for the Pandey and Samads if they don't come up with a better gameplan.

For Pandey, being dropped from India's central contracts on Thursday, has been a blow but his inability to finish games regularly is one of the reasons that he might not wear the India blues anytime soon.

However, this tournament gives him a platform to do course correction. He is one of the five with slowest strike-rates to reach 3000 IPL runs.

On a track like Chepauk, at times it becomes imperative to play as late as possible and use the depth of the crease well, which Williamson is adept at.

The other issue has been team's bowling with T Natarajan not in the kind of form he was last season and Bhuvneshwar Kumar also on the expensive side.

Options like Sandeep Sharma and Siddarth Kaul don't inspire too much confidence when one looks at Mumbai Indians top-order comprising Rohit Sharma, Quinton de Kock, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan.

It is unlikely that MI will tinker with their playing XI and more so after winning a thriller against KKR.

However, they would like to put up a better account of their batting as theirs is a line-up that can just throw the pitch factor out of equation on a given day.

## SRH's Kane Williamson Hopes To Be Fit And Ready Within A Week

Press Trust of India

**CHENNAI:** Star New Zealand batsman Kane Williamson, who missed Sunrisers Hyderabad's first two IPL matches due to an elbow injury, is recovering well and is expected to attain full match-fitness "within a week".

The 30-year-old Williamson, a vital cog in SRH's middle order, suffered a small tear in his left elbow tendon and was ruled out of the home ODI series against Bangladesh in March ahead of the IPL. However, the New Zealand captain on Friday said his "recovery is going really well".

"...you know I have been focussed to get pain free as quickly as possible and we are certainly tracking really nicely and hoping to be fit and ready within the week," Williamson said in a video posted by SRH on Twitter.

"It's been a bit of a balance between practice and rehab and sort of things. But for the most part, the progression is being really good. So pretty optimistic about being close to full fitness very soon."

Batting at number four, Williamson had scored 317 runs in 11 innings to take SRH to the play-offs last season in UAE.

## Arsenal, Man United, Roma, Villarreal Reach Europa League Semis

Agencies

**LONDON:** With their season on the line, Arsenal's players produced a devastating first-half performance Thursday to beat Slavia Prague and reach the Europa League semifinals.

They'll meet a familiar face there.

Arsenal's 4-0 win in the Czech capital -- secured courtesy of a three-goal burst in six minutes from the 18th -- clinched a 5-1 aggregate victory and set up a last-four match against Villarreal, which is managed by Unai Emery.

The Spanish coach spent an underwhelming 18 months at Arsenal as Arsene Wenger's replacement in 2018-19 and is rebuilding his managerial career at Villarreal, which beat Dinamo Zagreb 2-1 and advanced 3-1 on aggregate.

Manchester United and Roma complete the semifinal line up. United is back in the last four for a second straight season after beating Spanish team Granada 2-0 for a 4-0 aggregate win.

Roma drew 1-1 with Ajax to squeeze through 3-2 on aggregate.

Arsenal and Roma were under pressure to advance because the Europa League represents their only chance of winning a trophy this season and their only realistic route into next season's Champions League, owing to their lowly current placing in their domestic leagues.

Arsenal is ninth in the Premier League and Roma seventh in Serie A.

The winner of the Europa League earns an automatic spot in the far more lucrative Champions League.

### SENDING A MESSAGE

Arsenal sent a message before and during the win over Slavia.

The hosts learned the day before the game that their defender, Ondrej Kudela, had been banned for 10 games for racially abusing Rangers' Glen Kamara



during a round-of-16 game last month.

Before kickoff, as Slavia's players stood in a line at the center circle, Arsenal's players took a knee in a symbolic gesture in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, with Alexandre Lacazette doing so right in front of the Slavia team and staring at the players.

Arsenal responded to having an early goal by Emile Smith Rowe ruled out for offside by VAR by scoring three times in quick succession, first though Nicolas Pepe in the 18th and then Lacazette -- from the penalty spot -- and Bukayo Saka.

That meant Slavia, the runaway leader of the Czech league which hadn't lost at home in nearly 18 months, needed to score four goals to qualify. By halftime, the hosts had essentially given up as they removed some of their key players to preserve their condition for the league.

Lacazette, continuing as striker with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang sidelined after contracting malaria, added a fourth in the 77th minute.

"The boys were really at it from the start," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "It is a really important win in a crucial moment. We won in a convincing way."

Arsenal lost to Chelsea in the Europa

League final in 2019.

Villarreal's goals were scored by Paco Alcacer and Gerard Moreno at the end of the first half, with Zagreb -- the last-16 conqueror of Tottenham -- grabbing a consolation through Mislav Orsic.

Villarreal is in the semifinals of the Europa League for the first time since 2016.

### CAVANI MILESTONE

Edinson Cavani scored his 50th goal in European competition to lead United to victory over Granada at Old Trafford. The 34-year-old Uruguay striker met a flicked header back into the middle of the area by Paul Pogba with a left-foot volley into the bottom corner in the sixth minute.

A 90th-minute own-goal by Jesus Vallejo completed a second straight 2-0 win over Granada. United lost in the semifinals to Sevilla last season and has been defeated at that stage three other times -- twice in the English League Cup and again in the FA Cup -- under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

Roma will look to inflict another last-four loss on United after surviving a scare against Ajax, which took the lead through Brian Brobbey's lobbed finish in the 49th to tie the score on aggregate at 2-2.

## PCB Asks Umar Akmal To Pay Fine In Full, Rejects His Instalments Plea



Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** The Pakistan Cricket Board would not allow controversial Test batsman Umar Akmal to pay his fine of 4.25 million rupees in instalments, rejecting his claims of financial struggles.

Paying the fine would pave the way for him to return to cricket after serving a ban for breaching clauses of the Anti-Corruption code.

According to details, after Umar pleaded his case with the board, the board asked him to submit taxation and other documents to prove his current financial status.

"The PCB was not satisfied with Umar's argument that he was facing financial difficulties at the moment after it had studied his documents. The Pakistan batsman also did not submit all documents asked for by the board," a well-informed source said.

He said Umar has now been told that he has to pay the fine in full and until that time he can't resume his cricket career and start the rehabilitation process which is mandatory for all banned players under the anti-corruption code.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport has reduced the ban on Umar Akmal to 12 months but hit him with a fine of Rs 4.25 million for breaching the Pakistan Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption code.

The Lausanne-based body had disposed of the appeals of both PCB and Umar in February.

Umar was suspended in February 2020 for failing to report details of corrupt approaches made to him just before the start of the fifth Pakistan Super League.

The PCB's disciplinary panel last April found Umar guilty on two charges of separate breaches and handed him a three-year suspension with the periods of ineligibility to run concurrently.

But an independent adjudicator appointed by the Board reduced the ban to 18 months against which the PCB went to the CAS while Umar also filed an appeal for the entire ban to be dismissed.

Sources close to Umar claimed that the enigmatic player was indeed facing financial issues because he had to spend a lot of money on lawyers in the case.

## Vinesh Phogat Wins Maiden Gold At Asian Wrestling Championship

Press Trust of India

**ALMATY:** Dominating the proceedings in a depleted field, Olympic-bound star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat won her maiden Asian Championship gold medal after she pinned her rival in the summit clash here on Friday.

There was no stopping Vinesh in the absence of the Chinese and Japanese rivals as she cruised to the title without losing a point in the 53kg category.

Vinesh has notched up seven podium finishes at the Asian meet over the years, including three silver medals before this edition.

Earlier in the day, she won by technical superiority against Mongolia's Otgonjargal Ganbaatar and Taipei's Meng Hsuan Hsieh while an injured Hyunyoung Oh from Korea did not turn up for the semifinal.

Vinesh, who had won a bronze in the Delhi edition of the Continental championship last year, moved 6-0 up in the final and finished the bout in style by pinning her rival in the first period itself.

Continuing her impressive rise, Anshu, who booked an Olympic quota for herself only few days back at the same venue, reached the summit clash with ease in 57kg.

The 19-year-old won her first two bouts by technical superiority against Uzbekistan's Sevara Eshmuratova and Kyrgyzstan's Nazira Marsbek Kyzy to reach the semifinal.

Her quick moves and tremendous energy had her rivals gasping for breath.

Up against Mongolia's Battsetseg Altantsetseg, she was leading 9-1 when the referee awarded a 'victory by caution' to the Indian. The Mongolian was cautioned thrice.

Also reaching the final was Sakshi Malik, who is competing in 65kg, having missed her claim in her pet 62kg category.

Competing much better than she was in the trials, the Rio Games bronze medalist won her first two bouts by technical superiority and was leading 3-0 against Hanbit Lee when the Korean suffered a knee injury and opted out of the contest. She will fight for gold against Mongolia's Bolortungalag Zorigt.

Also doing well was Divya Kakran, who is competing in the 72kg category. She stunned reigning Asian Champion Zhamila Bakbergenova from Kazakhstan 8-5 en route the third round.



## US' Troops Withdrawal From Afghan Shouldn't Create Vacuum For "Disruptors":Bipin Rawat



**NEW DELHI:** Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat on Thursday said the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan should not create a vacuum for "disruptors" to step in and that India wants a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the country.

In an address at the Raisina Dialogue, he said India would be very happy to provide whatever support it can extend for the development of Afghanistan and make sure that peace returns to it. He said if the US was of the view that withdrawal of its forces and similar drawdown by its NATO allies would lead to peace in Afghanistan, then, India would be happy to see emergence of such a situation.

"But our concern is that the vacuum that is going to be created should not create space for disruptors to step in, and, therefore, the violence continues in Afghanistan," General Rawat said at the virtual conference.

He, however, did not explain whom he referred to as disruptors.

In a major announcement, President Joe Biden on Wednesday said the US troops will be withdrawn from Afghanistan begin-

ning May 1 and the process will be completed by September 11.

In a tweet last night, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said he spoke to Biden and that his country respects the US decision.

In his remarks, General Rawat said there are many nations which are willing to step into Afghanistan to take advantage of the opportunities following the withdrawal of US troops. He, however, did not name the countries.

Afghanistan is a nation which is rich in resources and there are nations which tend to exploit resources for their own benefit...If that happens, it should be prevented. The international community must step in to ensure that Afghanistan is for the Afghans," he said.

There have been renewed global efforts to bring lasting peace to Afghanistan. Russia recently organised a conference in Moscow where all major stakeholders were invited to brainstorm over ways to move forward in the peace process.

India has been a major stakeholder in the peace and stability of Afghanistan. It has already invested \$2 billion in aid and reconstruction activities in the country.

## 45 Seats To Go To Polls In Phase 5, Fate Of 342 Candidates To Be Sealed



### Agenceis

**KOLKATA:** Over one crore voters in West Bengal will decide the political fate of 342 candidates on Saturday, when 45 assembly constituencies go to polls in the fifth phase, amid a raging second wave of COVID-19.

Security measures have been heightened for phase five in view of the violence in the previous phase, which witnessed the death of five people in Cooch Behar, including four in CISF firing.

The Election Commission has decided to deploy at least 853 companies of central forces to ensure free and fair voting, an official of the poll panel said.

It will also put in place measures to ensure strict adherence of COVID-19 protocols during the voting process, he said.

West Bengal on Thursday recorded the highest single-day spike of 6,769 coronavirus cases and at least 22 more fatalities.

Prominent names in the fifth phase include Siliguri Mayor and Left Front leader Ashok Bhattacharya, state ministers Gautam Deb and Bratya Basu and BJP's Samik Bhattacharya.

Voting will be held at 15,789 polling stations in the 45 constituencies 16 seats in North 24 Parganas, eight each in Purba

Bardhaman and Nadia, seven in Jalpaiguri, five in Darjeeling and one in Kalimpong district.

The phase is crucial for the ruling Trinamool Congress, which is hoping to better its 2016 tally of 32 seats, even as a resurgent BJP looks to make inroads.

The Left-Congress alliance had bagged 10 seats in the assembly elections five years ago.

TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, who had Thursday urged the EC to consider conducting the polls for the remaining assembly seats at one go in the wake of the emerging COVID-19 situation, held several public meetings and roadshows in most of the seats in the run-up to the fifth phase.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah led the campaign blitzkrieg of the BJP, which has fortified into TMC's main challenger in this election.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, too, has held two public meetings in north Bengal as part of his first campaign in the state for the assembly polls. Campaigning for the fifth phase ended on Wednesday with the EC having increased the "silence period" from 48 to 72 hours in view of the Cooch Behar violence.

Elections have been held in 135 constituencies so far, and the remaining 159 seats are set to go to polls between April 17 and 29.

## 'Absolute Rampage': As COVID-19 Cases Rise, Delhi Surpasses Mumbai To Become Worst-Hit City In India

### Agenceis

In just a matter of weeks, Delhi has become the worst-hit city in the country in the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, a situation that some doctors are describing as an "absolute rampage".

Delhi recorded 16,699 fresh cases of COVID-19 on Thursday, and 112 fatalities from the infection - a frightening positivity rate of 20.22 per cent, the highest ever since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, according to data shared by the health department. The previous highest positivity rate till the third wave, was on November 14 last year at 15.33 per cent.

With an exponential rise in cases, the national capital has left far behind the financial capital Mumbai, which at one point was the largest COVID hotspot in the country. Mumbai's single day peak so far has been 11,163 cases, registered on April 4, according to official figures.

"It is an absolute rampage in the city. Young and old, vaccinated or not vaccinated, the virus is just hitting everyone. Delhi's situation is grim," said Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, a senior consultant at Apollo Hospitals here.

While Delhi's numbers were lower than on Wednesday, that was because it conducted much fewer tests - about 20,000 less, leading to a positivity rate of 20.22 per cent. On Wednesday, Bengaluru recorded 8,155 cases and Chennai 2,564 cases, their highest daily surge. Pune's highest single-day since the pandemic began was 12,494 cases, recorded on April 4.

The unprecedented surge in cases, especially in the last few days, has left other doctors and medical experts baffled, with some conjecturing that the virus has mutated and assumed so many different strains, some of which are far more infectious than others.

"Given the surge in cases in the



last few days, it is an absolute rampage. We will have to watch for the next few days, as far as hitting the peak of the wave here is concerned," said Dr Avdhesh Bansal, a pulmonologist at the Apollo hospital.

"Also, in this wave, the severity is such that in many cases, either majority of family members or all family members are getting infected," he added.

He also felt that vaccination for the general masses "started a bit late" and many frontline workers did not opt for the vaccine, leading to its "wastage".

"Early vaccination could have given a protective layer to large number of general masses," the doctor said.

He said about two per cent of the people admitted to hospital are dying. The other reason for the surge was the carelessness of people who assumed the pandemic was over when Delhi's numbers went down dramatically in February. A Delhi government hospital doctor, on the condition of anonymity, said, "people had thrown caution to the wind, and were socialising and partying with gay abandon again. This has led to the surge too".

Bansal also expressed worry about the huge number of people testing positive from the Kumbh Mela area in Haridwar, who run the risk of infecting others.

Over 1,700 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Harid-

war Kumbh Mela area from April 10 to 14 confirming fears that one of the world's largest religious gatherings may contribute further to the rapid rise in coronavirus cases.

The previous highest single-day spike in Delhi till the third wave of the pandemic -- 8,593 cases -- was reported on November 11 in 2020, while on November 18, the city had recorded 131 COVID-19 deaths, the highest single-day fatality count till date.

That figure was surpassed on April 11 when 10,774 cases were recorded. Since then Delhi has been on an upward spiral with 13,468 cases on Tuesday, and eventually 17,282 cases on Wednesday.

Compare that with the situation in March: Delhi had registered 23,141 cases and 117 deaths that month. In comparison, Mumbai had 88,710 cases and 216 fatalities in March.

Richa Sareen, consultant, pulmonology at Fortis Hospital here, said, "Given the pace of spread, it definitely seems there is a different variant in circulation and it is more infectious than the previous one."

She said the younger population was getting more infected as elderly have mostly got vaccinated, and the older population is more at home. But the younger people have been going out and meeting others or socialising, partying or travelling, which increases the chance of infection, Sareen said.

## Top Seer At Kumbh Mela In Haridwar Dies Of COVID-19

### Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** A seer has died from COVID-19 and 80 other holy men have tested positive after attending a vast religious festival where millions of pilgrims have been ignoring Covid-19 advice despite a national surge in infections.

The announcement from authorities in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, came as India recorded more than 217,000 fresh cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of new infections to more than two million since April 1.

The festival of Kumbh Mela has long rung alarm bells among health experts who say it could turn into a "super-spreader" as pilgrims return home to their towns and villages all across India.

A gathering on the banks of the holy River Ganges in Haridwar happens every 12 years, and has attracted as many as 25 million people to the site since January, including some 4.6 million on two auspicious days this week alone.

The enormous crowds of pilgrims -- including cannabis-smoking holy men with dreadlocks -- taking a dip in the river have mostly ignored official advice to maintain distancing.

Earlier this week, Mahamandaleswar Kapil Dev Das, 65, head of one of the Hindu akhadas or ascetic councils, was admitted



to hospital and died from coronavirus on Thursday, officials said.

"We had around 2,000 positive cases since Monday during random testing of pilgrims at the Kumbh," Harbeer Singh, a top festival officer, told AFP.

"We are taking precautions and urging people to adhere to coronavirus prevention behaviours."

The officer said they had ramped up testing at the event's 600-hectare (1,500-acre) site and insisted they were strictly enforcing government protocols, including requiring negative virus certificates.

Two of the 13 Hindu ascetic councils that are part of the major get-together have now pulled out over soaring Covid cases in the city.

Mr Singh said more than 25,000 pilgrims were still visiting every day and they were expect-

ing 2-3 million devotees on the last grand bathing event on April 27 before the festival concludes.

The Uttarakhand government has exempted the event from restrictions limiting gatherings to 200 people. Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat said in early April that no devotees would be "unnecessarily harassed in the name of Covid-19 restrictions".

He too later tested positive for the virus, which has so far killed almost 175,000 Indians and infected 14.3 million, the second most in the world after the United States.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh, home to some 240 million people, on Friday became the latest to announce restrictions on gatherings, calling a day-long lockdown on Sunday with fines of 1,000 rupees (US \$14) for failing to wear a mask.

## Rare Blood Clot Risk Higher From Coronavirus Than Vaccine, Says UK Study

### Agenceis

London: The risk of rare blood clotting following the COVID-19 infection is around 100 times greater than normal, several times higher than it is post-vaccination or following influenza, according to a new University of Oxford study published on Thursday.

The research found that the rare blood clotting known as Cerebral Venous Thrombosis (CVT) is more common after COVID-19 than in any of the comparison groups, with 30 per cent of these cases occurring in the under 30s.

Compared to the current COVID-19 vaccines being administered, this risk is between 8-10 times higher, and compared to the baseline, approximately 100 times higher.

The study follows reports of possible links between the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and rare cases of CVT, which are undergoing deeper investigations by the medicines regulators even as the jabs have been ruled as safe and effective.

"There are concerns about possible associations between vaccines and CVT, causing governments and regulators to restrict the use of certain vaccines. Yet, one key question remained unknown: 'What is the risk of CVT following a diagnosis of COVID-19?'" said Paul Harrison, one of study authors as Professor of Psychiatry and Head of the Translational Neurobiology Group at the University of Oxford.

"We've reached two important conclusions. Firstly, COVID-19 markedly increases the risk of CVT, adding to the list of blood clotting problems this infection causes.

"Secondly, the COVID-19 risk is higher than we see with the current vaccines, even for those under 30; something that should be taken into account when considering the balances between risks and benefits for vaccination," he said.

The study authors, led by Professor Harrison and Dr Maxime Taquet from Oxford University's Department of Psychiatry and the NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre, counted the number of CVT cases diagnosed in the two weeks following diagnosis of COVID-19, or after the first dose of a vaccine. They then compared

these to calculated incidences of CVT following influenza, and the background level in the general population.

"The signals that COVID-19 is linked to CVT, as well as portal vein thrombosis - a clotting disorder of the liver - is clear, and one we should take note of," said Dr Maxime Taquet, also from the Translational Neurobiology Group.

In the study of over 500,000 COVID-19 patients, CVT occurred in 39 in a million patients. In over 480,000 people receiving a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine, such as Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna, CVT occurred in four in a million, and CVT has been reported to occur in about five in a million people after first dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

"Compared to the mRNA vaccines, the risk of a CVT from COVID-19 is about 10 times greater. Compared to the AZ-Oxford (Oxford/AstraZeneca) vaccine, the risk of a CVT from COVID-19 is about eight times greater," the findings note.

However, the researchers said that all comparisons must be interpreted cautiously since data is still accruing. An important factor that requires further research is whether COVID-19 and vaccines lead to CVT by the same or different mechanisms. There may also be under-reporting or mis-coding of CVT in medical records, and therefore uncertainty as to the precision of the results, the study authors note.

The findings come as numerous countries have limited use of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine to certain age groups or paused its rollout. Denmark has dropped the jab from its vaccination programme permanently following reports of very rare cases of blood clots.

Earlier this month, the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said the vaccine is still safe and effective but said that people under-30 will be offered an alternative, where possible, as an additional precaution.

The overall advice, including from the World Health Organisation (WHO), remains in favour of continued vaccinations as the experts concluded that the life-saving benefits of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine continue to outweigh the risks.

## Case Against Mamata Banerjee For "Instigating" People In Bengal

### Agenceis

**COOCH BEHAR:** A case has been registered against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a police station in state's Cooch Behar district, alleging that she instigated voters to gherao central forces and that, in turn, led to the incident of firing in Sitalkuchi and the subsequent death of four persons.

Siddique Ali Mia, the district chief of BJP's minority cell in Cooch Behar, cited the Trinamool chief's comments during a rally in Banerjee area as he filed a complaint on Wednesday claiming that her address provoked people to attack CISF force personnel during the fourth phase of state elections.

He attached a video clip of Ms Banerjee's speech in his complaint at Mathabhabga police station. Villagers, after being provoked by such statements of Mamata Banerjee, tried to snatch fire arms of the deployed paramilitary forces, Mr Mia said.

"The said villagers, including women, launched attack upon the paramilitary forces with the intention of causing bodily injury, knowing it to be likely to cause



death of the deployed paramilitary forces," he wrote in his complaint, a copy of which is with the PTI.

The BJP leader, when contacted, said he would launch a massive protest demanding the Chief Minister's arrest, if the police "sits idle" on the case in the next few days.

"She is solely responsible for the death of those four people. She is answerable to all the voters of our district," Mr Mia stated.

At least four persons died outside a polling booth in Sitalkuchi assembly constituency on April 10 when CISF personnel opened fire in "self defence" allegedly after coming under attack from locals.

The Election Commission had suspended the voting exercise at the booth following the incident.

## "Strong Evidence" Covid Predominantly Spreads Through Air: Lancet

### Agenceis

**COLORADO:** A new assessment in the medical journal Lancet has found "consistent, strong evidence" that the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19, is predominantly transmitted through the air.

Therefore, public health measures that fail to treat the virus as predominantly airborne leave people unprotected and allow the virus to spread, according to six experts from the UK, USA and Canada, including Jose-Luis Jimenez, a chemist at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) and the University of Colorado Boulder.

"The evidence supporting airborne transmission is overwhelming, and evidence supporting large droplet transmission is almost non-existent," Jimenez said. "It is urgent that the World Health Organization and other public health agencies adapt their description of transmission to the scientific evidence so that the focus of mitigation is put on reducing airborne transmission."

The team of experts, led by the Uni-

versity of Oxford's Trish Greenhalgh, reviewed published research and identified 10 lines of evidence to support the predominance of the airborne route.

At the top of their list: Super-spreader events such as the Skagit Choir outbreak, in which 53 people became infected from a single infected case. Studies have confirmed these events cannot be adequately explained by close contact or touching shared surfaces or objects.

Moreover, transmission rates of SARS-CoV-2 are much higher indoors than outdoors, and transmission is greatly reduced by indoor ventilation.

The team highlighted research estimating that silent (asymptomatic or presymptomatic) transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from people who are not coughing or sneezing accounts for at least 40 per cent of all transmission. This silent transmission is a key way COVID-19 has spread around the world, "supporting a predominantly airborne mode of transmission," according to the assessment. The researchers also cited work demonstrating long-range transmission of the virus between people



in adjacent rooms in hotels; people who were never in each other's presence.

By contrast, the team found little to no evidence that the virus spreads easily via large droplets, which fall quickly through the air and contaminate surfaces.

"We were able to identify and interpret highly complex and specialist papers on the dynamics of fluid flows and the isolation of live virus," lead author Greenhalgh said. "While some individual papers were assessed as weak, overall the evidence base for airborne transmission is extensive and robust. There should be no further delay in implementing measures around the world to protect against such transmission."

The new work has serious implications for public health measures designed to mitigate the pandemic. First, "droplet measures" such as handwashing and surface cleaning, while not unimportant, should be given less emphasis than airborne measures, which deal with inhalation of infectious particles suspended in the air.

If an infectious virus is primarily airborne, someone can potentially be infected

when they inhale aerosols produced when an infected person exhales, speaks, shouts, sings, or sneezes. So airborne control measures include ventilation, air filtration, reducing crowding and the amount of time people spend indoors, wearing masks whenever indoors (even if not within 6 feet or 2 meters of others), attention to mask quality and fit, and higher-grade PPE for healthcare and other staff when working in contact with potentially infectious people.

"It is quite surprising that anyone is still questioning whether the airborne transmission is the predominant transmission pathway for this virus or not," said co-author Professor Kimberly Prather, an aerosol scientist from the University of California San Diego. "Only by including inhalation of aerosols at both close and long range can we explain the many indoor outbreaks that have occurred around the globe. Once we acknowledge this virus is airborne, we know how to fix it. There are many examples of places that have fared much better by acknowledging this virus is airborne from the start. The world needs to follow their lead as soon as possible."