

# KASHMIR OBSERVER

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P3 CITY

## GOVT TO REMOVE ILLEGAL BARBECUE STALLS ALONGSIDE DAL LAKE

The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole Monday reviewed the preservation of Dal Lake. During the meeting, the Div Com stressed for a sustained...

THINK

## ARE COVID-19 VACCINES SAFE?

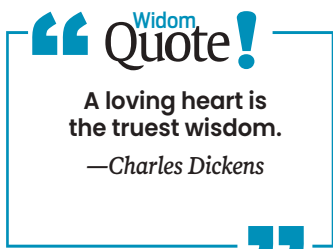
Taking a vaccination is the first step towards protecting yourself. While certain side effects are there depending on individual cases, this shouldn't dissuade people from taking the vaccine in the first place, as per the doctors....



P5 STATE

## COVID-19: EXPERTS WARN OF DEADLY SECOND WAVE

The Covid-19 resurgence wave is very steep, and if the callous attitude of people continues, lockdown is the only option to control the pandemic, experts said on Monday...



7TH RAMAZAN		
	Iftar TODAY	Sehri TOMMOROW
FIQAH HANAFIYA	07:07	04:25
FIQAH JAFARIYA	07:15	04:23

## NEWS DIGEST

### CBI Nabs Two Officials With Bribe

**SRINAGAR:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday arrested two officers, including a woman of a prominent insurance company while accepting a hefty bribe in Lal Chowk area of this capital city. RK Goyal, Senior Divisional Manager, National Insurance Company Ltd and her colleague Nahida Gaffar were arrested while accepting a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from a... [More On P10](#)

### Soldier Dies Of Cardiac Arrest

**SRINAGAR:** An army man died after suffering a cardiac arrest on Monday in this capital city, reports said. The body of Naik Sanjay Kumar of 15 corps was brought to the Police Control Room (PCR) hospital here on Monday for medical formalities, officials told news agency KNO. He had reportedly died due to cardiac arrest this morning, they said.

### Misfire Creates Panic In Budgam Court

**SRINAGAR:** Panic gripped the district court in central Kashmir's Budgam district on Monday after a policeman's rifle accidentally off leaving a hole in a parked car. The incident, as per the reports, occurred on Monday when a team of cops from police station Budgam reached the district court complex in a case related to the remand of an accused. In the... [More On P10](#)

### Bear Injures Forest Dept Employee

**SRINAGAR:** A forest department employee on Monday was attacked and injured by a bear in Tangmarg area of Baramulla district. Mohammad Sultan Magray of Panditpora village of Tangmarg was passing through Zandpal forest area when a bear attacked and injured him, reports said. A forest department employee, Magray was rushed to Sub District... [More On P10](#)

# Corona Surge Continues In J&K, 1516 Test Positive

Deadly Infection Claims 6 More Lives



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

## Observer Monitoring Desk

**SRINAGAR:** Showing no sign of decline, coronavirus cases continue to peak in Jammu and Kashmir as 1516 more people, including 231 travellers tested positive for virus on Monday, while six more people succumbed to the infection during the last 24 hours in the Union Territory.

While 748 fresh cases of infection were reported from Kashmir

valley, the remaining 768 were detected across the Jammu region, taking the total number of people infected by the virus since the outbreak of pandemic last year to 148208 in J&K.

On Sunday, J&K reported highest single day spike of this year with 1526 cases and six deaths.

Giving district wise details of the cases that include 231 travellers, officials said, Srinagar reported 383, [More On P10](#)

## SITUATION UNDER CONTROL: ADVISOR

The Jammu and Kashmir administration Monday assured that the coronavirus situation was under control and all the requirements including oxygen, medicines beds and other parameters are available in sufficient quantity. There is a steep rise in COVID-19 cases across the parts of India including Jammu and Kashmir with the resurgence having more infection potential forcing authorities to order the closure of educational institutions and place required restrictions to contain the spread. A local news agency KNO quoted Lieutenant Governor's Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar as saying that the administration was responding to all the requirements including the medicines and oxygen. "The situation is under control across the region and everything will be ensured as per the situation demand," he told the wire. [More On P10](#)

## Army Replaces Red Flags With White-And Blue To Remove 'Alienation'

Press Trust Of India

**SRINAGAR:** The Army in Jammu and Kashmir has replaced red flags on its vehicles with white-and-blue ones and road barriers in sensitive zones have been given a new look in a move to ease the feeling of alienation among people during security checks and drills, an Army official said on Sunday.

"Nowadays, the Army vehicles

in Kashmir are moving with white-and-blue flags. Earlier, the Army vehicles used to have red flags and even the soldiers in Road Opening Parties carried red flags while clearing way for convoys, the Army official said.

He said road barriers in sensitive zones have also been given a new look.

"These steps have been taken to address the feeling of alienation among... [More On P10](#)

## Re-Registration Of Outside Vehicles

## RTO Kashmir Asked To Appear With Records On April 21

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Monday directed RTO Kashmir to appear before it on Wednesday even as it sought government's response to a plea regarding re-registration

of the outside vehicles.

The petition was filed by one Irshad Hussain Munshi, a resident of Buchpora Srinagar, and a division bench of Justices Mohammad Magrey and Vinod Chatterji Koul asked the government to file the... [More On P10](#)

## Sun Shines On Valley But More Rainfall Predicted This Week

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Kashmir Valley on Monday witnessed a bright sunshine after days of incessant rains, even as the weather department forecast light rains in next few days across the Union Territory.

"Scattered light rain and thundershowers are expected on Tuesday and Wednesday besides wide-spread rain on April 23 and isolated showers on April 24," a meteorological department official 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 for three days from April 20-22.

There are four types of colour codes signifying the level of caution: green which means no ac-

tion, yellow—situation to be watched), amber –government agencies need to be prepared for severe weather and red –action needed by the agencies.

Meanwhile, the meteorological department official said that Srinagar received 9.6mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours till 8:30 a.m., while the summer capital of J&K recorded a low of 7.6 degree Celsius against 7.8 degree Celsius on the previous night.

Qazigund received 4.0mm of rain during the time and recorded a low of... [More On P10](#)

## Highway Open For Two-Way Traffic Today

Traffic authorities on Monday said that there would both way traffic on Jammu-Srinagar highway, the only surface link connecting Kashmir with the outside world. "Tomorrow (Tuesday), subject to fair weather and better road condition, LMVs (Passenger) shall be allowed from both sides on Jammu-Srinagar NHW viz Jammu towards Srinagar and vice-versa. However, TCU Jammu/Srinagar shall liaise with TCU Ramban before releasing the traffic," a traffic department official said in a communiqué. "HMVs shall be allowed from Jakheni (Udhampur) towards Srinagar from 1500 hrs to 2200 hrs. TCU Udhampur shall liaise with TCU Ramban before releasing the HMVs."

## 2 Militants Killed In Shopian Encounter: Police



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Two Hizbul Mujahideen militants were killed on Monday in a gun-battle with government forces in south Kashmir's Shopian district, police said.

According to police officials, special operations group (SOG) of police, army's 34 RR and CRPF on Monday laid a siege around Zeipora village of the district on specific information about the

presence of militants in the village. When the joint team started combing operations, the officials said, the militants hiding in the village opened fire upon them in a bid to thwart their advances.

"The search team returned the fire setting off an encounter. In the ensuing encounter, two militants were killed," officials said.

They added that the militants turned down repeated surrender... [More On P10](#)

**ARMS, AMMUNITION & OTHER INCRIMINATING** materials were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes." [More On P10](#)

## Baramulla-Banihal Rail Line Will Be Electrified: Pole

Press Trust Of India

**SRINAGAR:** The 137-kilometer Baramulla-Banihal railway line will be electrified and the work on the project will start in a week's time, Divisional commissioner Kashmir Pandurang K Pole said on Monday.

Pole made these remarks while chairing a meeting of the officials concerned to discuss the execution of the project.

The meeting, among others, was attended by deputy commissioners of Budgam, Baramulla, SSPs concerned, ADC Srinagar and AGM Ircon.

Emphasising on speedy work execution, Pole said the work on the project will be carried out round the clock for its early completion.

He said in the first phase, electrification work will be started from Budgam Railway station towards Baramulla, while Srinagar and south Kashmir districts up to Banihal Railway Station will be covered in next phases.

In order to ensure smooth execution of... [More On P10](#)

## 'Serious, Shocking': 'Kashmir-Less' PCC Creates Concerns In Valley

Umer Ahmad

Days after Delhi downgraded Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Board (JKPCB) to Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC) without Kashmir representation, environmental lawyer Nadeem Qadri and his battery of activists is mulling to take a judicial route to counter the move.

"It's a very serious matter," Qadri told Kashmir Observer.

"If Commissioner JMC is in the committee, why not it's counterpart from Kashmir division?"

The lawyer said his team is



analyzing the legal aspects in the Gazette Notification of March 25 "and will file a Public Interest

Litigation (PIL) and challenge the decision in the High Court". Earlier concerns grew among

the Kashmir based environmentalists after the Centre formulated a 14 member Pollution Control Committee, without considering any governmental or non-governmental member from Kashmir.

The members in the committee include Commissioner JMC, Medical Superintendent GMC Jammu, Regional Officer Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change Govt of India Jammu, Dr. Pankaj Chandan Director NGO Nature, Wildlife and Climate Change based in Jammu, Prof Anil Raina Department of Environmental Science Jammu... [More On P10](#)



New Wave Of Covid-19 has forced people indoors and otherwise bustling Boulevard remained largely deserted on Monday. KO Photo Abid Bhat









**STARTED WITH MUCH FANFARE LAST MONTH**, the famous Tulip Garden wore a deserted look on Monday, a day after J&K saw 1526 Covid-19 cases, highest this year. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

## Govt To Remove Illegal Barbecue Stalls Alongside Dal Lake



Representational photo

**Observer News Service**

**SRINAGAR:** The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole Monday reviewed the preservation of Dal Lake.

During the meeting, the Div Com stressed for a sustained drive to remove all illegal encroach-

ments including all illegal barbecue stalls from Boulevard and Foreshore road alongside the Dal.

The Div Com directed a joint team of concerned departments is constituted to carry out a sustained drive against these illegal stalls causing traffic jams and other nuisance alongside Dal

banks.

He also directed the concerned to speed up beautification work inside Dal and catchment areas and submit a detailed action taken report on preservation, beautification and other related works executed and plans of works to be executed during current year.

The Div Com directed concerned to ensure no unauthorized work is carried out and CCTV cameras are installed at all designated locations to keep check on illegal construction.

At the outset, the Div Com also reviewed the beautification works enforcement, traffic management, STPs, drainage and drainage related works.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Commissioner SMC, VC LAWDA, CE PWD, UEED, Director Floriculture, SSP Srinagar, SSP Traffic, JD G&M and DD Tourism.

## Padshahi Bagh-Lasjan Road In Shambles, Residents Demand Macadamisation



Representational photo

**Observer News Service**

**SRINAGAR:** The residents of Lasjan, Soiteng, Padshahi Bagh and Nowgam areas of Srinagar city Monday expressed anguish over the dilapidated condition of road from Lasjan to Padshahi Bagh and Srinagar city, and blamed the authorities for failing in carrying out the repairing work.

The residents said that the road stretch is full of potholes causing huge inconvenience to the commuters.

They alleged that the authorities failed to macadamise the road during the last summer without any reasons. "The main cause of the dilapidated condition of the road is that it sans

any proper drainage and the rain water seeps on the macadamised road making it impassable for commuters."

The residents appealed the administration to at least fill the potholes so that the inconvenience caused to the general public can be avoided. "The roads in the area are in worst condition, and travelling is a back breaking experience for the travellers and it also causes heavy damages to the vehicles."

The residents said the road stretch has seen a huge rush of vehicular traffic during the last few months as it has become a vital link road for traffic coming from south Kashmir.

The residents said that the authorities shall take the notice of bottlenecks at several points and start road widening in the area.

"Despite protesting multiple times over the condition of the road, the authorities seemed to be in deep slumber.

"This road has a vital significance as it is only 5 Kilometres away from Central city— Lalchowk," said a commuter, demanding macadamization. (CNS)

## Nowshera Acid Attack: Sessions Court Records Statement Of SIT

**Observer News Service**

**SRINAGAR:** The Principal Sessions Court Srinagar on Monday recorded the statement of head of Special Investigation Team (SIT) which was constituted for the investigation of Srinagar acid attack case during 2014.

Head of Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigating acid attack, Rayees Mohammad Bhat, SSP Baramulla, then SP Hazratbal on Monday appeared before the court of Principal District and Sessions Court Srinagar where his statement was recorded and the case was listed on 3 May 2021 for cross examination.

Special Public Prosecutor AA Teli said that Court has recorded the statement of Rayees Bhat (SSP Baramulla) who was head of Special Investigation team constituted for Speedy investigation of the Nowshera Acid case.

The Court has charged the accused under sections 307 (attempt to murder), 362 (causing damage to vital organ) 354 (Outrage of Modesty) of RPC.

Pertinently on December 2014, a 21-year-old college girl pursuing law course was attacked with acid by unknown car-borne youngsters who sped away after leaving the victim in withering pain. The incident evoked protests and condemnations across Valley. (CNS)

## Srinagar Admin To Set Up 50 More Covid-19 Vaccination Centres

**Observer News Service**

**SRINAGAR:** Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar Mohammed Aijaz Asad Monday called for intensifying vaccination process in the district to safeguard people and fight fresh wave of Covid-19.

The Deputy Commissioner said this while chairing a meeting with officers of all Government departments and health care warriors including BMO, ZMOs review the achievements made with regard to ongoing vaccination process in Srinagar, besides the mitigation measures undertaken to control the second wave of Covid-19.

The meeting also discussed the impact of the process and precautions of the measures that need to be taken to address the looming threat of spread of the 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

On the occasion, the DC directed the officers not to lower the guard and continue to maintain the highest level of alertness to ensure implementation of SOPs to counter the spread of virus.

The meeting was informed that the Health functionaries and other frontline workers are working in day in and day out to get the vaccination

process done well in time to save the precious lives of the people by motivating them to come forward and get vaccinated forthwith.

The DC reiterated that apart from executing proactive measures, mobilization of all resources and manpower shall be put on ready gear to enable the Administration to tackle any emergencies arising from the 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The Deputy Commissioner directed for setting up additional 50 vaccination centers and immunization teams to expand coverage. Presently 96 Vaccination centres are in place. He also stressed on maintaining and updating database of the vaccination being done on daily basis to ensure data is submitted well in time to concerned quarters.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the officers of different Government departments to undertake the vaccination of their subordinate employees to safeguard their families.

The DC urged upon the general public to cooperate with the District Administration in making the Covid drive successful in the district. He further said that the vaccination is most necessary for fighting against the Coronavirus pandemic.

## 'No Decision Yet On Imposing Lockdown'

**Observer News Service**

The district administration Srinagar refuted reports about the imposition of lockdown in the district, saying that there was no such decision at present and that adequate beds and oxygen supply is available within the district.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Muhammad Aijaz Asad told reporters that they have not received any decision vis-à-vis imposing the lockdown in view of spike in Covid-19 cases. "Whenever a decision in this regard would be taken, we as an implementing agency will take necessary steps accordingly," he said.

Asked about the availability of oxygen supply, he said there was no shortage of the oxygen supply and on the directions of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, the administration is further setting up oxygen plants, which would be made functional shortly.

About bed capacity, DC Srinagar said that sufficient beds are available at present. "The beds are also sufficiently available at the COVID designated centres established last year by the administration," he said—(KNO)

## 50 Percent Capacity Of Passengers To Be Allowed In Public Transport

**Observer News Service**

Mayor Srinagar Municipal Committee Junaid Azim Mattu Monday took stock of the measures in wake of surge in Covid-19 cases.

He passed on directions to all the enforcement agencies to manage the situation on day to day basis with reasonable restrictions in synergy with guidelines of SDMA.

He also stressed on the need for constituting a General Committee to reach out to the people.

He said only 50% capacity of the passengers shall be allowed in public transport in coordination with traffic Police.

He further stressed that Rapid Testing shall be made mandatory for the travellers and tourists coming from outside

## Five More Srinagar Localities Declared Micro-Containment Zones

**Observer News Service**

The authorities on Monday declared five more localities of Zadibal and Batamalo areas of Srinagar in view of detection of fresh Covid-19 cases.

In an order the Srinagar admin said that 5 more localities of Zadibal and Batamalo have been declared as Covid-19 containment zones to prevent the further spread of the virus. The areas which have been declared as containment zones include Meerakabad Shalimar, Hyder Colony Kill Khan Gali Upper Soura, Buchpora Firdous Colony in Zadibal and Gazaliabad Lane No. 01 HMT and Shahanwar Colony Lane 02 in Batamalo area of Srinagar.

Officials said that at least these areas have at least 33 active cases of Covid-19 and to prevent the further spread of the virus, these localities have been declared as micro-containment zones—(KNO)

### 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: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

### HIGHWAY STATUS

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

## This Day in History

- 1611 - First known performance of Shakespeare's tragedy Macbeth at the Globe Theatre,
- London, recorded by Simon Forman
- 1650 - Dutch East India Company (VOC) management sets new guidelines
- 1657 - Battle in Santa Cruz Bay, Tenerife: English fleet under Robert Blake sinks Spanish silver fleet
- 1689 - The former King James II of England, now deposed, lays siege to Derry
- 1702 - Comet C/1702 H1 approaches within 0.0437 AUs of Earth
- 1792 - France declares war on Austria, Prussia & Sardinia
- 1809 - Napoleon I and French forces defeat Austria at Battle of Abensberg, Bavaria
- 1862 - The first pasteurization test is completed by Frenchmen Louis Pasteur and Claude Bernard.
- 1910 - Halley's Comet passes 29th recorded perihelion at 87.9 mn km
- 1915 - The Armenians rise and seize the Turkish town of Van, which they hold until Russians relieve them on 19 May; thousands of Armenians are killed
- 1916 - German-British sea battle off Belgian coast
- 1940 - 1st electron microscope demonstrated (RCA), Philadelphia, Pa
- 1958 - Morocco demands departure of Spanish troops
- 1961 - American Harold Graham makes 1st rocket belt flight
- 1962 - NASA civilian pilot Neil Armstrong takes X-15 to 63,250 m
- 1965 - People's Republic China offers North Vietnam military aid
- 1967 - US Surveyor 3 lands on Moon
- 1967 - US planes bomb Haiphong for 1st time during Vietnam War
- 1968 - Pierre Trudeau sworn in as Canada's 15th Prime Minister
- 1972 - Apollo 16's Young & Duke land on Moon with Boeing Lunar Rover #2
- 1983 - Soyuz T-8 launched; mission aborted when capsule fails to dock
- 1983 - Soyuz T-8 is launched (lands 2 days later)
- 1988 - US accuses Renamo of killing 100,000 Mozambiquians
- 1993 - Uranus passes Neptune (once every 171 years)
- 1994 - Serbian army bombs hospital in Goradze Bosnia, 47 killed- 1994 - Sohail & Inzamam make world record ODI partnership of 263
- 1994 - Space shuttle STS-59 (Endeavour 6), lands
- 1998 - TAME Boeing 727-200 chartered by Air France crashes into Cerro El Cable mountain after takeoff from Bogotá, Colombia, killing 53.

## From KO Archives

## 3 LET MEN AMONG 7 KILLED IN JK

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR** – Seven persons, including six militants – three of them from the Lashkar-e-Taiba – were killed in separate incidents of violence in Jammu and Kashmir since Monday evening.

Unidentified gunmen sprayed bullets on a released militant of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Abdul Ahad Chak at Tangmarg Bazar, 45 kms from here in Baramulla district today. Chak, a resident of Qazpora and now working as a contractor, was shifted to hospital where he was declared dead.

Three militants of the LeT outfit identified as. Abu Abdullah Umar alias Delta-2, Abu Katlal alias Ronico-2 and Abu Jabran alias Juliet-1 were killed in an encounter with security forces and police at Naliyan-Shiudhara top in Poonch sector last evening.

Three AK rifles, 9 magazines, 78 rounds, 3 hand grenades, a wireless set, a recovered from the slain militants.

Another militant, yet to be identified, was shot dead by security forces in a gunfight at Hari Wala in Gool area of Duahmpur, reports said.

Two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants identified as Waqqas Ahmad of Pakistan and Javid Ahmad Peer of Kandi area of Kupwara were killed in a gunbattle with security forces at village Dardpora Khas in Kupwara district.

A defence spokesman said that Javid Ahmad Peer was a divisional commander of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and was long wanted by the security forces.

Militants fired on a patrol part} of security forces at Preng-Ganderbal, 27 kms from here in Srinagar last night. The security forces returned fire but no loss of life was reported.

(Kashmir Observer, 20 April, 2005)

## NC Rues Power Outages In Srinagar

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** National Conference (NC) on Monday rued power outages particularly during Sehri, Iftar and Taraweeh, saying the claim of the administration to ensure provision of electricity on all feeders to people during these hours has fallen flat.

Former Speaker Legislative Assembly Mubarak Gul expressed concern over the frequent power outages in the Srinagar city in particular the suburbs of Srinagar in Eidgah constituency.

"On the contrary, ever since the holy month of Ramzan has set in, the electricity has been playing hide and seek with the consumers particularly during Iftaar, Sehri, and Tarawhi

hours. This has put the people to undue trepidation. However the concerned departments have failed to live up to its promise to ensure adequate power supply to domestic consumers," he said.

He said that he has been receiving phone calls from across the old city areas in particular the Eidgah constituency where consumers from different areas informed him how they are facing more power cuts at Sehri, and Iftar. "People are forced to have Sehri and Iftaar under candlelight, lamps. It goes without saying that the usage of electricity increases manifold during the ongoing month. I am hopeful that the concerned authorities will live up to its promises and ensure adequate power supply to consumers

across Srinagar in particular the suburban area of Pal Pura in Eidgah constituency," he said.

Meanwhile expressing concern over the oddities faced by people living in Srinagar city, Gul said "Never has the road infrastructure been so horrendous, as it is these days. The entire road surface of the city these days is marked by potholes, piths and crumbling black topping, making it very difficult for public and private transport to ply. The gravel, slush and dust on the road stretch has made it difficult for the pedestrians to walk on the road not to speak of plying their vehicles," he said.

He impressed upon the administration the need of reining in the malefactors who indulge in black-marketing, and hoarding. He asked the government



to take cognizance of scarcity of essentials across Kashmir division including taking action against those meat sellers who are charging exorbitant rates from consumers. "It looks like the government is sleeping at a

time when it should have taken preemptive measures to ensure hassle free Ramzan to people. I hope the concerned departments will swing into action to ensure price stability across markets," he said—(KNO)



## Afghan Mosque Attack Kills Eight



KABUL: At least eight members of a family were killed after un-

known gunmen opened fire at a mosque in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province. A police spokesperson said they were investigating the incident, but no one had been arrested yet. Provincial governor Ziaulhaq Amarkhail said it may be the result of some dispute over a private land. Last April, six tribals were killed in armed clashes over a land dispute in the same province. — IANS

## Bangladesh Cracks Down On Islamist Group After Anti-Modi Protests



Agencies

Hundreds of members and supporters of an Islamist group, including its influential leader, have been arrested in Bangladesh over the past week, officials said, over deadly protests against the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month for the country's golden jubilee celebrations of independence.

The protests across several districts in Bangladesh were mostly led by the Hefazat-e-Islam group, whose members accused India's Hindu nationalist leader of stoking religious polarisation and discriminating against minorities, particularly Muslims, in his country.

At least 13 Hefazat supporters died in police firing during the days-long demonstrations against Modi's two-day visit as they attacked a police station and other government buildings, and blocked highways elsewhere in the country.

In the capital Dhaka, they clashed with police outside the country's main Baitul Mukarram National Mosque during the visit.

On Sunday, the group's joint secretary, Mamunul Haque, was arrested at a madrasa (Islamic school) in Dhaka's Mohammadpur neighbourhood, Harunur Rashid, a senior Dhaka Metropolitan Police official, said.

Haque, 47, faces charges of instigating violence but police did not provide details on specific cases or whether the charges stem from Modi's visit.

"We will investigate all allegations against him since Haque is accused in a number of cases related to inciting violence," Rashid told reporters.

A further 298 Hefazat members and supporters were arrested in the eastern rural dis-

trict of Brahmanbaria where anti-Modi demonstrations were also held, police said on Sunday.

"We arrested them by identifying them through video footage," Brahmanbaria police's deputy chief, Mohammad Roish Uddin, told the AFP news agency.

Hefazat spokesman Jakaria Noman Foyezi told AFP that 23 leaders of his organisation had been detained by police, calling the police claims against them "false and fabricated".

In a speech to Bangladesh's parliament earlier this month, Hasina warned the group and its leaders they would face consequences if they continue to resort to violence.

Haque and his associates led a recent campaign against building a sculpture of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hasina's father, saying sculptures are unIslamic. The government backed off.

Founded in 2010, Hefazat is Bangladesh's largest hardline Islamist outfit and draws its support from millions of students and teachers in thousands of religious schools in the Muslim-majority nation.

Although the organisation says it is not a political party, it has gained eminence after the fall of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh's largest Islamist political party.

Hefazat leaders in their sermons regularly talk about the country's politics, advocating an Islamic revolution in the nation of 160 million people.

Hefazat-e-Islam also wants Hasina's government to enact blasphemy laws, under which anyone convicted of criticising Islam's prophet would face the death penalty.

A 2013 rally in Dhaka by thousands of Hefazat supporters demanding a blasphemy law ended in unrest and dozens of deaths.

## Banned Party Frees 11 Abducted Pakistani Policemen After Talks



Asad Hashim/ Al Jazeera

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN – Protesters belonging to Pakistan's far-right Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) group have released 11 police officers abducted during violent clashes in the eastern city of Lahore, the country's interior minister says, as negotiations remain ongoing. Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed, speaking in a video message issued early on Monday, said "a lot of progress" had been made in the first round of negotiations.

"They have released the 11 policemen they had abducted and the people of the TLP have gone into the Rehmat ul Ali-meen mosque and police have also moved back," Rasheed said. Several policemen and protesters were wounded in clashes on Sunday, which began after TLP activists attacked a police station in the Sodhiwal area of Pakistan's second city Lahore, police spokesperson Nayab Haider told Al Jazeera.

Protesters retreated on Monday to a nearby TLP mosque, around 2 km (1.2 miles) from the site of Sunday's clashes, Haider said. Police had also moved back and reduced the number of officers deployed as negotiations took place, he added.

Haider said no policemen had been killed in Sunday's violence, and that authorities were not aware of any casualties on the TLP's side.

TLP representatives did not respond to Al Jazeera's request for comment on Monday.

Meanwhile, several religious parties called a strike on Monday in solidarity with the TLP, with authorities raising security levels in the capital Islamabad and elsewhere.

'Terrorist organisation'

Last week, the Pakistani government designated the TLP a "terrorist" organisation under anti-terrorism legislation, with authorities saying they would move to have the Election Commission delist the group as a political party.

That move came after days of violent TLP protests in Lahore, the country's largest city of Karachi, Rawalpindi and elsewhere, as the group demanded the release of its chief Saad Rizvi from police custody.

Founded in 2017, the TLP is a hardline religious group that has held several major countrywide demonstrations on the issue of perceived "blas-

phemy" against Islam.

Its latest protest movement was launched in November against the French government, after French President Emmanuel Macron made comments that were interpreted by some, including Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, as "encouraging Islamophobia".

Macron had defended a publication's right to republish caricatures of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, an act considered "blasphemous" by some Muslims.

Blasphemy is a sensitive subject in Pakistan, where certain forms of the crime carry a mandatory death penalty.

There has also been a rise in violence related to such accusations, with at least 78 people killed in mob and targeted attacks in relation to blasphemy allegations since 1990, according to an Al Jazeera tally.

The TLP, whose previous anti-government protests have been supported by PM Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party when it was in the opposition, won more than two million votes in the country's 2018 general election, although they translated to just three provincial assembly seats in the southern region of Sindh.

In response to Macron's comments, the TLP has demanded Pakistan expel the French ambassador, boycott French goods and take other measures. While the government initially agreed to place those demands before parliament, Interior Minister Rasheed said last week that the TLP refused to agree upon the wording of a parliamentary resolution on the issue, stalling progress.

On Monday, Pakistani PM Imran Khan appeared to address the issue during an event in the capital Islamabad, saying "some religious parties [...] use Islam wrongly."

## Iran Says Open To Talks With Saudi Arabia After Media Reports

Agencies

TEHRAN, IRAN – Iran's foreign ministry has said the country is open to direct talks with Saudi Arabia after media reports said the two regional rivals recently held secret talks in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh on Monday refused to confirm or deny the reported talks on April 9 in Baghdad, but added that media outlets have used "contradictory quotes" and have had a history of fabricating news, referring to reports by the London-based newspaper Financial Times and news agency Reuters.

Khatibzadeh, however, pointed out that Iran "has always welcomed talks with the Saudi kingdom and has deemed it beneficial to the two countries' people and regional peace and stability, and this thought will continue".

The talks also reportedly touched on Lebanon, which is in political and economic turmoil, and where Arab states are concerned about the influence of the



Iran-backed Hezbollah movement.

Unnamed sources from Iran and Saudi Arabia denied talks were held in Iraq.

The reported meeting came shortly after Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi travelled to Saudi Arabia to hold talks with its top leadership, including powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Al-Kadhimi also visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE), another Iranian adversary in the region.

after a prominent Shia Muslim leader was executed by Riyadh. According to reports by the Financial Times and Reuters, Iranian and Saudi officials held direct talks on April 9 to discuss the war in Yemen, where a Saudi Arabia-led military coalition has been battling the Iran-aligned Houthis rebels since March 2015. The talks also reportedly touched on Lebanon, which is in political and economic turmoil, and where Arab states are concerned about the influence of the

## Covid Survivors May Need Just One Shot Of 2-Dose Vaccines, Say Studies



Agencies

Coronavirus vaccines were just rolling out in December when more than 1,000 staffers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles volunteered for a sweeping study. The goal: pinpoint how immune reactions to the jab might vary.

By last month, a clear pattern in the data "popped out at us," said research leader Susan Cheng. Those who had recovered from Covid-19 responded to their first shot so robustly that the results rivaled never-infected colleagues who had received both shots. The implication was clear. If you've had Covid, you may only need one of the two doses recommended by Pfizer and Moderna.

"We did not expect that this was going to jump out like a smoking gun," said Cheng, who co-authored the Nature Medicine write-up. In fact, if you already had the virus, your immune response after one vaccine is likely to be even better than a never-infected person's after two, according to Italian research just out in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The issue of giving only a single dose to people who have had Covid has become all the more urgent since safety concerns have been raised about Johnson & Johnson's and AstraZeneca's

vaccines. The implications at a time of strained global supply are striking: giving previously infected people just one mRNA vaccine shot could free up more than 110 million doses worldwide, according to a calculation by University of Maryland School of Medicine immunologist Mohammad Sajadi and colleagues.

'Remembering' Covid Sajadi co-authored one of the recent studies that fit into a recent flurry of findings all pointing in the same direction: The immune system in people who've had Covid "remembers" the virus, so a first vaccine acts as a powerful booster for existing defenses. "The data is very clear," Sajadi said. "Every study has shown you get a very clear and strong memory response."

Since February, several European countries -- including France, Spain, Italy and Germany -- have adopted policies giving Covid survivors just one dose of the two-dose vaccines.

In Israel, a world leader on coronavirus vaccinations, health authorities initially withheld vaccines altogether from recovered Covid patients, but in February recommended they receive one shot. New research there suggests that the booster vaccine adds protection against newer variants that originated in the U.K., South Africa and Brazil.

## South African Variant May "Break Through" Pfizer Vaccine Protection, Says Study

JERUSALEM: The coronavirus variant discovered in South Africa can break through the protection provided by Pfizer Inc and BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine to some extent, a real-world data study in Israel found. However, the variant's prevalence in Israel is very low and the vaccine remains highly effective.

The study was released on the medRxiv pre-print site on April 9 and has not been peer reviewed. It compared almost 400 people who had tested positive for COVID-19, after they received one or two doses of the vaccine, against the same number of unvaccinated patients with the disease. It matched age and gender, among other characteristics.

The South African variant, B.1.351, was found to make up about 1% of all the COVID-19 cases across all the people studied, according to the study by Tel Aviv University and Israel's largest healthcare provider, Clalit.

But among patients who had received two doses of the vaccine, the variant's prevalence rate was eight times higher than those unvaccinated - 5.4% versus 0.7%. This suggests the vaccine is less effective against the South African variant, compared with



the original coronavirus and a variant first identified in Britain that has come to comprise nearly all COVID-19 cases in Israel, the researchers said.

The researchers said the study was not intended to assess overall vaccine effectiveness against any variant, since it only looked at people who had already tested positive for COVID-19, not at overall infection rates.

Separate real-world Israeli studies on the vaccine's overall effectiveness, including by Clalit, have shown the Pfizer shot to be more than 90% effective.

"We found a disproportionately higher rate of the South African variant among people vaccinated with a second dose, compared to the unvaccinated group. This means that the South African variant is able, to some extent, to break through the vaccine's protection," said Tel Aviv University's Adi Stern. **REUTERS**

### NEWS MAKERS

## Top Commander: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Iranian Army's Trump Card In Any Battle

Agencies

The chief commander of the Iranian Army says drones are now a substantial component of the Islamic Republic's Armed Forces and will be used in any battle if the need arises.

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi made the remarks on the sidelines of a military march held on Sunday to mark the National Army Day, during which Iran's latest military achievements, including home-grown air defense systems, were showcased.

"What you saw today was a small portion of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army's capabilities



FARS

put on display," the commander said, adding that all the necessary health precautions had been taken into consideration during the parade at a time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Today, you witnessed the emerging drone power of the

Islamic Republic of Iran Army, and it must be noted that this power was developed during all the years the country was under [Washington's] 'maximum pressure'."

Sanctions have restrictive implications for any coun-

try, Mousavi said, but those who view the bans as an opportunity for national breakthroughs are the ones who can ultimately have a say at the international arena.

The Army's air defense division on Sunday unveiled three domestically-developed missile systems, including Zolfaghar low-altitude missile system that enjoys great mobility and can connect to electro-optic systems.

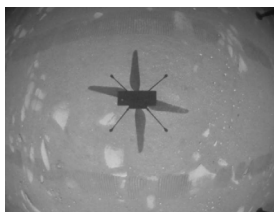
The Majid missile system, used for intercepting and downing low-altitude targets as well as cruise missiles, and the Khatam artillery fire control system, capable of striking various aerial targets at low altitudes, were also showcased.

## NASA's Mars Helicopter Makes History With Successful Flight On Red Planet

LOS ANGELES: NASA's miniature robot helicopter Ingenuity performed a successful takeoff and landing on Mars early on Monday, achieving the first powered, controlled flight by an aircraft over the surface of another planet, the US space agency said.

The twin-rotor whirling debut on the Red Planet marked a 21st-century Wright Brothers moment for NASA, which said success could pave the way for new modes of exploration on Mars and other destinations in the solar system, such as Venus and Saturn's moon Titan.

Mission managers at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) near Los Angeles burst into ap-



plause and cheers as engineering data beamed back from Mars confirmed that the 4-pound (1.8-kg) solar-powered helicopter had performed its maiden 40-second flight precisely as planned three hours earlier.

The robot rotorcraft was programmed to ascend 10 feet (3 meters) straight up, then hover and rotate in place over the Martian surface for half a minute before settling back down on its four legs.

During NASA's presentation of the event livestreamed from JPL headquarters, mission managers also displayed the first images from the flight.

A black-and-white photo taken by a downward-pointing onboard camera while the helicopter was aloft showed the distinct shadow cast by Ingenuity in the Martian sunlight onto the ground just below it.

And a snippet of color video footage captured by a separate camera mounted on the NASA's Mars rover Perseverance, parked about 200 feet away, showed the helicopter in flight against the orange-colored landscape surrounding it.

"We can now say that human beings have flown an aircraft on another planet," said MiMi Aung,

Ingenuity project manager at JPL.

Despite the flight's brevity, it marked a historic feat in interplanetary aviation, taking place on an "air field" 173 million miles from Earth on the floor of a vast Martian basin called Jezero Crater.

NASA likened the achievement to the Wright Brothers' first controlled flight of their motor-driven airplane near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in December 1903 - a takeoff and landing that covered just 120 feet (37 meters) in 12 seconds.

Paying tribute to that modest but monumental first flight, NASA engineers affixed a tiny swath of wing fabric from the original Wright flyer under Ingenuity's solar panel before sending it on its way to Mars. **REUTERS**



## Revenue Generation Of Floriculture Dept Registers 46 Percent Dip In Two Years

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In the past two Financial Years (FY), the department of floriculture Kashmir has witnessed a dip of nearly 54 percent in revenue generation as compared to the five financial years from 2014-2019.

The officials of the Department of Floriculture Kashmir said that in past two financial years, there has been a continuous dip of 53.96 percent in revenue generation as compared to the previous five financial years. According to the official figures, since the financial year 2014-15 to 2018-19, a total amount of Rs 26.89 crores were generated from various gardens and structures falling under the department.

However, in the past two financial years that includes 2019-20 and 2020-21, a total of Rs 4.95 crores of revenue was generated by the department.

The documents reveal that in the past seven financial years, a total of Rs 31.84 crores were generated by the department.

The breakup-wise figures of Department of Floriculture Kashmir states that in the financial year 2014-15, a total revenue of Rs 434.4 lakhs was generated by the department.

Similarly, in the financial year 2015-16, the department had generated a total of Rs 397.9 lakhs from the various gardens of their jurisdiction.

The figures further reveal that in the financial year 2016-17, a total of Rs 555.6 lakhs were generated by the department followed by the financial year 2017-18 wherein the department had generated a total of Rs 489 lakhs.

According to the official figures, among the past seven financial years, the highest number of revenue was generated in the 2018-19 in which the department made a collection of Rs 812.2 lakhs.

The two weak financial years according to the official figures are 2019-20 and 2020-21 wherein the department of floriculture generated only a total amount of Rs 288.1 lakhs and Rs 207 lakhs respectively—(KNO)

## Two KPDCL Engineers Attached Over Ramazan Power Cuts



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Facing sharp criticism and outrage over the frequent power cuts during the holy month of Ramazan, the Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday ordered action against two senior officials of the power department for showing laxity in their work.

Taking serious note of laxity in electric supply during Iftar and

Sehri times in Srinagar district, the government on Monday attached The Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) Bemina and the Assistant Engineer (AE) Zakura, of the Kashmir power development corporation limited (KPDCL) with the office of the Managing Director, KPDCL, an official spokesperson said. Both the officers, he said, will be attached till the time a detailed enquiry is conducted on the issue.

"It may be recalled that a number of public grievances about disruptions in power supply during Iftar and Sehri times had been received from these areas," the official spokesperson said.

He further said that the Managing Director, KPDCL and Chief Engineer, Distribution, Kashmir have also been directed to personally monitor the supply of electricity and ensure no disruptions.

## Irregular Power Cuts Irk Ganderbal Residents

Observer News Service

**GANDERBAL:** Residents of several villages of Lower Kangan area in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Saturday expressed resentment against the Power Development Department (PDD) for failing to provide adequate electricity to them especially in the holy month of Ramadan.

The residents said that they are not getting the electricity as per the schedule and are facing tremendous hardships especially during Sehri and Iftar times.

The locals from Prang, Kangan, Akhal Anderwan Haripora, Wussan, Chattergul, Kachnabal, Najwan, Wayil, Nunner and

main town Ganderbal said they are getting electricity for merely two to four hours in a day, thus leaving the consumers here to lurch at large, adding that the concerned department, however, is acting as mute spectator.

Irshad Ahmad from Kangan said that despite paying hefty electricity bills, the department has failed to ensure adequate electricity to them, adding that the locals are being pushed to the wall by forcing them to reel under darkness.

The locals appealed Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal to intervene into the matter and ensure that the adequate electricity is provided to them especially during the ongoing holy month of Ramadan—(KNO)

## Two Residential Houses Guttled In Ganderbal Blaze

Observer News Service

**GANDERBAL:** The residential houses of two brothers were damaged in a massive blaze that broke out in Waliwar area of Lar in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Monday afternoon.

Locals said that massive fire broke out from one of the residential houses in this afternoon, which engulfed the other nearby structure as well.

The houses belong to Alam Din Ghazi and Kalam Din Ghazi, sons of Juma Ghazi from Chount Waliwar.

Soon after the fire broke out, the fire tenders rushed to the spot and doused the flames, locals said adding that both the residential houses, however, suffered huge damage in the blaze.

Meanwhile, the locals urged the administration to compensate the affected families—(KNO)

## Woman Dead, Two Minor Siblings Injured In Karnah Accident

Observer News Service

**KUPWARA:** A woman has died even as two minor siblings have sustained injuries after a vehicle they were on-board met an accident at Hajinar Karnah area of this north-Kashmir district.

An official told Srinagar-based news agency Global News Service (GNS) that a Tata Sumo vehicle bearing registration number JK-09 2710 driven by one Javid Ahmad Khan met an accident result-

ing in on-spot death of a woman and injuries to two others.

Identifying the deceased as Rukhsar Begum (30) wife of Tasleem Ahmad Lone, a resident of Bakhiyaan Tanghdar, the injured minor girl duo as per the official included Zohra Shameem(3) and Zoya Shameem – daughters of Shameem Ahmad of Haihama village in the district. The injured duo has been evacuated to sub-district hospital Kupwara for treatment, the official said. (GNS)

# Covid-19: Experts Warn Of Deadly Second Wave

'Young People Should Remain Vigilant'

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Covid-19 resurgence wave is very steep, and if the callous attitude of people continues, lockdown is the only option to control the pandemic, experts said on Monday.

Dr Mohammad Sultan Khuroo said that there are several things that have taken us by great surprise in the second wave.

"The wave is extraordinary steep and it shows something has happened," Khuroo said.

Khuroo said that the callous attitude of people towards the pandemic, political and religious activities and the presence of mutant variants are the possible reasons behind the resurgence.

"A mutation can occur when the virus can die. When it can be weak than the mutant variant when it becomes as strong as the parent virus. Besides, the mutant variant spreads faster and can kill more people," he said.

"Earlier we used to say that protect elderly people having comorbidities but it is severe now and is involving younger people. Earlier it was behaving mildly but now infection is severe among young people too, so there is a need to protect every person," he said. "Although in very few but severe Covid-19 infection can affect lungs of younger people and in few cases, there can be inflammatory syndrome."

Khuroo said that young people have to remain now more vigilant as the vaccination process hasn't been started for them.

"As of now and everyone must follow covid appreciate behaviour so as to beat the Covid-19."

He said that even if people today start following Co-

## 'High Time To Take Precautions, Follow SOP'

Observer News Service

**S**rinagar Kashmir's top medico Dr Naveed Nazir Monday said that it's high time for the people to take all precautions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic and that the situation shouldn't be allowed to go out of control.

Head of Department at Chest Diseases Hospital Dalgate, Srinagar, Dr Naveed said that the situation shouldn't be allowed to go out of control and people should take all precautions to prevent the spread of the virus.

"We had been stating that Covid is here and it has not gone away. One thing that needs to be hailed is that people have started following SOPs. There is hardly anyone who doesn't wear a mask. This is a good sign," he said, adding that "we must strictly follow SOPs and contain the situation."

About the present position at CD hospital, one of the premier hospitals dealing with the Covid positive patients, Dr Naveed said that there are over 100 beds available for the virus affected patients and almost there is 90

per cent occupancy. "We are not admitting patients with mild symptoms and they are asked to go for home isolation. At present all our beds are almost full. We have oxygen facility at all the beds and have ventilators as a backup as well. We also have 50 more beds available as a backup at a nursing home," the leading medico said. He said that all the cases admitted at CD hospital are severe cases who need oxygen and injectable.

Dr Naveed said that SMHS and other hospitals have also been designated as Covid hospitals "but people shouldn't allow the situation to go out of control and stick to Covid protocols strictly."

About the Covid vaccine, he said that there are some cases who have tested positive even after taking the Covid vaccine, but that is obvious as the vaccine takes at least three weeks to adjust in the body. "Its efficacy too isn't 100 percent but it has surely helped to prevent the severity in the patients who test positive, which is significant. People must take Covid vaccines as it helps to prevent mortality," he said—(KNO)

tal said that severity is more now in younger people too.

"Authorities are here selective, schools have been closed but music concerts and other things are going on," he said, adding that there is a need for a pragmatic approach and need to keep a vigil on national highway and airport.

"Lockdown is not a solution but there is a need to install proper checking points so that we can beat the Covid-19 pandemic," he said—(KNO)

## FOREST LAND ENCROACHMENT

## Govt Sets Up District Panels To Address Complaints

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Nearly seven months after setting up a high-level committee to decide on complaints about the encroachment of forestland in Jammu & Kashmir, the administration of the Union Territory has now constituted the district-level committees to hear such complaints in a time-bound manner.

According to an order, the sub-committee headed by the respective deputy commissioners would address these complaints in a time-bound manner.

The committees would also comprise of Additional Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Revenue, Divisional Forest Officer, Territorial Headquarter,

Divisional Forest Officer concerned and Tehsildar concerned.

The committees would provide regular hearing to the parties to address the complaints in a time-bound manner.

These panels have also been mandated to delete the illegal entries and evict encroachers from forest land under Indian Forest Act, 1927 and relevant Revenue Acts/laws.

The order further states that these committees will assist and report to the high-level panel constituted by the J&K government on the matter on 19 September, 2020.

The high-level committee was constituted last year after the High Court directed the government to set-up a panel for receiving and deciding all complaints of encroachments of forestland in a time-bound manner.

The committee is headed by Principal Secretary Revenue and comprises Commissioner Secretary, Forests, Ecology and Environment, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu and Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir.

In its first meeting held on September 28, 2020, the committee recommended that sub-committees shall be constituted at the district-level to provide regular hearing to the parties, citing that the Indian Forest Act-1927 and Revenue laws empower the divisional forest officer and deputy commissioner to decide on the status of the land involved.

## Former Pulwama Hospital Officer Booked In Disproportionate Assets Case

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Anti-Corruption Bureau Monday registered a Disproportionate Assets case against Ghulam Nabi, the then Section Officer in the office of Medical Superintendent, District Hospital Pulwama.

A spokesperson in a statement informed that Anti-Corruption Bureau registered a Case FIR No.01/2021, under Section 5(1) (e) r/w 5(2) of PC Act. Svt.2006 against Ghulam Nabi, a resident of Pachhar Pulwama, the then Section Officer in the office of Medical Superintendent, District Hospital Pulwama for amassing various assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

He said that instant case was registered on the outcome of preliminary Enquiry conducted by PS ACB Anantnag, to look in

to the allegations that the accused has amassed huge assets disproportionate to his known source of income.

"During the course of preliminary enquiry, accused Ghulam Nabi has been found to have acquired numerous immovable as well as movable assets in his name as well as in the name of his family members, apart from investment in Insurance Policies and huge expenditure on the education of his children. The verification culminated into the registration FIR in Police Station ACB Anantnag."

He said searches were also conducted at the residential house of the accused and business establishment at Khedermoh Pampore, Pulwama. During the searches various incriminating documents related to the instant case were seized. "Further investigation of the case is going on."

## Director DIPR Reviews Functioning Of Department

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Director Information and Public Relation, Rahul Pandey Monday chaired an officers meeting of Kashmir division and reviewed the functioning of the department.

Joint Director Information Kashmir, Haris Ahmad Handoo, Assistant Director, Public Relations/ FPO Kashmir M Aslam Khan, Asstt Dir (AV), Javed Ahmad Rather, Cultural Officer, Srinagar Riyaz Ahmad Fazli, Sachin Bali and Tawheed Ahmad (Jr KAS officers) were present in the meeting.

The meeting discussed various issues pertaining to administration, advertisement, PR and the cultural activities started by the department.

Joint Director briefed the director about the action taken on the decisions taken in the previous meeting with regard to alternate Govt accommodation for divisional office, auction of condemned vehicles, holding of DPC, empanelment and de-empanelment of newspapers etc.

The Director issued several directions to make the functioning of the department more vibrant.

## CUK VC Inspects Examination Centres



**GANDERBAL:** Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir on Monday inspected the examination centres of the varsity across various campuses and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made in view of the Covid-19.

The Vice Chancellor was informed that strict Covid protocol is followed while conducting the examinations and SOPs are followed in letter and spirit. Vice Chancellor Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir, exhorted upon the employees of the health section of the university to take all necessary precautions and measures to ensure Covid free examination.

Director Tulmulla Campus, Prof. (Dr.) Shahid Rasool, while accompanying the Vice

Chancellor at Tulmulla Campus, informed the VC that Covid Protocol officers have been designated in each department of the Campus, who are given the responsibility to ensure full compliance to the SOPs issued by the government. He said that RAT testing was conducted today in the campus and the students and staff were tested on the spot for any possible case but none was found positive. Posters and banners have been installed at entry points of departments and prominent places across the campus, informing the students, faculty and staff about the COVID SOPs. He further said a fine of Rs 50 would be charged from a student and Rs 200 from the employees found without wearing a mask in the campus at any time.

Later Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir chaired a meeting of the Deans and discussed the issues related to re-emergence of Covid-19. Some of the exams have been postponed and some rescheduled to ensure the attendance on the campus is thinner. The counselling of Ph.D aspirants for the recently held entrance test has also been postponed.

## NEWS MAKERS

## SKUAST-K Bags EU Project For Urban Green Infrastructure

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Adding another feather to its cap, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Kashmir has bagged a prestigious European Union (EU) Project, 'URGENT', for the promotion of urban green infrastructure and climate-friendly liveable cities.

The project has been granted to the SKUAST-K's Faculty of Forestry under the European Union's Erasmus education programme on 'Urban Resilience and Adaptation through Nature-based Solutions' as a project partner.

'URGENT' is yet another such prestigious project received by the university. Earlier in 2019, the university got a Rs 30-crore grant under National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) jointly funded by the World Bank and Indian Council of Agricultural Research for the institutional development of the SKUAST-K.

University after signing the agreement with the University of Bremen, Germany entered into a collaboration with four European Universities, three universities and two institutes in Mongolia, besides three universities and two institutes in India with a consortium outlay



of one million Euros (€). The grant agreement pre-signed by Director of Finance and Administration, University of Bremen, Frauke Meyer, was signed by V-C SKUAST-K, Prof JP Sharma in presence of Director Planning and Monitoring Prof NA Ganai, Dean Faculty of Forestry Prof TH Masoodi, and Principal Investigator of the project Dr Akhlaq Amin Wani.

The V-C at the moment lauded the Dean Forestry for encouraging the scientists of the faculty for achieving such a historic feat. He congratulated PI of the project Dr Akhlaq Amin Wani for bringing laurels to the university.

Prof NA Ganai in his remarks congratulated the project and said that bagging such projects will make the presence of SKUAST-K felt at the global level.

The project is the first of its kind for SKUAST-K in receiving a direct grant from the European Union

and provides an opportunity to enter into collaboration with some of the finest universities in Europe including the University of Bremen Germany, University of Catania Italy, Estonian University of Life Sciences and Martin Luther University Germany besides some of the leading universities and institutes in Mongolia and India.

The project aim is to promote green & blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions (GBI&NBS) for resilient, climate-friendly and liveable cities through ICT-enhanced tertiary education linked to labour markets & wider stakeholder circles.

It is joint research in managing urban forest, resilience and adaptation, revising existing curricula with European standards, capacity building and creation of learning platforms for enhancing green and blue infrastructure in the respective regions.

## Govt Employee's Body Found In Kupwara Village

**SRINAGAR:** Body of a 40-year-old employee was found under mysterious circumstances in Jumgund forest area of Haihama in north-Kashmir's Kupwara district on Monday afternoon.

A police official said that on intimation about sighting of a body from Jumgund forest area, a team was sent to the area.

On identification, the body was found to be of one Mohammed Ashraf Qureshi (40) son of Ghulam Mustafa Qureshi, presently residing in Zurhama, previously a native of Jumagund, Haihama.

The deceased has been an employee in Department of Animal Husbandry, the official informed.

"We have retrieved the body and removed it to SDH Kupwara for postmortem", the official said adding that a case under relevant sections has been taken up and due investigations set in motion.

## IUST Goes Live On Digi-Locker NAD

Observer News Service

**AWANTIPORA:** Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) has become the first University in Jammu and Kashmir to go live on Digilocker NAD. IUST has successfully uploaded the academic awards of the students graduated in the year 2019 on NAD through Digilocker.

"Vice Chancellor IUST, Prof. Mushtaq A Siddiqi has congratulated the NAD Cell for this achievement. Meanwhile, Nodal Officer NAD Cell informed that the university is in final phase of uploading the student awards of three more years on Digilocker NAD, while the rest will be uploaded in phased manner."

National Academic Depository (NAD) is an initiative by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, GoI under Digital India campaign to facilitate the issuance, storage and verification of the academic awards of students through online depository system and as per UGC directions, it is mandatory for all the academic institutions to upload the student awards on NAD portal through Digilocker.



## KASHMIR OBSERVER

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### K O V I E W

## Prioritise vaccination

The Covid-19 situation across the country is taking on a grim turn. We are on way to witness three lakh cases a day. This is taking a toll on the healthcare infrastructure which is on the verge of breaking down. It is difficult for infected people to find a bed in the hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir too we are already past the peak of the infections recorded last year.

It is therefore time that the government pays more attention to vaccination with Srinagar which has been consistently recording the maximum number of cases being prioritised in the effort. The need is to set up more vaccination centres in the city to make it easier for people to receive jabs. It is also important to highlight the safety of vaccination through advertisements placed in newspapers and other media to address the vaccine hesitancy among a section of people.

Government has to also strictly implement the Standard Operating Procedure in public, which is something that is not being done. The wearing of mask has to be made mandatory and those violating the SOP in public should be taken to task. What the administration can do and which is eminently possible is to create more awareness about social distancing norms and take action against the people and the businessmen who violate it. It is time people are made responsible for their own health. We have to ensure that both life and livelihood are saved.

And to this end, the government will have to run an aggressive awareness campaign about the disease. It has to also work towards involvement of the community by charging village, locality elders, mosque managements etc to ensure people follow the safety precautions. Government should also enlist the youth for the purpose. This will go a long way to make a redeeming difference to the attitude of the people towards the contagion and in turn arresting its spread.

Government should resist the temptation to go for yet another lockdown. Considering its disastrous fallout on the economy, lockdown is a bad word. It is not possible for people to remain in a perpetual state of paralysis. This has already wrought havoc with the economy. More so, in Valley which has been under lockdown for the past twelve months. This has led to a loss of employment for thousands of people. The vital sectors of our economy like tourism, horticulture, handicrafts have been hit hard. So, resorting to lockdown is not an option

### OTHER OPINION

## Covid-19: India at War

Covid-19 has come home to India's urban centres, to middle class homes, to the elite, to the working class, in ways that diminish what happened last year when the pandemic first struck. There's a waiting list everywhere and for everything — for tests, admission to hospitals, even at crematoriums and graveyards (with on-ground reports suggesting a disjunction between official fatality figures and these). And there is a shortage of everything — oxygen, ICU beds, and remdesivir. And everywhere and for everything, getting care has become dependent on who you know, as public health systems collapse, automatically excluding the majority.

It did not have to be this way. The government may have made an error of judgment in not anticipating the intensity of the second wave, though there were adequate warnings. But, the current situation does highlight a clear policy failure on varied counts — from not using the past year to boost India's health infrastructure enough to deal with current numbers to slipping into business-as-usual mode when it came to events (including large elections), from a painfully slow rollout of the vaccination (only absolute numbers as a proportion of the population, not relative to the rest of the world, matter here) to the delay in imposing curbs. What's important now is to fix the crisis, and be prepared in case there is another wave after this one (remember the United State's third wave was its worst, although it came before the vaccine drive began). This requires the State to pump all its resources into beat the second wave. It is war, and nothing short of a war effort is needed.

Hindustan Times

# Corporal Punishment Just Another Slap?

"I have received hundreds of such slaps from my teacher, but thanks to all of them for bringing me on the right path and helped me to achieve my goal"

My revolutionary greetings to people like these who came out to support and justify the beating of a student by a teacher at a private tuition centre. Perhaps such beatings did help them to achieve their goal which perhaps was about increasing the threshold of their tolerance to pain. Very divine!

In the last few days, we all came across this video that went viral on social media. While my sympathies and support to those who cared to raise their voice against the incident, I am equally appalled by the reaction of those who chose to defend the act of beating, taking a very patronising stand. Some chose to justify the act of beating by the teacher on social media, while some chose to publish articles in support of such heinous acts. In one such mention, it appears that the student enters the class without the teachers' permission and some have taken offence, alleging that it goes against our moral values. One wonders, how?

One is free to access knowledge and it is entirely the students' responsibility to follow through by will. You can neither teach nor correct students through fear, for fear is the instrument of tyranny, not education. No one has the right to reprimand any student on such issues, let alone beating them blue. It is ingenious to see how people had reservations with the students raising their voice against such incidents and they compared it with their times when they would submit to such beatings! Now do we have to glorify pain and slaps and insults as the trade-offs for getting a decent education? This is morally flawed, pedagogically erroneous and psychologically shattering to say the least.

While the mere act of publishing such an article is worthy of collective condemnation, but to see the kind of support it received to the contrary, points to the urgency of a collective rethinking.

Let us go back to basics and ask ourselves not only why the beating is problematic but also why is justifying the act also equally problematic. Firstly, no teacher is entitled to the concession on account of beating the students which in other cases would be intolerable to us, had it not been for a teacher. Secondly, if your teaching requires the support of beating, then your teaching is empty and lacks conviction in other words you do not deserve to be called a teacher. Thirdly, irrespective of what mistake the student commits, if you being the teacher are comfortable raising your hand on the student, then it is you and not the student who should be removed from the respective position because instead of creating a safe atmosphere for learning, you are being a threat to the students' safety and well-being — both physical and emotional. In other words, in spaces of learning there should not be any room for any kind of abuse. In a region where conflict already takes a toll on our general well-being, and the pandemic has added to the woes of students, the teachers ought to act more sensitively and responsibly instead of contributing to the trauma-cycle.

Now, let us come to the more difficult part and see why defending such acts is equally problematic. If one reads the kind of arguments given in support of the teacher, one can infer that the people defending the teacher have not quite sensed what the issue



Guardian/Getty Images

In a region where conflict already takes a toll on our general well-being, and the pandemic has added to the woes of students, the teachers ought to act more sensitively and responsibly instead of contributing to the trauma-cycle

is. It does not matter what character certificate you produce to testify the greatness of the teacher if that greatness is only for a few to witness and benefit from while others are harassed on account of that greatness. It is therefore important to ask what is the role of educational spaces like schools and tuition centres and also the role of the teachers in such spaces. I am bringing this in, because many arguments ran to justify the act in the name of corrective measure and to inculcate morals in the student community. While such a line of thinking is patronising to say the least, what is even more problematic is that there is an added nuance which many people choose to ignore, which is this: there is a fine line of difference between moral education and moral policing. While we can still be comfortable with the teachers addledly working as moral educators, they cannot use this position as a license to moral police the students. If one is to extend the logic of such arguments that justify the beating, then you will also have to contend with the kinds of acts carried out in some reputed educational institutions in the valley in the name of moral policing. This would much to your delight include hairstyle-disciplining that could also involve pulling and tugging at the students' plaits and ponies and sideburns; denying the students the right to dress smartly, especially girls, because well, that could attract boys and they do that on purpose to attract boys, as if girls don't dress for themselves and to their liking. Then you also must extend your zeal to justify the moral policing carried out arguably in some oldest missionary schools running in the valley which have embraced slut-shaming as their mode of policing the students. Add to the list the corrective measures which include making students lick the floor as punishment or calling them names and rebuking them by demeaning their families, backgrounds, commenting on their length of tunics, invading their private space — all in the name of inculcating morals! The student in question could also be your own child, I wonder even then are we going to be comfortable with this kind of abuse. While many educationists have been demanding for counselling centres to be opened in educational institutions to care for the students' emotional health, it is nothing less than ironical that the teachers are the ones to trigger the cycle of trauma for the students.

We must understand that a teacher is no God, they can be wrong as well and there is no point eulogising any teacher when

learning is a two-way process. I cannot see any wisdom in the supposed precept which calls the slap by a teacher as a blessing! If anything, it is demeaning to the students' self-esteem and we must do away with the feudal norms which place the providers of knowledge as infallible and on a moral high ground. Yes, basic respect is the deal, but it has to be mutual and this is no trading point for inviting physical assault. If people condemning this incident are being called "irresponsible" and "illiterate", one wonders how is beating up the student being responsible in any sense of the term and is not such a vocabulary of insults in itself very elitist in that it looks down upon those who have differing opinions, only furthering the perception that knowledge and learning is your area of entitlement and some hegemonic asset.

Now then, having made these points, one final remark regarding the beating. It is overwhelming to see a section of people coming forward to condemn such acts. However, there is one important question that I leave you with: does only physical violence warrant our collective condemnation? Should we not also extend it to the mental abuse and harassment that the students face and are made to put up with in schools, tuition centres or colleges?

If we have to really move in the right direction of learning and knowledge dissemination, then the invisible pockets and forms of violence too will have to be pointed as well. Because at the end, students require spaces where they can feel welcomed, loved, safe and secure — emotionally, mentally and physically. This is the foundational stone for any kind of learning, anywhere in the world. And given the tests of the time, it is evermore contingent upon the teachers to provide their students with such harbours of safety and security, where their private space is respected and they can with respect wade or sail through the ocean of learning.

On a concluding note, next time when we wish to evaluate the role of a teacher, let these lines by Tagore be the qualifier for our pedagogy and learning:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free".

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

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## Mask Up and Save Lives this Ramadan

We're in the midst of the holiest months of the year. A month which is full of blessings and hope. It is also considered an opportunity by muslims to put their best foot forward in conduct, kindness and worship.

However, what is markedly different from typical ramadans

is the challenge that we're having to face owing to the covid-19 pandemic. The second wave has coincided with the holy month. While this may bring our spirits down but the invitations of the month are otherwise.

This is a rare opportunity that every single one of us has gotten to save lives. This can be done by the

simple act of masking up for yourself, for your loved ones and for others as well. Practicing social distancing, maintaining hand hygiene, masking up are some very easy to save lives. Imagine the spiritual rewards besides our own safety!

The situation is getting grim by the day. However, we've the opportunity to make this test easier through

the aid and assistance of this holy month. Pray for everyone's safety, be proactive in facilitating community efforts, mask up, wash hands and maintain social distancing. It is truly that simple!

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# Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Priyadarshini Patwa

While most respond well, some people can have side effects such as low-grade fever, fatigue, tiredness, swelling, pain and redness at the injection site. Sometimes one can have a fever which can last for a few days but in the end, it is better than getting Covid and dying in the hospital

The increasing number of COVID cases and a barrage of information available across the various channels on COVID-19 vaccines can alarm anyone. It has raised plenty of questions.

Should we take COVID vaccination?  
Which COVID vaccine should one opt for?  
Are COVID-19 vaccines 100% safe?  
What are the side effects of COVID vaccines?  
What precautions should one take?  
Is it possible to get COVID even after vaccination?  
Here are answers to all your questions.

Should you take the vaccine?

Taking a vaccination is the first step towards protecting yourself. While certain side effects are there depending on individual cases, this shouldn't dissuade people from taking the vaccine in the first place, as per the doctors.

Covishield or Covaxin - Which vaccine to take?

Currently in India, the Covishield vaccine and the Covaxin vaccine are the two available for commercial use. Explaining in detail about the vaccination, Dr Sameer Gupta, Director, Cardiac Cath Lab, Metro Group of Hospital, MD, Aurum Senior and Assisted Living said, "The Covishield is a DNA vaccine which codes for the spike protein whereas the Covaxin produces antibodies against many regions of the complete virus. This is a fully inactivated virus. Both the vaccines do an effective job of preventing severe infection, hospitalization and we should be ready to take whichever one is available to us when the time comes."

Are COVID vaccines safe?

Vaccines have helped in the eradication of multiple diseases for years but are COVID vaccines safe? "Now once you get the vaccine are you 100% safe, the answer is no. But the risk of transmission presumably goes down and secondarily the risk of you getting complications goes down drastically to 85% to 90%," Dr Shriram Nene, Healthcare Innovator and Cardiovascular Surgeon told us.

What Are The Side Effects?

In most cases, people have adjusted well to the vaccination. However, depending on your body some can have an after effect. "While most respond well, some people can have side effects such as low-grade fever, fatigue, tiredness, swelling, pain and redness at the injection site. Sometimes one can have a fever which can last for a few days but in the end, it is better than getting Covid and dying in the hospital," explains Dr Gupta.

Things to keep in mind when getting vaccinated

First and foremost, if you have an immune-compromised condition, make sure to inform the doctor. Also, individuals with comorbidities (a person who has multiple underlying health-related conditions present at once) are at more risk of getting infected and should prioritise receiving the vaccine. "I often get asked if it is safe to get the vaccine if a person has comorbidities (such as diabetes, high blood pressure). For such individuals, the potential benefits offered by the vaccine far outweigh the minuscule risks that have been reported after millions of doses all over the world. Those on blood thinners need to consult their physicians and would be advised to apply pressure on



Now once you get the vaccine are you 100% safe, the answer is no. But the risk of transmission presumably goes down and secondarily the risk of you getting complications goes down drastically to 85% to 90%

the site of the vaccine for 3-5 minutes after receiving the vaccine," says Dr. Lancelot Pinto, Consultant Pulmonologist, P.D Hinduja Hospital & MRC.

Things to follow during first and second vaccine shots

It is important to understand the core requirement of the vaccination. The goal of vaccination is to prevent severe hospitalisation and deaths. Elaborating on the vaccination, requirements, interval shots and more Dr Gupta points out, "For the vaccine to be effective, we need adequate antibodies which will be achieved after both the doses and typically after 2-3 weeks of the second dose. The duration between the first and second doses of the vaccination of Covishield is intended to be four weeks. However, new data has come out that shows better immunogenicity if there is a 6 to 8-week interval between the two doses. This is also being recommended by the government. With Covaxin, the dosing interval is still four weeks. It is important not to mix and match your vaccine and stick with it as recommended by the government and health authorities."

What are the chances of getting Covid post vaccination?

You think COVID can't touch you after vaccination? Wrong. "There are chances of getting COVID post both the first and second doses. However, across

the world, and for all vaccines that have been used, the chances of getting severe COVID or dying from COVID after vaccination seem to have significantly reduced. One must not assume that being vaccinated equates to letting one's guard down. One must continue taking all the precautions as before," says Dr Pinto.

Precautions post vaccine

- Take rest and don't exert yourself
- Do not engage in strenuous physical activity for a couple of days
- Keep yourself hydrated
- In case you feel feverish, take paracetamol or crocin
- Sleep well to prevent exacerbating the potential adverse effects such as body aches, fever and soreness
- Don't stop your regular medications (hypertension, diabetes and more) until advised by the doctor
- Wear masks everywhere you go
- Wash and sanitise your hands regularly
- Continue to practice social distancing

GQ India

## Top Ten COVID-19 Anxiety Reduction Strategies

Ken Goodman

During this time of national crisis, we must manage two things simultaneously: 1) Protect ourselves from the Coronavirus, and 2) Protect ourselves from anxiety. If your anxiety, fear, and worry has been overwhelming, put these ten strategies into practice.

Media Distancing: To stop the spread of COVID-19, we've had to practice social distancing. But to stop the spread of anxiety, we must distance ourselves from the media. All anxiety stems from uncertainty and an active imagination which produces catastrophic thoughts. The media, which is 24/7 Coronavirus and virtually all negative, is the driver of those thoughts. My patients who are the most anxious about the Coronavirus are those who are consuming the most news from social media, online, and traditional outlets. The more anxious you feel, the more you should distance from the media. And if you are extremely fearful, stop altogether. Do no Google or research. Stop checking the latest news about the virus. Any vital information you need to know, you will find out.

Do Not Engage with Worry. Take Action: Whether you are worried about contracting the virus, your struggling business, or being unemployed, the more your mind focuses on worst-case scenarios, the more anxious you feel. You can't stop thoughts from entering your mind, but you can choose to stop dwelling and you can choose to take action to solve problems. There is a huge difference between worrying and problem solving. When your mind tries to bait you into worry, don't take the bait. If you do, like a fish in a lake, you will



be caught. Anxiety will try to bait you with many "what if" questions. Don't answer them.

Focus on Present Odds: All deaths are tragic and the coronavirus can be deadly but maintaining proper perspective can reduce your anxiety. No doubt the symptoms of COVID-19 can be horrible but the vast majority of people infected with COVID-19 have mild to moderate symptoms or no symptoms at all. The Infection Fatality Rate (IFR) is the total number of deaths divided by the total number of people that carry the infection, regardless of them having clinical symptoms or not.

Do Not React to Physical Sym-

My patients who are the most anxious about the Coronavirus are those who are consuming the most news from social media, online, and traditional outlets. The more anxious you feel, the more you should distance from the media. And if you are extremely fearful, stop altogether. Do no Google or research.

ptoms: If you cough, it does not mean you have the COVID-19. The same is true for others who cough. Allergies, bronchitis, post-nasal drip, and the cold are more common and a more likely explanation. Accept uncertainty as you do in other areas of life and assume what is most likely. Do not scan your body looking for symptoms. This behavior reinforces your worries and will increase anxiety.

Focus on Being Productive and New Ways of Enjoying Life: Although we have no control over the national crisis, we must focus on where we do have control – our response to the crisis. This is an opportunity to try some-

thing new and do things we haven't had time for. Organize a messy room, paint a fence, clean the garage, edit the photos on your phone, clean a rusty bike and take it for a ride, and play a board game — remember those? You can also learn a new skill or start a new hobby from videos on YouTube or various apps and websites.

Engage in Stress Reduction Activities: Focusing on what you are grateful for, exercising your body, and relaxing your mind will help give you the peace you desire. Guided meditation, yoga, exercise, and a gratitude journal are all practices that lower stress. Select one or two, learn about them so you do them correctly, and practice each day. If you and your loved ones are not severely sick or experiencing dire financial hardship, be grateful. Once this crisis has passed, perhaps we will all appreciate what we take for granted: a healthy society, freedom to gather, dinner with friends, a night at the movies, and a simple haircut.

Be Kind to Yourself and Others and Have Faith: It's normal to feel anxious and worried during a national crisis. Don't be hard on yourself. Reaching out to relatives and friends who are isolated or in need will boost their spirits and yours. If you are in good financial standing, be grateful and continue to pay others for the services they cannot provide.

Seek Out Professional Help: You don't need to do this alone. If you are experiencing an escalation of anxiety, talk to a professional who can help you through this difficult time.

Anxiety and Depression Association of America



# Unhealthy lifestyle only explains a small part of socioeconomic health inequity

Agencies

A recent study on UK and US adults states that unhealthy lifestyles alone only explain a small proportion of the socioeconomic inequity in health.

This is the suggestion of a large study published in the BMJ.

The findings show that the poorest individuals with the least healthy lifestyle are 2.7 to 3.5 times more at risk of death than the most affluent people with the healthiest lifestyle.

While healthy lifestyles play an important role in reducing disease burden, the researchers warn that healthy lifestyle promotion alone "might not substantially reduce the socioeconomic inequity in health, and other measures tackling social determinants of health are warranted."

It is well known that disadvantaged socioeconomic status (the measure of a person's social and economic standing) and unhealthy lifestyles are linked to poor health.

Lifestyle factors are commonly viewed as mediators between socioeconomic status and health, but it's not clear to what extent healthy lifestyles might alleviate the socioeconomic inequities in health.

To explore this further, an international research team used data from the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (US NHANES) and UK Biobank to evaluate the complex relations of lifestyles and socioeconomic status with death and heart disease.

Their findings are based on 44,462 US adults aged 20 years or older and 399,537 UK adults aged 37-73 years.



Socioeconomic status was defined using family income, occupation or employment status, and education level in both groups, and health insurance in US participants. A healthy lifestyle score was derived using the information on smoking, alcohol consumption, physical activity and diet.

Medical records were then used to track deaths from any cause ("all-cause mortal-

ity") among both US and UK adults, as well as cases of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and CVD deaths in UK adults.

Over an average follow-up of 9-11 years, US NHANES documented 8,906 deaths and UK Biobank documented 22,309 deaths and 6,903 CVD cases.

Among adults of low socioeconomic status, the age-adjusted risk of death was

22.5 and 7.4 per 1000 person-years in US NHANES and UK Biobank, respectively, and the age-adjusted risk of CVD was 2.5 per 1000 person-years in UK Biobank.

The corresponding risks among adults of high socioeconomic status were 11.4, 3.3, and 1.4 per 1000 person-years.

Compared with adults of high socioeconomic status, those of low socioeconomic

status had consistently higher risks of mortality and CVD, and lifestyle factors only explained 3 per cent to 12 per cent of the excess risks. The highest risks of mortality and CVD were seen in adults of low socioeconomic status and with the least healthy lifestyles.

For example, compared with adults of high socioeconomic status and three or four healthy lifestyle factors, those with low socioeconomic status and no or one healthy lifestyle factor had 2.09-fold to 3.53-fold higher risks of mortality and CVD.

This is an observational study, so can't establish cause, and information on the socioeconomic level and lifestyle was self-reported, so may not have been completely accurate. Nevertheless, strengths included the large sample size from two well established nationwide databases, and results were similar after further analyses, suggesting they are robust.

Unhealthy lifestyles mediated a small proportion of the socioeconomic inequity in health in both US and UK adults; therefore, healthy lifestyle promotion, although essential, alone might not substantially reduce the socioeconomic inequity in health, and other measures tackling social determinants of health are warranted, say the researchers.

They call for government policies "to tackle upstream social and environmental determinants of health" but also point out that healthy lifestyles were associated with lower mortality and CVD risk in different socioeconomic groups, "supporting an important role of healthy lifestyles in reducing disease burden."

## Study suggests older adults more likely to help others than younger ones



Agencies

The findings of a new research from the University of Birmingham suggest that older adults are more willing to make an effort to help others in comparison to younger adults.

The findings of the study were published in the journal 'Psychological Science'.

The study, led by researchers in the University's School of Psychology, is the first to show how effortful 'prosocial' behaviour, intended to benefit others, changes as people get older. In particular, it focused on people's willingness to exert physical effort, rather than to give money or time, since attitudes to both these are known to change with age.

In the study, the research team tested a group of 95 adults aged between 18-36 and a group of 92 adults aged 55-85. Each participant made 150 choices about whether or not to grip a handheld dynamometer, a device for measuring grip strength or force, with 6 different levels of how hard they had to grip.

Before the experiment, the researchers measured each person's maximum grip strength, so they could make sure that the effort people had to put in was the same for everyone, and not affected by how strong people were.

For each decision, participants were told whether they would be working to gain money for themselves, or for another person. First, they were asked to decide whether they would be willing to put in the effort to gain money or not. If they accepted the offer, they had to grip hard enough to get the money.

The results showed that when the task was easy, young and older adults

were equally willing to work for others, but, when the task was more effortful older adults were more willing to work to help others. In contrast, younger adults were more selfish and were much more likely to put in higher levels of effort to benefit themselves.

The team also noticed a correlation between the willingness to put effort into tasks that benefited other people and positive feelings towards other people. But it was only in younger people that this 'warm glow' feeling also related to them completing tasks for themselves.

Senior author, Dr Matthew Apps, explained, "Past research had suggested that older adults were more prosocial than young adults because they donate more money to charity. But, the amount of money or time people have available changes a lot as we get older, as such older adults might just appear more prosocial. We wanted to focus simply on people's willingness to exert effort on behalf of someone else, as this shouldn't depend on your wealth or the time you have available. Our results showed very clearly that participants in our older age group were more likely to work harder for others, even though they would gain no significant financial reward for themselves."

Lead author Patricia Lockwood added, "A lot of research has focused on the negative changes that happen as people get older. We show that there are positive benefits to getting older too, in particular, older adults seem to be more willing to put in the effort to help others. These 'prosocial behaviours' are really important for social cohesion. Understanding how prosocial behaviour changes as people get older is critical as we predict the impact of an ageing society."

## Chrome 90 will let you share links to highlighted text

Google has started rolling out a feature for Chrome 90, which will allow users to create a link that takes people to the part of a page you highlighted.

The tech giant originally launched the capability as an extension last year - now that it's officially part of Chrome itself, you don't have to install anything extra to use it anymore, Engadget reported.

The feature could be very useful to students and colleagues working together, or even just to anyone who likes sharing random stuff with friends.

As for iOS users, Google says "Copy link to highlight" is "coming soon" for the

platform, the report said.

Google has also launched a new PDF viewer for the browser, which introduces a two-page view and a new toolbar that lets you zoom, jump to a page, save and print with a single click.

In February, Google also started rolling out a new update that features a new interface for switching tabs, and a new tab grouping feature to help organise open web pages for the Android app.

Chrome's new grid layout replaces the vertically arranged list of cards that nearly spanned the entire width of your screen. Each tab is now significantly smaller.



## Study claims good dental health may help prevent heart infection from mouth bacteria

Agencies

According to a new study, maintenance of good oral health is more important than the use of antibiotics in dental procedures for some heart patients to prevent a heart infection caused by bacteria around the teeth.

The new American Heart Association (AHA) scientific statement was published in the association's flagship journal, Circulation.

Infective endocarditis (IE), also called bacterial endocarditis, is a heart infection caused by bacteria that enter the bloodstream and settle in the heart lining, a heart valve or a blood vessel. It is uncommon, but people with heart valve disease or previous valve surgery, congenital heart disease or recurrent infective endocarditis have a greater risk of complications if they develop IE.

Intravenous drug use also increases the risk for IE. Viridans group streptococcal infective endocarditis (VGS IE) is caused by bacteria that collect in plaque on the tooth surface and cause inflammation and swelling of the gums. There's been concern that certain dental procedures may increase the risk of developing VGS IE in vulnerable patients.

The new guidance affirms previous recommendations that only four categories of heart patients should be prescribed antibiotics prior to certain dental procedures to prevent VGS IE due to their higher risk for complications from the infection:

1. those with prosthetic heart valves or prosthetic material used for valve repair;

2. those who have had a previous case of infective endocarditis;



3. adults and children with congenital heart disease; or

4. people who have undergone a heart transplant.

"Scientific data since the 2007 AHA guidelines support the view that limited use of preventive antibiotics for dental procedures hasn't increased cases of endocarditis and is an important step at combating antibiotic overuse in the population," said Walter R. Wilson, M.D., chair of the statement writing group and a consultant for the Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Internal Medicine at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

It has been over a decade since recommendations for preventing infective endocarditis were updated amid concerns of antibiotic resistance due to overprescribing. The American Heart Association's 2007 guidelines, which presented the biggest shift in recommendations from the Association on the prevention of infective endocarditis in more than 50 years, more tightly defined which patients

should receive preventive antibiotics before certain dental procedures to the four high-risk categories. This change resulted in about 90% fewer patients requiring antibiotics.

The scientific statement writing group reviewed data on VGS IE since the 2007 guidelines to determine if the guidelines had been accepted and followed, whether cases of and mortality due to VGS IE have increased or decreased, and if the guidance might need to be adjusted.

The writing committee reports their extensive review of related research found:

1. There was a good general awareness of the changes in the 2007 guidelines, however, adherence to the guidelines was variable. There was about a 20% overall reduction in prescribing preventive antibiotics among high-risk patients, a 64% decrease among moderate-risk patients, and a 52% decrease in those patients at low- or unknown-risk.

2. In a survey of 5,500 den-

tists in the U.S., 70% reported prescribing preventive antibiotics to patients even though the guidelines no longer recommend it, and this was most often for patients with mitral valve prolapse and five other cardiac conditions. The dentists reported that about 60% of the time the antibiotic regimen was recommended by the patient's physician, and 1/3 of the time was according to patient preference.

3. Since the stricter 2007 antibiotic guidelines, there is no convincing evidence of an increase in cases of VGS IE or increased mortality due to VGS IE.

4. The writing group supports the 2007 recommendation that only the highest risk groups of patients receive antibiotics prior to certain dental procedures to help prevent VGS IE.

5. In the presence of poor oral hygiene and gingival disease, VGS IE is far more likely to develop from bacteria attributable to routine daily activities such as toothbrushing than from a dental procedure.

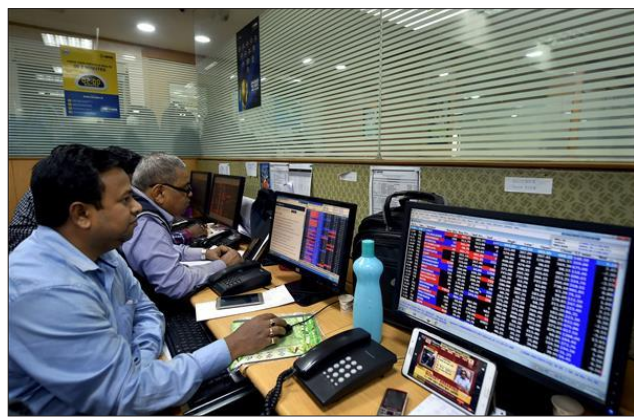
6. Maintenance of good oral hygiene and regular access to dental care is considered as important in preventing VGS IE as taking antibiotics before certain dental procedures.

7. It is important to connect patients with services to facilitate access to dental care and assistance with insurance for dental coverage, especially in those patients at high risk for VGS IE.

8. It is still appropriate to follow the recommendation to use preventive antibiotics with high-risk patients undergoing dental procedures that involve manipulation of the gum tissue or infected areas of the teeth, or perforation of the membrane lining the mouth.



## Markets In Tailspin As COVID Woes Resurface; Investors Lose Rs 3.53 Lakh Crore



**MUMBAI:** The Sensex plunged 883 points while the Nifty crashed below the 14,400-level on Monday as the worsening COVID-19 situation in the country triggered an across-the-board selloff.

Fresh lockdowns announced by some states have stoked concerns over the economic recovery, while another sharp drop in the rupee also weighed on risk appetite, traders said.

After crashing over 1,469 points in early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex pared some initial losses to close at 47,949.42, down 882.61 points or 1.81 per cent.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tanked 258.40 points or 1.77 per cent to finish at 14,359.45.

PowerGrid was the top loser in the Sensex pack, slumping 4.17 per cent, followed by ONGC, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Bank, L&T, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints and M&M.

Only Dr Reddy's and Infosys managed to end in the green, rising up to 1.58 per cent.

"Domestic equities, which were looking resilient for last couple of days, fell sharply on sharp spike in COVID-19 cases across the country and enhanced economic restrictions imposed by

several states. Announcements of wider mobility restriction by Rajasthan and Delhi governments dented investors' sentiments," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Barring pharma and IT, which remained resilient, all key sectoral indices witnessed sharp correction. Financials and automobiles witnessed steeper correction. Notably, volatility index soared by over 11 per cent, which does not augur well, he added.

Investor wealth tumbled by Rs 3.53 lakh crore on Monday, with the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies standing at Rs 201.77 lakh crore.

India's total tally of COVID-19 cases crossed 1.50 crore with a record single-day rise of 2,73,810 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

Sector-wise, BSE realty, capital goods, power, auto, industrials, finance and telecom indices plunged up to 3.96 per cent, while healthcare index closed higher.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices skidded up to 1.93 per cent. - **PTI**

## S Jaishankar In Abu Dhabi, To Discuss Bilateral Economic Cooperation With UAE Counterpart

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**ABU DHABI:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who arrived here on Sunday, met his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the two leaders are expected to discuss bilateral economic cooperation and issues of mutual and regional interest.

"Delighted to meet FM @ABZayed. Look forward to our discussions," Mr Jaishankar tweeted.

Interestingly, Mr Jaishankar's visit coincides with the ongoing trip of his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mahmood Qureshi to the United Arab Emirates amid media reports that the Gulf emirate has been holding back channel talks to restart dialogue between the two neighbours.

Mr Jaishankar earlier paid a two-day visit to the UAE from November 25 to 26 in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. During his visit, he had met his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and held discussions on the entire range of bilateral issues.

"At the invitation of his coun-



terpart, EAM @DrSJaishankar will be visiting Abu Dhabi on 18th April 2021. His discussions will focus on economic cooperation and community welfare," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted on Saturday.

Mr Jaishankar's current visit to Abu Dhabi comes days after the Emirati ambassador to the US Youssef al-Otaiba said that the UAE played a role in bringing down the tension between India and Pakistan and getting their bilateral ties back to a "healthy functional relationship".

"They might not sort of become best friends but at least we want to get it to a level where it's functional, where it's operational, where they are speaking to each other," al-Otaiba said during a virtual discussion with Stanford University's Hoover Institution on Wednesday.

## In Two Years, Floriculture Deptt Registers 46 Per Cent Fall In Revenue Generation

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** In the past two Financial Years (FY), the department of floriculture Kashmir has witnessed a dip of nearly 54 percent in revenue generation as compared to the five financial years from 2014-2019.

The officials of the Department of Floriculture Kashmir said that in the past two financial years, there has been a continuous dip of 53.96 percent in revenue generation as compared to the previous five financial years.

According to the official figures accessed by the news agency, since the financial year 2014-15 to 2018-19, a total amount of Rs 26.89 crores were generated from various gardens and structures falling under the department.

However, in the past two financial years that includes 2019-20 and 2020-21, a total of Rs 4.95 crores of revenue was generated by the department.

The documents reveal that in

the past seven financial years, a total of Rs 31.84 crores were generated by the department.

The break-up-wise figures of Department of Floriculture

Kashmir states that in the financial year 2014-15, a total revenue of Rs 434.4 lakhs was generated by the department.

Similarly, in the financial year 2015-16, the department had generated a total of Rs 397.9 lakhs from the various gardens of their jurisdiction.

The two weak financial years according to the official figures are 2019-20 and 2020-21 wherein the department of floriculture generated only a total amount of Rs 288.1 lakhs and Rs 207 lakhs respectively—(KNO)



**ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL FIGURES ACCESSED BY THE news agency, since the financial year 2014-15 to 2018-19, a total amount of Rs 26.89 crores were generated from various gardens and structures falling under the department.**

## Principal Secretary Tours Silk Factory Rajbagh, Woollen Mills Bemina

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Principal Secretary Industries & Commerce (I&C), Ranjan Prakash Thakur along with Union Joint Secretary Ministry of Agriculture, Shubha Thakur today visited Silk and Wool units of Jammu Kashmir Industries Limited, Rajbagh and Bemina and took stock of the ongoing works being undertaken at these units under the World Bank funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP).

During the visit, the Principal Secretary appreciated the efforts of JKI in creating end to end market solutions especially for the raw materials available in J&K. He directed the department in exploring assistance from international organizations for development of the whole chain of Silk and Wool Sectors in the J&K.

The Principal Secretary further directed the officials of JKI to undertake the branding of Kashmir Silk and Wool Products and also seek design support so that the products manufactured by it are as per present market fashion and trends.

viewing the working of the units Principal Secretary I&C stressed on



managing production on modern lines, introduction of new product ranges which are in vogue in present markets, strengthening the marketing networks so that both Rajbagh Silk Factory and Bemina Woollen Mills regain their due position as manufacturers of quality fabrics.

During the visit, Principal Secretary was briefed that under modernization of the Silk Factory Rajbagh, new machinery has been procured which had been damaged during 2014 floods besides a new building is also being constructed. He was also informed that the silk fabric production capacity of the factory is expected to increase by around 2.5

lacs meters annually after completion of modernization.

He was further briefed that with the modernization of the Silk Factory Rajbagh and the establishment of new Silk Reeling and Weaving units in Jammu, JKI would be procuring around 1.30 MT of cocoon worth Rs. 11.24 crore in the current year for both Kashmir and Jammu Divisions from various centers of the Sericulture Department which would result in providing direct market linkage to around 10000 cocoon rearers of J&K.

Similarly the Principal Secretary was also informed that under the World Bank funded JTFRP, new machinery was being procured for Govt. Woollen Mills Bemina besides a Showroom cum Interpretation Centre is also being constructed.

Principal Secretary I&C was briefed that with the installation of the new machinery, the production capacity of the unit would increase significantly and an additional one lakh kgs of locally produced raw wool would be used to weave quality tweed fabric, bringing economic benefit to hundreds of sheep rearing families.

## Steel Prices May Take 2 Yrs To Cool Down As Demand Increases: JSPL MD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**S**teel prices might take at least two years to cool down as its demand is consistently increasing, a top industry executive said.

During the current financial year, the demand for steel in India is also expected to exceed the production numbers, Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) Managing Director V R Sharma told PTI.

While the demand in the financial year 2021-22 will be in the range of 140-150 million tonnes (MT), the country's production is expected to be somewhere around 125 MT, he said.

When asked about an estimated time for the steel prices to cool down, he said,



"It (prices) will take around two years (to ease), because of the demand."

While hot-rolled coil (HRC) in India is trading at around Rs 58,000 per tonne in April, the international steel prices are hovering around USD 735-740 per tonne since April 1, 2021.

Both domestic as well as international prices are 50 per cent higher compared to a year-ago period.

He also said most of the countries,

including India, have announced stimulus packages. Because of this, the consumption has increased; and until the stimulus packages are exhausted, these prices will not come down.

On steel demand, Sharma said in the calendar year 2020, the entire world has seen a slump except for China which recorded a growth of 6-7 per cent.

While, the Indian steel industry recorded a negative growth of 10 per cent at 99 million tonne (MT).

"The all-India data is yet to come. But, in my view, from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, we are at a level of minus 4 per cent. We have made around 104 MT of steel against expectations of 112 MT. However, these are the rough observations," he said.

## Govt Working To Save Lives, Livelihood: Fm Tells India Inc Amid COVID Surge



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**F**inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said she has taken inputs from various industry chambers on concerns of India Inc with regard to the management of COVID pandemic and the Centre would continue to work with state governments to save lives and livelihood.

She sought feedback from businesses to deal with the impact of the second COVID-19 wave on the country's economy.

It is to be noted that the economy contracted by a whopping 23.9 per cent in the first quarter (April-June) of the previous financial year due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Spoke on telephone with each of the following business/Chamber leaders. Took their inputs on industry/Association related matters. Informed them that GoI at various levels from @PMOIndia is responding to #Covid management. Working together with states for lives and livelihoods," she said in a tweet.

The finance minister had interactions with heads of industry chambers including CII president Uday Kotak, Uday Shankar, president Ficci, and Vineet Agarwal president ASSOCHAM.

She also spoke to many busi-

ness leaders like Tata Steel managing director T.V. Narendran, L&T chairman A M Naik, TCS managing director Rajesh Gopinathan, Maruti Suzuki chairman R C Bhargava, TVS Group chairman Venu Srinivasan and Hero Moto Corp managing director Pawan Munjal to take their feedback on situation arising out of surging COVID-19 cases and local containments.

Last week, the finance minister made it clear that the government would not go for lockdowns in a big way and only resort to local containment to break the COVID-19 chain.

"Even with the second wave, we are very clear that we are not going in for lockdowns in a big way. We don't want to totally arrest the economy. The local level isolation of patients, or households which have people in quarantines are the methods through which the crisis will be handled, the second wave will be handled. There shall not be lockdown," Sitharaman had said.

Daily average COVID-19 cases across the country crossed 1.7 lakh on Sunday. India's total tally of COVID-19 cases crossed 1.50 crore with a record single-day rise of 2,73,810 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

## Investors' Wealth Tumbles Over Rs 3.70 Lakh Cr As Markets Crack



**I**nvestors' wealth in morning trade on Monday tumbled over Rs 3.70 lakh crore as markets went into a tailspin amid record surge in coronavirus cases in India. The 30-share BSE benchmark index tanked 1,469.32 points to 47,362.71 in early trade.

Following the massive selloff, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies declined by Rs 3,70,729.4 crore to Rs 2,01,60,016.60 crore in morning trade.

IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Auto, SBI and ICICI Bank were the biggest drags among the BSE 30-share frontline companies' list.

India's total tally of COVID-19 cases crossed 1.50 crore with a record single-day rise of 2,73,810 new coronavirus infections,

while the active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

"The health crisis India is going through and localised lockdowns and restrictions on economic activity warrant a market correction. The steady rise in test positivity cases and the steady decline in recovery rates are areas of serious concern. But, this negativity need not reflect fully in the market since the global clues are positive," said V.K. Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

In the previous trading session, the BSE benchmark closed 28.35 points or 0.06 per cent higher at 48,832.03. **PTI**

### SHORT TAKES

#### Founder Of Adobe And Developer Of PDFs Dies At Age 81

**C**harles Chuck Geschke the co-founder of the major software company Adobe Inc, who helped develop Portable Document Format technology, or PDFs died at age 81.

Geschke, who lived in the San Francisco Bay Area suburb of Los Altos, died Friday, the company said.

"This is a huge loss for the entire Adobe community and the technology industry, for whom he has been a guide and hero for decades," Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen wrote in an email to the company's employees.

As co-founders of Adobe, Chuck and John Warnock developed groundbreaking software that has revolutionised how people create and communicate," Narayen said.

"Their first product was Adobe PostScript, an innovative technology that provided a radical new way to print



text and images on paper and sparked the desktop publishing revolution. Chuck instilled a relentless drive for innovation in the company, resulting in some of the most transformative software inventions, including the ubiquitous PDF, Acrobat, Illustrator, Premiere Pro and Photoshop.

His wife said Geschke was also proud of his family.

He was a famous businessman, the founder of a major company in the U.S. and the world, and of course he was

very, very proud of that and it was huge achievement in his life, but it wasn't his focus really, his family was, Nancy Nan Geschke, 78, told the Mercury News on Saturday. He always called himself the luckiest man in the world.

After earning a doctorate from Carnegie Mellon University, Geschke began working at Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, where he met Warnock, the Mercury News reported. The men left the company in 1982 to found Adobe, developing software together.

In 2009, President Barack Obama awarded Geschke and Warnock the National Medal of Technology.

In 1992, Geschke survived a kidnapping, the Mercury News reported.

Arriving to work one morning, two men seized Geschke, then 52, at gunpoint and took him to Hollister, California, where he was held for four days. **PTI**

#### SC Stays Proceedings Before Delhi HC In Amazon Future Case

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court Monday stayed the ongoing proceedings before the Delhi High Court in the case related to the amalgamation of Future Retail Ltd (FRL) with Reliance Retail.

A Bench of Justices R F Nariman, B R Gavai and Hrishikesh Roy posted the matter for hearing on May 4 and directed that all pleadings be completed in the matter.

Amazon had moved the apex court on April 8 challenging the Delhi High Court's Division Bench order that had vacated a stay on Kishore Biyani-led Future Group proceeding with its Rs 24,713 crore asset sale to Reliance Industries.

Prior to this, FRL had moved the division bench of the high court against its a single judge's order upholding the Singapore's



Emergency Arbitrator's (EA) order restraining FRL from going ahead with its Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail.

The Division Bench had granted Future a reprieve from a March 18 single-judge order that restrained it from taking any steps to sell assets to Reliance.

The petition by the US based e-commerce giant has sought a stay on the March 22 order of the division bench, terming it "illegal",

"random", "inequitable and unfair".

Amazon and Future have been locked in a bitter legal tussle after the US firm dragged Future Group to arbitration at SIAC in October last year, arguing that the latter had violated their contract by entering into the deal with rival Reliance.

Amazon had invested in Future Coupons in August 2019 with an option of buying into the flagship Future Retail after a period of three to 10 years.

The Future group had however moved the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) seeking regulatory approvals to the Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance.

Amazon had filed a plea before the high court (single judge) for enforcement of the October 25, 2020 Emergency Arbitrator (EA) award

by Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) restraining FRL from going ahead with its Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail.

The high court division bench however said that it was staying the single judge order as FRL was not a party to the share subscription agreement (SSA) between Amazon and Future Coupons Pvt Ltd (FCPL) and the US e-commerce giant was not a party to the deal between FRL and Reliance Retail.

The bench had further said that it was of the prima facie view that the shareholding agreement (SHA) between FRL and FCPL, the SSA between FCPL and Amazon and the deal between FRL and Reliance Retail "are different" and "therefore, the group of companies doctrine cannot be invoked". **PTI**



# Legacy Issues Need To Be Resolved Through Dialogue And Not By Unilateral Actions: Army Chief Amid Border Standoff With China

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** In a veiled reference to the border standoff with China, Army Chief Gen MM Naravane on Monday said legacy issues and differences need to be resolved through mutual consent and dialogue, and not by unilateral actions.

In his address at a symposium, Gen MM Naravane, however, noted that there were positive developments with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that led to disengagement of troops in Pangong lake areas in eastern Ladakh.

The Army Chief also said that the recent comments of Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong "to avoid relapse and jointly safeguard peace and tranquillity in border areas" augurs well for the future of India-China relations.

Talking about regional developments, he referred to the renewed commitment by the armies of India and Pakistan to follow the 2003 ceasefire on the Line of Control (LoC), saying it bodes well for the future.

"We have recently entered into a ceasefire understanding with Pakistan Army in February this year, and since then there has been no exchange of fire on an otherwise active LoC. This bodes well for the future," he said.

"With China too, there have been positive developments along the LAC, an area where both countries have differing perceptions on the alignment of the land borders. This has led to disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh," he added.

Gen Naravane also mentioned about the 11th round of Corps commander-level talks between the armies of India and China, and hoped to "settle other border" issues through further negotiations.

The military standoff between India and China that erupted on May 5 last at multiple friction points in eastern Ladakh has significantly strained bilateral ties.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, India and China completed withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of

Pangong lake in February.

The two sides are now engaged in talks to extend the disengagement process to the remaining friction points.

"Legacy issues and differences need to be resolved through mutual consent and dialogue and not by unilateral actions," he said.

Talking about new challenges being thrown up by the changing character of war, he said "our own region" is also witnessing that wars are no longer confined to the customary hard core kinetics but being increasingly contested in the ambiguous grey zone.

"However, even as we move to a technology empowered Army, the peculiar unsettled nature of our borders means that the requirement of 'boots on ground' cannot be simply wished away."

Gen Naravane reiterated that India looked to maintain peace and harmony with all its neighbours and in the region.

"Maintenance of peace and tranquillity requires joint efforts. All nations need to come together to uphold rules-based

order, respect international laws and norms and develop mutual respect for each other," he said.

The Army Chief also said that geo-strategic spaces are being "constricted" and geo-strategic realities are being "altered" without physical battles, noting conflicts are steadily moving to the new domains of space, cyber and informatics.

"We are conscious that niche technologies including artificial intelligence, autonomous and unmanned systems, long range precision technology, internet of things, 5G and quantum computing, to name a few, need to be acquired to remain and capable to face future threats," he said.

About the coronavirus pandemic, he said the Army is devising ways and means to work through the challenging times and get its training schedules back on track.

"The disruptive powers of the pandemic have, however, changed the way we think and act. It has also exposed our vulnerability to global supply chains, forcing us to re-engineer our dependencies and work towards self-reliance," he added.

## J&J Seeks Permission For Phase-3 Trial Of Its Single-Shot COVID Vaccine In India, Import Licence



Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Multinational pharma giant Johnson & Johnson has applied to India's drug regulator seeking permission to conduct phase-3 clinical trial of its single-dose COVID-19 vaccine in India as well as import licence, sources said.

They said the company has sought an early meeting of the subject expert committee on COVID-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to take a decision on its application.

This comes close to the heels of the central government last week deciding to fast-track emergency approvals for all foreign produced coronavirus jabs that have been given a similar nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan.

Such vaccines will be given emergency use approval mandating the requirement of post-approval parallel bridging clinical trial in place of conduct of local clinical trial under the provisions of the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules 2019, the health ministry had said.

According to sources, Johnson & Johnson had applied

on April 12 in the Global Clinical Trial Division through the Sugam online portal, instead of applying to the biological division which deals with vaccines and other biologicals.

"Due to the technicalities involved, Johnson & Johnson has resubmitted its application on Monday," a source said.

Johnson & Johnson's vaccine is a single-dose jab, whereas the three vaccines cleared by India so far are of double doses.

So far, two vaccines -- Oxford/Astrazeneca vaccine COVISHIELD manufactured by Serum Institute in India and indigenously developed COVAXIN by Bharat Biotech -- are being administered in India, while a third vaccine Sputnik V -- developed in Russia and to be imported and sold in India by Dr Reddy's Laboratories -- has also been approved by the Indian drug regulator.

The government, meanwhile, on Monday decided to expand its vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 years of age eligible to be vaccinated from May 1 and permitted state governments, private hospitals and industrial establishments to procure the doses directly from manufacturers.

## Couple Without Mask Misbehaves With Policemen When Stopped, Arrested

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** A man and his wife were arrested after they allegedly misbehaved with policemen when they were stopped for not wearing masks in central Delhi's Daryaganj, officials said on Monday.

While the man was arrested on Sunday, his wife was arrested on Monday, they said, adding that the couple have been sent to judicial custody.

A purported video of the incident was shared on social media platforms, wherein the couple could be seen misbehaving



with Delhi police personnel when they were asked the reason for not wearing masks.

Police said they registered a case

against Pankaj, a marketing salesman, and his wife Abha, residents of Patel Nagar in central Delhi.

"The husband-wife who

refused to wear mask and misbehaved with police personnel of Daryaganj police station during the weekend curfew and further obstructed them in discharging their duties have been booked and arrested," tweeted Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Jasmeet Singh from his official Twitter handle.

"During interrogation, the man put the blame on his wife and told police that his wife does not wear mask and also does not let him wear one. However, he claimed that whenever she is not around, he always wears a mask," a senior

police officer said.

The woman, however, claimed during interrogation that she does not wear a mask because of breathing problem, he said. Delhi has been witnessing a massive surge in coronavirus cases in the past few days.

According to the police, the incident took place at on Sunday.

The couple, travelling in a car, misbehaved with the policemen when they were stopped and asked the reason for not wearing mask. The woman also said they would not pay fine and started arguing with them, police said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Corona Surge

Baramulla 110, Budgam 46, Pulwama 29, Kupwara 36, Anantnag 48, Bandipora 14, Ganderbal 31, Kulgam 47, Shopian 4, Jammu 451, Udhampur 81, Rajouri 34, Doda 8, Kathua 38, Samba 33, Kishtwar 4, Poonch 4, Ramban 13 and Reasi 102 fresh cases of coronavirus.

Of the six people that succumbed to the virus, officials said, two were residents of Jammu division and four others from the Valley. The victims from the Valley included a 65-year-old man from Anantnag, a 75-year-old man from Kupwara, 60-year-old man from Pulwama and a 43-year-old woman from Fateh Kadal Srinagar. With these deaths, the fatality count has reached 2063 in the Union Territory.

Moreover, officials said, 813 more patients have recovered -- 207 from Jammu Division and 606 from Kashmir.

### Dulloo Makes

underlining that the contemporary situation was "challenging."

"As you can see, covid-19 cases are rising day by day. A challenging situation is before all of us. To face the situation, two aspects are important and need to be given immediate attention," he said in an audio message circulated by the department.

"One is that people must adhere in letter and spirit to covid-19 appropriate behavior such as wearing masks, maintain social distancing, wash or sanitize hands regularly," he said, adding, "Second is vaccination. Those above 45 years of age, especially government employees, should immediately vaccinate themselves. There is evidence that those who vaccinate either do not contract the covid-19 or if they get infected, then the severity is far less."

He said that health care workers were given the facility to vaccinate "but a number of them have not vaccinated themselves so far."

"I appeal all the health care workers as also above 45 years of age, whether government employees or not, to vaccinate themselves immediately," he added.

### Use X-Rays

South African variant and one sample with the Brazil variant.

Based on ICMR data, the current variants are also being picked up by the RT-PCR tests. The RT-PCR test has sensitivity of around 80 per cent and therefore 20 per cent of the cases can still be missed out.

"Also, if the sample is not properly taken or if the test is done too early when the viral load is low, it may come out negative. So, if a person is symptomatic, a combination of clinical features, laboratory reports, CT/chest X-ray can be used for presumptive diagnosis of COVID-19 and treatment should be started accordingly. The test should also be repeated after 24 hours," AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria told PTI.

Dr Samiran Panda, the Head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at the Indian Council of Medical Research, said the mutants -- variants from the UK, Brazil and South Africa -- are not able to evade the diagnostic RT-PCR testing that is being conducted in India.

"In India, we have to be able to detect two or more genes of virus so if mutation happens on one area then the RT-PCR test kits will be able to capture it and it is capturing. However, some of the infections will remain undetected irrespective of the mutations happening," Dr Panda said.

Moreover, all the mutants have been identified from these tests only, he said.

Clinical symptoms and CT scan reports should be the guiding factor for treatment rather than relying only on the RT-PCR test which has a sensitivity of around 80 per cent, another senior doctor said.

Even the rapid antigen test has a sensitivity of only 40 per cent, he said, adding, "So many patients will be missed if we rely only upon these tests."

### GMC Suspend

of 2021 dated 18-04-2021, all the UG classes (MBBS, B.sc, paramedics nursing and other paramedics ) are hereby suspended till 15-05-2021," reads an order issued by the authorities. "However online teaching shall continue as per the schedule issued by respective departments / Nursing College Srinagar / AMT School Srinagar respectively," the order adds.

The suspension of classes at the GMC comes a day after the Jammu and Kashmir government ordered closure of all colleges and Universities across the Union Territory till May 15 over the looming coronavirus threat.

### Situation Under

On the steep rise in COVID-19 cases, Bhatnagar said that all the preparations are being made to tackle the situation.

Talking about the designated COVID-19 hospitals and quarantine centres across Jammu and Kashmir, he said that the situation is being accessed dynamically and all the arrangements will be made on time.

"I request people to follow all the precautions, wear mask, maintain social distancing, and not come out in numbers/ groups besides sanitizing hands frequently," he said.

"Eligible people should go for vaccination," Bhatnagar said.

Notably with the unexpected rise in COVID-19 cases across Jammu and Kashmir the administration has ordered the closure of all educational institutions, restrictions on overcrowding besides the night curfew to contain the spread.

### 2 Militants Killed

offers and engaged the joint team in gunfight.

According to the reports, the internet services were snapped across the district to ensure smooth conduct of anti-militancy operation and to prevent any law and order situation.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued here on Monday evening, a police spokesperson said that the two killed militants were locals and associated with Hizbul Mujahideen.

He identified the duo as Sabzar Ahmad Ganie of Kulgam and Amir Ahmad Bhat of Shopian.

The police spokesperson further said that the two militants were part of groups involved in many crime cases.

"Arms, ammunition & other incriminating materials were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes," he said.

He further said that the last rites of the killed militants shall be performed after conducting medico-legal formalities and their nearest family members shall be allowed to participate in the last rites.

"In this connection police have registered a case under relevant sections of law and investigation has been initiated. People are requested to cooperate with police till the area is

completely sanitized and cleared off of all the explosive materials, if any," the police spokesperson added.

### Army Replaces

citizens at the security checks and drills, he said.

The official said there is a need for understanding the fact that the security checks are necessitated due to the existing threat of attacks by militants on the security forces and common man and more the threat, more will be the preventive checks and drills.

"These checks will be necessary till the time the militant threat can be brought down. This effort at countering militancy has to be a joint citizen-soldier effort, he said.

The official said these visual steps taken by the force are a message that the security forces are reaching out to the citizens for better mutual understanding and there is a desire to minimise the discomfort to the citizens due to the security drills.

The intent is to improve the citizen-soldier connect so that both work jointly to address the challenge of militancy in J&K, the official said.

### RTO Kashmir

response by April 21.

The court has however already declined to hear the plea as a Public Interest Litigation.

"Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir, shall remain present along with the records of circular dated 23-03-2021," the court said and also its Registrar Judicial to allow the RTO to enter the court premises for his appearance amid covid-19 guidelines on the date.

The petitioner, Munshi, 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.

Earlier this month, the court sought government's response on a petition filed by another individual. Advocate General D C Raina, had questioned the maintainability of the 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.

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)

### Sun Shines On

7.4 degree Celsius against previous night's 7.6 degree Celsius, the official said.

Pahalgam received 16.7mm during the time while the famous resort in south Kashmir recorded a low of 1.4 degree Celsius against 3.4 degree Celsius on the previous night, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, received 4.8mm of rain and recorded a low of 4.8 degree Celsius against previous night's 5.1 degree Celsius, the official said.

Kupwara received 8.0mm of rain while the north Kashmir district recorded a low of 4.8 degree Celsius against 5.7 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said.

Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir, received 7.0mm of rain during the time and recorded a low of minus 0.6 degree Celsius against 0.4 degree Celsius on the previous night which was below 2.9 degree Celsius than the normal for the area, the official said.

### Baramulla-Banihal

the project, Pole directed the deputy commissioners and the SSPs concerned to provide all logistic support and provide adequate security facilities to executing agency concerned in their respective areas.

He said two wagons shall be operated during day and night with work force onboard to complete pole erection and wire laying works during the execution.

He instructed deputy commissioners to conduct spot visits and discuss modus operandi threadbare and ensure proper deployment for hassle-free work execution.

Pole also instructed officials concerned to start work in a week's time and ensure timely completion of electrification of the railway line.

Meanwhile, Pole also chaired a meeting of officers to review the progress of various projects of NHIDCL.

During the meeting, the divisional commissioner reviewed pace and progress made on Z-MORH and Zojila tunnels connecting Kashmir with the Ladakh region.

Stressing on the speedy work process, Pole instructed officials to ensure prompt response by all departments concerned to all bottlenecks causing inconveniences in the construction process.

He directed them to ensure prompt disposal of NOCs, complete land acquisition process with release of compensation to the land losers at the earliest.

### 'Serious, Shocking

University, Member Secretary Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) or his/her nominee, MD Small Industrial Corporation, and others.

It's said that Administrative Secretary Forest, Ecology and Environment might be the chairman of the committee.

"This was expected," Qadri continued. "But what is shocking is that not even a single member from Kashmir is included in the Committee."

Since there's no representation from Kashmir division, the advocate said, tomorrow any decision can be taken related to environmental clearance of projects or pollution control measures and mitigations.

Post-abrogation of J&K's special status, the government cleared many projects in Kashmir without any public consultation, said Sheikh Ghulam Rasool, chairman and founder, J&K RTI Movement.

"And now Centre is taking yes men in the committee so that they can do whatever they want," Sheikh Ghulam Rasool said.

Notably, since the abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent implementation of J&K Reorganization Act, many state institutions were closed including State Information Commission (SIC), State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), State Women's Commission (SWC) and, now institution like State Pollution Control Board (SPCB).

Terming the notification 'shocking', comrade Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami said: "Excluding representation from Kashmir division in the

JKPCC showed the discriminatory mindset."

### CBI Nabs Two

claimant in Pratap Park, Lal Chowk, an official said.

He said both the officers were arrested while accepting the bribe for settling a claim of a customer, who died in a road accident in January 2020.

"A case under relevant sections of law has been registered at CBI office in Srinagar and further investigation has been initiated in the matter," he added.

### Misfire Creates

meantime, reports said, the service rifle of constable Zahid Ahmad went off accidentally and the bullet hit an advocate's car that was parked in the court compound.

Fortunately, there was no loss of life or any injury to anyone in the incident.

### Bear Injures

Hospital Tangmarg for treatment. However, the doctors there referred him to SMHS for further treatment. (KNS)



## PSG, Bayern Some Of The Big Names Missing From Super League Proposals



### Agencies

**DUSSELDORF:** The new Super League football competition in Europe is, surprisingly, missing the names of Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain.

Last year's Champions League finalists were noted absentees from the elite clubs announced in the league's formation on Sunday. Bayern would face difficulties convincing its fans and members, who have a majority say in club business. PSG's Qatari owners could be wary of disrupting next year's World Cup — which will be played in Qatar — and a lucrative UEFA broadcast deal if there's a civil war in European football.

The Super League has signed up 12 clubs from England, Spain and Italy and left open three more spots for founder members, who will get permanent places in the competition. Bayern, PSG and Borussia Dortmund have been linked with those founder places.

However, Dortmund said Monday that it and Bayern reject the Super League in favor of reforming the existing Champions League.

They are both on the board of the European Club Association, which held an emergency meeting Sunday after representatives of the Super League clubs quit the organization.

"The clubs want to implement the planned reform of the UEFA Champions League. It was the clear

opinion of the members of the ECA board that the plans for founding a Super League are rejected," Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke said in a statement.

"Both of the German clubs which are represented on the ECA board, FC Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund, put forward 100% identical views in all conversations."

Germany's rules on fan ownership, known as 50%+1 for the voting stake which members must have, pose a problem for the Super League. Fan organizations at the English clubs have risen up in revolt at the plans but have little or no say in how their clubs are run. The Super League waited until after recent elections of club presidents at Real Madrid and Barcelona to launch its plans.

German fans could in theory block their clubs from being involved. Bayern was due to have its annual general meeting last week but it was postponed to the end of the year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Super League dispute complicates Qatar's efforts to win support across Europe for its hosting of the 2022 World Cup. PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi is well connected at UEFA, with a seat on its executive committee. He's also the chairman of Qatar-based broadcaster beIN Media Group, which holds Champions League rights for large areas of the world.



## European Football Split As 12 Clubs Announce Breakaway Super League

### Agencies

**LONDON:** A group of 12 elite English, Spanish and Italian clubs dramatically split European football by announcing the formation of a largely-closed Super League.

They are leaving the existing UEFA-run Champions League structure despite warnings they could be kicked out of their domestic competitions and face legal action.

The seismic move to shake up the world's biggest sport is partly engineered by the American owners of Arsenal, Liverpool and Manchester United who also run U.S. franchises in closed leagues a model they are trying to replicate in Europe.

The power-play came after the rebel clubs reneged on a promise on Friday to back the plan by UEFA European football's governing body to expand the Champions League beginning in 2024.

The deal was designed to appease their wishes for more games, seemingly because they couldn't control the sale of rights to the existing competition.

The Super League plan was first leaked in January but re-emerged this weekend.

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez would be the founding chairman of the SL, which said it "intended to commence as soon as

practicable" as a 20-team competition playing in midweek like the current Champions League and Europa League.

"We will help football at every level and take it to its rightful place in the world," Perez said in a statement.

"Football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires."

No evidence was presented that supporters want a Super League. Fan groups across Europe last week criticized even the current Champions League expansion plan as a "power grab."

Only 12 clubs have signed up for now with none from France or Germany but the SL hopes for three more as permanent members.

Barcelona and Atletico Madrid are the other founding members, along with Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan. Five slots would be left open to be determined each year based on the previous season's results.

UEFA warned clubs that joining the cynical project "based on self-interest would see them banned from playing in any other competition domestic, European or global. It said their players could be denied the opportunity to represent their national teams.

The statement was issued jointly with the leagues and national gov-

erning bodies from England, Spain and Italy. England has the most clubs with the six including Chelsea and Manchester City, who are due to contest a Champions League semifinals this month.

Also included is Tottenham, which is outside of the Premier League's top four to qualify for the Champions League next season.

"By bringing together the world's greatest clubs and players to play each other throughout the season, the Super League will open a new chapter for European football, ensuring world-class competition and facilities, and increased financial support for the wider football pyramid," said Joel Glazer, co-owner of Manchester United and SL vice chairman.

Another vice chairman of the new competition would be Andrea Agnelli who on Sunday night quit his role as chairman of the European Club Association, which was working with UEFA on enlarging the Champions League to 36 teams.

Agnelli also resigned as a member of the executive committee of UEFA rupturing his previously-close friendship with the governing body's president, Aleksander Ceferin.

The UEFA leader has been determined not to grant more control of the sale of television and commercial rights to the clubs.

### IPL 2021, MI VS DC, PREVIEW

## MI, DC Look To Outsmart Each Other In Battle Of Equals



### Press Trust of India

**CHENNAI:** A battle royale is in the offing as heavyweights Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals cross swords, looking to outsmart each other in the IPL here on Tuesday.

Up against a resurgent side, defending champions MI will need to address their middle-order woes if they are to go for a third consecutive win.

While Delhi come into the match after beating Punjab Kings by six wickets at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai have recorded back-to-back victories by defending low totals, something a formidable opponents like DC may not offer.

Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma has got starts and he would be keen to convert it into a big one and so would be Quinton de Kock.

MI have the likes of Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan, Kieron Pollard, Hardik Pandya and his brother Krunal, who can pummel any attack into submission on their day, but they are yet to fire on all cylinders.

After the last game, Rohit had conceded that his team "can bat a little better in the middle overs."

The Mumbai bowlers, led by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, have been splendid in the last two games when they successfully defended low scores of 150 and 152 respectively. Strike bowlers Bumrah (3 wickets) and New Zealander Trent Boult (6 wickets) have been exceptional at the death.

Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar, whom bowling coach Shane Bond described as a "wicket-taking bowler", has grabbed seven wickets in last two games.

Another important cog in the wheel is left-arm spinner Krunal, who would be itching to give his team breakthroughs.

Mumbai played Adam Milne in the previous game but considering the nature of the pitch, they could be tempted to bring in off-spinner Jayant Yadav, who played the 2020 final against the same opposition.

Meanwhile, for Delhi Capitals, the biggest positive has been the form of Shikhar Dhawan, who is the leading scorer so far in the tournament with 186 runs.

Dhawan and young Prithvi Shaw form a lethal opening combination, but the Mumbaiers need to convert his starts into big scores.

Delhi opted for Australian Steve Smith on Sunday but, as they are next playing on the slow Chepauk track, they might go back to Ajinkya Rahane, who is looking better suited for such tracks.

Skipper Rishabh Pant has the ability to take any attack to the cleaners. The DC team management would be hoping that the top-order fires in unison against the defending champions, to whom they had lost in the final last year.

DC also possess quality all-rounders in Marcus Stoinis and Lalit Yadav, who would be keen to play their roles well.

Their pace attack is led by South African Kagiso Rabada and Chris Woakes, and the two have been impressive so far. They have an additional option in Anrich Nortje, who has also joined the squad.

Delhi played four pacers in the game against Punjab, but in Chennai, they could play more spinners as the track is conducive for the slower bowlers.

They have options in the experienced Amit Mishra, Pravin Dube and new recruit Shams Mulani, who can complement Ravichandran Ashwin.

## ‘Chennai Wickets Not Unplayable Just Slower,’ Says Mahela Jayawardene

### Press Trust of India

**CHENNAI:** The wickets in Chennai are not unplayable but challenging being on slower side, insisted Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene as teams batting first have dominated the matches played at the Chepauk stadium, so far.

Out of six matches played here, thrice teams managed 150-plus score and five times the team that has batted first won the match.

The match between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Rajasthan Royals was a high-scoring affair on Sunday when Virat Kohli-led side posted 204 for four to win the match by 38 runs.

"They are not unplayable wickets. They are good, competitive wickets. And adapting to challenges is always the key for any batsmen or any team. We have been consistent with that approach, it is challenging, but our bowlers have adapted pretty well," Jayawardene said ahead of the team's game against Delhi Capitals.

The 43-year-old former Sri Lanka batsman also said all-rounder Hardik Pandya has not yet bowled this season due to the niggle he picked up during the ODI series against England.

"We were looking forward for him to be bowling this season but after those matches against England, the last ODI, I believe he picked up niggle, so that is something that we are nursing at the moment."

Jayawardene however exuded confidence that the team would be able to use Hardik's services as a bowler.

"We don't want to risk it, because it is important that we make

sure that he (Hardik) is in a position to comfortably come in and bowl. So hopefully in the next few weeks, with a bit of work and all that, we might see him bowling."

"It is not that we are deliberately trying to not bowl him, we would love to have him bowling, but as soon as the niggle is off and he is comfortable, we should be able to use that asset as well," he said.

But all-rounder Hardik Pandya effected key run-outs in the field for MI and the head coach attributed it to him being agile.

"We have always used Hardik on the boundary line because of his speed and he has a good throwing arm and his catching ability. Last few games, because he has a niggle in the shoulder, we kept (him) in 30 yards and he has proved the value of that by picking up a few run-outs, because he is agile."

Rahul Chahar has picked seven wickets in the last two games and the head coach acknowledged the improvement the young leg-spinner has shown every year.

"When we started playing him (Chahar), I believe it was the 2019 season, where he had a breakthrough season. Even in the UAE in the last season, he bowled well but he had his ups and downs, he wasn't consistent in execution, but every year we see improvement in Rahul."

"He is still a young player and he is also learning, he gets challenged by different oppositions, some top-class players, it is constant learning for Rahul, but very happy the way he has come out and he is one of our leaders in that bowling group, specially in that spin department with Krunal (Pandya), the Sri Lankan veteran said.

## Humour, Sarcasm, Anger: Football World Reacts To Super League Plans

### Agencies

**LONDON:** As a slew of foreign-owned clubs announced plans to rip up European football by forming a breakaway Super League, one club with North American leadership was happy to announce its intention to keep the status quo.

"Despite the club's two 4-0 victories this week, we can confirm that we will not be seeking membership to the newly uncovered 'European Super League,'" read a post on Twitter from Welsh club Wrexham, which plays in England's fifth division and was recently taken over by Hollywood stars Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney.

"The club," it continued, "will be making no further comment."

Reaction to the potentially seismic changes being pushed through by 12 of the world's biggest clubs ranged from humour to sarcasm to condemnation and anger.

"We've won the same amount of Premier League titles as Tottenham," said Irish club Bray Wanderers, following up its initial tweet — "We wish to confirm that we will not be taking part in any European Super League" — that has received more than 100,000 likes.

Neither club has ever won the Premier League title, though Tottenham won the English league title twice before the Premier

League was founded in 1992.

Russian club Spartak Moscow turned directly to any fans from the 12 breakaway clubs who might be disgruntled by the developments.

"If you need a new club to support, we're always here for you," Spartak said. "Kind regards, FC Spartak Moscow."

The general tone of the reaction was downright disgust, from the average supporter to those with close links to a group many are now calling "the dirty dozen."

"Yesterday, the current board of (Tottenham) betrayed the club, its history and the magic that makes this game so special when they put their name to a statement announcing the formation of a breakaway European Super League," the Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust said in a statement.

The group said Tottenham's board was "prepared to risk the club's reputation and its future in the opportunistic pursuit of greed" and called for a change of ownership if Tottenham did not immediately disassociate itself from the breakaway league.

Gary Neville, the former Manchester United defender who is now a commentator and owner of fourth-division English club Salford, described those running the breakaway clubs as "impostors" and called for the Premier League

to punish the six English clubs involved with point deductions.

"They're breaking away to a competition they can't be relegated from? It's an absolute disgrace," Neville said in an impassioned rant on Sky Sports.

"We have to wrestle back power in this country from the clubs at the top of this league — and that includes my club," he said, referencing American-owned United.

French clubs got a pat on the back from the country's president, Emmanuel Macron, for refusing to take part in the league, alongside those from Germany. Macron's office said the proposed league "threatens the principal of solidarity and sporting merit," while the French government's sports minister, Roxana Maracineanu, criticized the proposed breakaway as "a VIP club to conquer the world, but a world conquest based only on marketing and sales, not sport."

The only real mouthpieces for the breakaway clubs could be their coaches, who must hold news conferences before and after matches. One of them, Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone, said he had "no doubt that my club will make the best decision for its future."

"I'll be prepared to coach wherever they tell me to coach," Simeone said. "I have no doubt that the club will decide what is best."

## Tottenham Sack Manager Jose Mourinho After 17 Months In-Charge

### Agencies

**LONDON:** Tottenham fired Jose Mourinho on Monday after only 17 months in charge, and just as he was preparing to coach the club in the League Cup final.

Mourinho was hired in November 2019 to replace Mauricio Pochettino, who unexpectedly led the London club to the Champions League final before the team collapsed the following season.

Mourinho failed to get Tottenham back into the Champions League and has overseen another collapse this season. The team was in first place in December but a run of poor results has seen it fall to seventh place.

Jose and his coaching staff have been with us through some of our



most challenging times as a club," Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy said.

"Jose is a true professional who showed enormous resilience during the pandemic. On a personal level I have enjoyed working with him and regret that things have not worked out as we both had envisaged. He

will always be welcome here and we should like to thank him and his coaching staff for their contribution.

Mourinho's exits comes two days before a Premier League game against Southampton and with the League Cup final on Sunday against Manchester City. Tottenham, which hasn't won

a trophy since the 2008 League Cup, said youth coach Ryan Mason had been put in charge of training.

It is Mourinho's shortest spell at a club since breaking into the big time with Porto in 2004.

Disgruntlement over his tactics and methods have resurfaced in recent months, with Tottenham slipping out of the Champions League places and getting eliminated from the Europa League in the round of 16 after a surprising 3-0 loss at Dinamo Zagreb.

Tottenham is five points behind fourth-place West Ham, which occupies the final Champions League qualification place. The club has won only one of its last five games.

The two teams above Tottenham Chelsea and Liverpool have games in hand.

## As COVID Cases Rise, NRAI Requests Government To Vaccinate Athletes Soon

### Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has requested the government to vaccinate its Olympic-bound shooters at the earliest, taking into account the unprecedented spike in COVID-19 cases.

As per the data updated by the union health ministry, India reported 2,73,810 new positive cases in the last 24 hours, the highest single-day surge taking the country's caseload past the 1.5 crore mark.

As many as 1,619 people succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours.

Considering the grim situation, the NRAI is keen that its athletes are

vaccinated soon.

"The federation has been insisting on the athletes getting vaccinated as soon as possible. It has again requested the government to vaccinate its shooters," a source close to the NRAI said.

"We understand that it is a personal choice but if the government takes the lead and is able to convince the athletes, they will probably come forward and get the jabs. With cases rising at such a fast rate, there is no other way around at this time," he added.

The NRAI stepped up its call for vaccination after three of its Olympic-bound shooters contracted the highly contagious virus recently, forcing the federation to cancel the national camp for the rifle team that

was to start in the national capital from Tuesday. It is instead arranging for a training-cum-competition trip abroad, including participation in the European Championships.

The NRAI had announced a 15-member Indian shooting contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Games in the first week of this month.

Keeping the threat posed by the COVID-19 in mind, two reserve shooters for each event have been picked alongside the main team. They will be trained on par with the Olympic-bound shooters and will be kept on standby for the Tokyo Games.

Last month, India finished with 30 medals including 15 gold in the ISSF World Cup in Delhi.



## Centre To Provide Fresh Insurance Cover To "COVID-19 Warriors"

Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Health Ministry on Monday announced that all claims of "COVID warriors" under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package will be settled till



April 24 after which a fresh insurance policy for them will become effective.

In a tweet, the ministry said that a new dispensation will be provided to cover the "corona warriors". For this, the ministry is in talks with the New India Assurance, it said.

"Two hundred and eight seven claims have been paid by the insurance company so far. The scheme has played a crucial psychological role in boosting the morale of the health workers fighting COVID-19," the ministry said in a

statement.

"The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) insurance policy claims of COVID warriors will continue to be settled till 24th April, 2021, thereafter a fresh insurance policy for COVID warriors will

become effective," it said.

The PMGKP was announced on March last year, and was extended thrice till April 24, the ministry said.

It was launched to provide a safety net to the health workers to ensure that in case of any adversity due to COVID-19, their families are taken care of. Insurance cover of 50 lakhs is provided under the PMGKP scheme.

This has provided a safety net to the dependents of the coronavirus warriors who lost their lives to the disease.

## Allocation Of Remdesivir Has To Be Need-Based: Bombay High Court

Agenceis

**MUMBAI:** The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court on Monday said the distribution of Remdesivir injections has to be on the basis of need and asked the Centre and the Maharashtra government what parameters are followed while allocating the drug to different states and districts.

A division bench of Justices Sunil Shukre and SM Modak said if Maharashtra was contributing to 40 per cent of the COVID-19 cases in India, then the allocation of Remdesivir injections to the state should also be in the same percentage.

Remdesivir is listed for use in serious COVID-19 patients. In view of a sudden spike in demand of the drug due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, the Centre last week banned its export till the situation improves.

"If contribution towards COVID-19 cases is 40 per cent from Maharashtra, then it is only right to say that 40 per cent of Remdesivir injections are allotted to this state. The allocation has to be need-based and not on any other factors that are not relevant," Justice Shukre said.

The court directed the Union and the state governments to file their affidavits by April 21, pointing out the parameters followed for the regulation and distribution of Remdesivir vials.

The court was hearing a bunch of petitions on the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of facilities in hospitals and the hurdles being faced by the public.

The court also pulled up the Maharashtra government for "disparity and arbitrariness" while allotting vials of Remdesivir to different districts in the state.

Advocate Tushar Mandlekar, appearing for a petitioner, informed the High Court that the allocation of Remdesivir vials to Nagpur was less than what was allocated to Thane.

"There appears to be a disparity and some arbitrariness in the distribution of Remdesivir vials to Nagpur district. The vials are not being released in proportion to the requirement," the court said.

The bench further said it did not understand the logic behind allotting over 5,000 vials of Remdesivir for around 2,000 beds in Thane, but allotting only about 3,000 vials of the drug for over 8,000 COVID-19 beds in Nagpur.

It noted that on April 13 and April 18, not a single vial of Remdesivir was allotted to Nagpur and on April 17, only 500 vials were allotted.

"This has severely affected the administration of health care to COVID-19 patients in Nagpur. The possibility of mortality because of lack of Remdesivir cannot be ruled out. It is the solemn duty of the state government to save and preserve each precious life," the court said.

The bench said the issue needs to be resolved on a "war-footing", and directed the Maharashtra government to immediately release 10,000 vials of Remdesivir by Monday night to Nagpur district.

"The COVID-19 scenario in Nagpur has turned to its worst. So much so that there are no beds available, no life saving measures available, lack of oxygen and also the dearth of medical and para-medical staff," it said.

"The spike in COVID-19 cases in Nagpur is steep and the situation was not so bad even in the first phase of the pandemic last year," the court observed.

Taking note of several COVID-19 patients waiting outside hospitals in Nagpur for admission, the High Court directed the district collector and the Nagpur Municipal Corporation's commissioner to set up temporary pandals outside those hospitals with drinking water facilities for such patients.



## India Witnesses 2.73 Lakh Covid Cases In A Day

Press Trust of India

**New Delhi:** India's total tally of Covid cases crossed 1.5 crore with a record single-day rise of 2,73,810 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The total tally of Covid cases mounted to 1,50,61,919 and the death toll increased to 1,78,769 with a record 1,619 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Registering a steady increase for the 40th day in a row, the active

cases have increased to 19,29,329 comprising 12.81 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid recovery rate has dropped to 86 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,29,53,821, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.19 per cent, the data stated.

According to the ICMR, 26,78,94,549 samples have been tested up to April 18 with 13,56,133 samples being tested on Sunday.

The 1,619 new fatalities include 503 from Maharashtra, 170 from

Chhattisgarh, 161 from Delhi, 127 from Uttar Pradesh, 110 from Gujarat, 81 from Karnataka, 68 from Punjab, 66 from Madhya Pradesh, 50 from Jharkhand, 42 each from Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, 29 from Haryana, 28 from West Bengal and 25 from Kerala.

A total of 1,78,769 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 60,473 from Maharashtra, 13,351 from Karnataka, 13,113 from Tamil Nadu, 12,121 from Delhi, 10,568 from West Bengal, 9,830 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,902 from Punjab and 7,410 from Andhra Pradesh. PTI

## Second Covid Wave In Delhi Likely To Peak Within A Week: Experts

Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** The second wave of coronavirus in Delhi is likely to peak within a week after possibly hitting a positivity rate of 50 per cent before the numbers start to go down, senior medical experts said on Monday.

Dr Jugal Kishore, the head of community medicine at Safdarjung Hospital, said, "The virus spreads from person to person in close proximity. Over the last few months, people have been meeting each other at a greater pace without following Covid-appropriate behaviour. The results are before us."

Citing the findings of a serosurvey conducted in February, he said around 50 per cent of Delhi's population has already been exposed to coronavirus, and there are "very few" cases of re-infection.

According to the fifth serosurvey, conducted between January 15 and January 23, around 56 per cent of Delhi's population have developed antibodies against the virus.

"Even if we say only 40 per cent of people have been affected so far... Delhi may achieve herd immunity if 30-35 percent of the remaining population is exposed to the virus," he said.

When a large part of the population develops antibodies and becomes immune to the virus, the chain of transmission is broken, and this is called herd immunity.

Dr Kishore said Delhi is "likely to hit the peak of the second wave within a week", considering the exponential increase in cases.

Dr Yudhvir Singh, Assistant Professor of critical care at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, said this Covid wave is nearing peak in Delhi and the next week is going to be crucial.

"The positivity rate may as well touch the 50 per cent mark," he said. Cases will start receding by April-end and the situation will be comparatively better by the second week of May, Mr Singh, who is a member of the "COVID Clinical Management



Team" at AIIMS, said.

Asked about the reasons behind such a high number of cases in Delhi this time, Dr Singh said people let their guard down and didn't take proper precautions at a time when it is likely that the second wave was being fuelled by the highly infectious "double mutant" strain of the virus.

"Entire families are turning out to be positive. Ninety per cent of the people threw caution to the wind ... didn't follow Covid-appropriate behaviour," he added.

Another reason is that a large number of non-Delhi residents have been coming to the national capital for treatment. They comprise some 30 per cent of all Covid patients admitted in hospitals here, he said.

He said the virus will evolve with time and "may become weak or strong. Anything is possible".

Most viruses tend to become less deadly after mutations, he added. The number of people getting vaccinated in the coming months will also determine how severe the situation will be, he said.

Dr NK Ganguly, the former head of the Indian Council of Medical Research, however, said the capital might have "hit the peak already" of this wave of coronavirus.

"The cases will start coming down next week. Similar trends (positivity rate and death rate) were witnessed

in the US when it was grappling with a second wave of Covid-19," he said.

Dr Ganguly said several super-spreader events, including the Kumbh, farmers' protests, weddings and election rallies, led to the present situation in Delhi and elsewhere.

The mutant virus is attacking children and younger populations in larger numbers, he said.

Delhi recorded over 25,500 cases on Sunday, the highest single-day tally since the pandemic began ravaging countries.

The city has registered 1,46,934 cases in the last 10 days. The positivity rate has shot up from 7.79 percent on April 9 to 29.74 per cent on April 18.

Meanwhile, hours after a weekend curfew ended Monday morning, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced a six-day lockdown, till 5 am on April 26, in a bid to contain the spread of the virus. He said Delhi's health system is under stress although it has not collapsed yet, "despite around 25,000 cases coming up every day".

Hospitals in the city are grappling with shortage of oxygen supply and crucial drugs.

On Sunday, the Chief Minister said less than 100 ICU beds were available for coronavirus patients in the city, even as the government explored options to set up Covid hospitals in schools and Covid care shelters in gated housing societies.

## British PM Boris Johnson Not To Visit India In View Of Pandemic



Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will not visit India next week in view of the coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Monday.

MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the decision was taken as per mutual agreement by both sides.

"In view of the prevailing Covid situation, it has been decided by mutual agreement that the prime minister of the United Kingdom will not visit

India next week," he said.

Bagchi said the two sides will be holding a virtual meeting in the coming days to launch plans for a transformed India-UK relationship.

"Both leaders attach the highest importance to taking the India-UK partnership to its fullest potential and propose to remain in close touch in this regard and look forward to an in-person meeting later in the year," he said.

Earlier this year, Johnson cancelled a visit to India in view of surge in coronavirus cases in the UK.

## Mamata Tells EC With 'Folded Hands' To Hold Last 3 Poll Phases On Single Day



Agenceis

**KOLKATA:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday urged the Election Commission to reconsider its decision to stick to the original poll schedule, as she stressed that wrapping up the last three phases of polls on a single day or at least in two days would check the spread of COVID-19 to a certain extent.

Indicating that the EC may have decided against clubbing the remaining phases at the behest of the BJP, Banerjee, while addressing a rally in Uttar Dinajpur, requested the poll panel to prioritise public health.

"With folded hands, I request the EC to hold the next three phases on a single day. If

not one day, conduct it in two days and save one day. Please don't take your decision based on what the BJP says... Please ensure that you protect public health by curtailing the poll schedule, even if it is by one day," the TMC supremo said.

Banerjee further said that she and other leaders of her party would not hold any rally in congested areas.

Banerjee lambasted the Narendra Modi government for "not taking adequate measures in the past six months to avert vaccine crisis".

Calling the BJP a party of "rioters and warmongers", she told people gathered at the rally, "Don't allow them (safron party leaders) to turn Bengal into Gujarat."

## Sena MLA Says He Wants To Stuff Coronavirus In Fadnavis' Mouth



Press Trust of India

**Buldhana:** Amid a row over Remdesivir supply in Maharashtra, Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad has said he wishes he could "stuff coronavirus in the mouth" of BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, sparking protests by the opposition.

The Shiv Sena which leads the three-party ruling alliance in the state is targeting the former chief minister for objecting to Mumbai police grilling a pharma company's director over stocking thousands of vials of Remdesivir, in high demand for treating coronavirus patients.

"Had I found coronavirus, I

would have stuffed it in the mouth of Fadnavis," Gaikwad said.

Talking to reporters on Saturday, Gaikwad, an MLA from Buldhana, asked what would Fadnavis have done if he was the chief minister during the pandemic.

Instead of supporting state ministers, BJP leaders are mocking them and want the state government to fail, he said.

The Centre asked Remdesivir manufacturing companies in Maharashtra not to supply the drug to the state, he claimed.

Following Gaikwad's remarks, BJP workers staged protests against him in Buldhana on Sunday and burnt the MLA's effigy. PTI

### NEWSMAKERS

## Domino's India hacked? Credit card data of 10 lakh users on 'sale' for Rs 4 crore

Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** In what could add to latest string of cyber breaches at India-based entities, a cyber security researcher on Sunday claimed that credit card details of nearly 10-lakh people who purchased online on Domino's Pizza India is allegedly being sold for over Rs 4 crore on the Dark Web.

According to Alon Gal, CTO of security firm Hudson Rock, a threat actor has claimed to have hacked Domino's India database worth 13TB.

The threat actor is looking for around \$550,000 (approximately Rs 4 crore) for the database and saying they have plans to build a search portal to enable querying the data, Gal claimed.

"Information includes 180,000,000 order details containing names, phone numbers, emails, addresses, payment details and a whopping 1,000,000 credit cards," Gal claimed in a tweet.

"Plenty of large-scale Indian breaches



lately, this is worrying," he added.

Domino's India was yet to react to Gal's tweet. Independent cyber security researcher

Rajshekhar Rajaharia told IANS that he had alerted about this possible hack to the CERT-in (India's national cyber defence agency) on March 5.

"I had alerted CERT-in about a possible Domino's Pizza India hack where the threat actor got data access with details like 200 million orders and personal data of the users too. The hacker, however, did not provide any sample," Rajaharia said.

There have been a string of hacking incidents involving Indian firms in the recent past, including Bigbasket, BuyUcoin, JusPay, Upstox and others. Gal earlier this month claimed that personal data of nearly 533 million (53.3 crore) Facebook users, including 61 lakh Indians, were leaked online after a hacker posted the details on a digital forum.

He leaked data included Facebook ID numbers, profile names, email addresses, location information, gender details, job data, and other details. Facebook said the data was old.

"This is old data that was previously reported on in 2019. We found and fixed this issue in August 2019," a Facebook spokesperson had said in a statement.