

KASHMIR OBSERVER

Tuesday 27 April | 14 Ramazan | 1442 Hijri | Vol:24 | Issue: 98 | Pages:12 | Price: ₹3

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



P7 STATE

VACCINE MUST FOR RECOVERED COVID-19 PATIENTS: DAK

Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases across Jammu and Kashmir, the government on Saturday designated 23 hospitals as dedicated hospitals for treatment including 15 in Kashmir division and...

P4 THINK

VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE

Some actions are normalized and engraved into our society in such a way that even if it's physical abuse, it's okay. Earlier in the times when our parents used to be children, they were subjected to certain correctional methods and corporal punishment was...



P3 CITY

TOURISTS ROAM INSIDE TULIP GARDEN DESPITE GOVT'S CLOSURE ORDER

Despite the government ordering the shutting down of Tulip garden in Srinagar, on Monday tourists were seen enjoying inside the Garden. The State Executive...



Quote!

Courtesy costs nothing, but buys everything.

—Imam Ali

14TH RAMAZAN

	Iftar TODAY	Sehri TOMMOROW
FIQAH HANAFIYA	07:15	04:14
FIQAH JAFARIYA	07:21	04:12

NEWS DIGEST

Arms Cache Recovered In Kishtwar

JAMMU: Government forces have recovered a cache of arms and ammunition, including two pistols, during a search operation in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, Army officials said on Monday. A joint team of the Army and police launched a search operation in Chhatru forest area on Sunday, they said. During the search, they recovered a cache of arms. [More On P6](#)

2 'OGWs' Held With Grenades In Uri

SRINAGAR: Police on Monday said that it arrested two youth from the border town of Uri in Baramulla district after two grenades were recovered from their possession. Liyaqat Ahmad Kakro of Nambla and Akhtar Mir of Barnate in the border town Uri were arrested by police at a checkpoint on Monday after two grenades were recovered from during frisking, a police. [More On P6](#)

CASO Conducted In Natipora

SRINAGAR: The government forces on Monday carried out a cordon and search operation (CASO) in Natipora area of this capital city. Eyewitnesses said that a part of Natipora area was brought under siege and a door-to-door search operation was launched by government forces on Monday afternoon. The identity cards of locals were thoroughly checked, news agency KNT reported. [More On P6](#)

Militant Hideout Busted In Kulgam

SRINAGAR: The government forces on Monday busted a militant hideout and seized a cache of arms and ammunition in a forest area of South Kashmir's Kulgam district. Police and the soldiers of 34 Rashtriya Rifles busted the hideout during a cordon and search operation in Manzgam forest area in Kulgam on the basis of specific information, officials said. [More On P6](#)

Corona Crisis Deepens, 25 More Die in J&K

2135 More People Infected, 1344 From Kashmir



KO Photo: Abrid Bhat

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir witnessed on Monday 25 deaths in a day, the highest this year, even as 2,135 fresh

cases of Covid-19 were reported across the Union Territory during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of people infected by the virus in J&K to 162890. According to the officials, 14

of the fatalities were reported from Jammu division while 11 people also died of virus in the Kashmir valley, taking the fatality count to 2172. Among others, [More On P6](#)

Indoor Stadium, Hajj House Turned Into Covid-19 Centres

Amid surge in the covid-19 cases, the authorities have turned Indoor Stadium, Hajj House Bemina, KU hotel building and Community health centers Sanatnagar into Covid-19 centres for emergency in Srinagar in wake of the spike in the number of positive cases. Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar Mohammad Aijaz Asad said that step has been taken to meet any emergency as may arise due to the surging covid-19 tally. | [FULL STORY ON PAGE 08](#)

30 KAS Officers Promoted To Special Scale

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday ordered the promotion of 30 Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS) officers from selection grade to special scale with the direction that those working as additional secretaries in the different department shall be now designated as special secretaries.

An order issued from the GAD reads "sanction is hereby accorded to the promotion of the following Selection Grade officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service to the Special Scale of KAS in pay level 13 (123100-215900), with [More On P6](#)

Chairs Meeting on Covid-19 Situation with Senior Doctors

LG Assures All Necessary Support to Hospitals, Doctors

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today chaired a review meeting with the senior Doctors of Jammu and Kashmir including Principals, Heads of Departments of Government Medical Colleges and District Hospitals, at Raj Bhavan here through virtual mode.

During the meeting, the Lt Governor took a detailed assessment of the preparedness being put in place in the hospitals across J&K to handle the



ongoing Covid pandemic.

The Lt Governor expressed his gratitude towards all the Doctors and frontline health workers for making untiring

efforts in the fight against Covid-19 and rendering continuous services day and night, for saving the people affected by the deadly virus. [More On P6](#)

Mercury Up In Kashmir As Sun Shines

Agencies

SRINAGAR: While weather is expected to "mainly dry" till May 3, the minimum temperatures have started to increase gradually in Kashmir Valley, officials said on Sunday.

A meteorological department official said that Srinagar recorded a low of 7.6 degree Celsius against 4.8 degree Celsius on the previous night. The temperature was 1.7 degree

Celsius below normal for this time of the season in the summer capital of J&K, he said.

Qazigund recorded a low of 5.6 degree Celsius against previous night's 3.4 degree Celsius and below normal by 2.2 degree Celsius, the official said.

Mercury settled at 2.1 degree Celsius against minus 0.1 degree Celsius on the previous night in Pahalgam.

The temperature in the famous tourist resort in South [More On P6](#)

'EC Responsible For Covid Surge, Should Be Booked For Murder': Madras HC

Press Trust Of India

CHENNAI: The Madras High Court on Monday castigated the Election Commission over the COVID-19 second wave in the country, holding it 'singularly' responsible for the spread, called it "the most irresponsible institution" and even said

its officials may be booked under murder charges.

The EC allowing political parties to take out rallies and meetings had led to the spread of the pandemic, the court said.

"Were you (living) on another planet," the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar [More On P6](#)



Ready For Talks If India Revisits Aug, 2019 Action: Pak

Observer Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has expressed its readiness to hold bilateral talks with India if Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led government at the Centre revisits its August 5, 2019 move revoking Jammu and Kashmir's special status and splitting the state into two Union Territories.

"If India is willing to revisit some of the decisions that they took on August 5, 2019, Pakistan will be more than happy to engage, sit and talk out our differences and sit and through a dialogue resolve the outstanding issues," Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood

Qureshi said in an interview with Turkey based Anadolu Agency.

Qureshi was on his two-day visit to Turkey. Maintaining that India's unilateral decision of August 5, 2019 was against international law, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and has put at risk, stability and peace of South Asia, Qureshi said that Pakistan had outstanding issues with India including Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek and others and the only sensible way forward is the dialogue.

"We cannot afford to go to war, you know, it will be mutually suicidal. And no sensible person will advocate [More On P6](#)

Delhi Tight-Lipped On Pak Offer

Even as Covid cases spiral and its health system grinds to a halt, India remains tight-lipped about the possibility of opening the border and accepting Pakistan's offers to assist its virus-ravaged neighbour. Despite an alarming shortage of oxygen supplies, hospital beds, and record numbers of deaths, the government in New Delhi has remained silent about opening the border, which will allow Pakistan [More On P6](#)

Entrepreneurs Becoming Labourers, As Kashmir Awaits Consumer Court

Umer Ahmad

The recent Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report censuring the government for the pending 2014 flood relief in Kashmir reminded Tanveer Ahmad of his own battle with the Consumer Court consumed by the 2019 summer shift along with the hundreds of cases.

"I was so near yet so far," Tanveer sums up his struggle with his pending flood case misplaced two years ago.

After losing his home in the devastating fall of 2014, Tanveer was banking on his insurance policy for the full recovery of losses suffered in the massive floods.

A resident of Hygam in north

Kashmir's Sopore town, Tanveer approached his insurer—HDFC Urbo—in post-flood phase.

But when his claim wasn't entertained, he decided to move to the Consumer Court for justice.

"My case was on its final stage," Tanveer says. "All the witnesses were heard in the court and the final decision was around the corner when New Delhi abrogated Article 370 in August 2019."

In the ensuing communication blockade spanning months, Tanveer lost the track of his case he was rigorously pursuing for half a decade.

"I don't know what is going to happen now," the distraught Kashmiri man says.

"I believe the abrogation of



J&K's special status only made us backwards, rather than the so-called prosperous in the make-believe development era. Our own vibrant bodies became

defunct and the cases instantly lost their address."

But Tanveer hasn't been suffering alone since the abrogation of J&K's special status — when

Consumer Court of Kashmir became shut and put thousands of litigants in uncertainty.

The subsequent Reorganization Act in October 2019 nullified many state laws and replaced them with the central laws.

Among others, J&K Consumer Protection Act 1987 was replaced by the Central Consumer Protection Act 1986. After an amendment in 2019, the Act became Central Consumer Protection Act 2019.

Under the amendment, new Commission was to be set up in J&K.

A committee headed by the J&K High Court Judge was formulated to set up the commission.

But the committee constituted in October 2020 is yet to reconstitute the commission,

thus leaving hundreds of litigants in lurch. Among them is Mohammad Maqbool Tambay.

In 2015, Maqbool lost his shop in a fire turning his world upside down.

"After that fire incident, I was hopeful to restart business with my insurance policy," he says.

"But when I made the claim, I was denied full insurance payment. The company was not even ready to provide me 10 percent of the losses I had suffered in the fire."

To seek justice, Maqbool took his case to the Consumer Court. But till date, the fate of his case remains unknown due to the changed equations on the ground.

With the result, the yesterday's entrepreneur has now

become a labourer.

"I work as a daily worker in construction sites now," Maqbool says.

"I had borrowed money from the bank to set up my shop. But after the incident and subsequent denial of insurance claim, I had to sell land to pay off the credit and to cope up with other losses."

Advocate Sujood, a consumer lawyer, told Kashmir Observer that there're hundreds of cases, majority of them related to the pending flood relief, in the consumer court which were at the final stage.

"But since 2019, when the J&K Consumer Protection Act was repealed and the commission was shut, there is uncertainty among clients now," the lawyer said.

"People fear [More On P6](#)

COVID EMERGENCY: Srinagar Admin Establishes Seven Covid Care Centers

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The district administration Srinagar Monday established seven COVID Care Centers with 1300 bed capacity to accommodate the increasing patient footfall within the district. The officials said that the rush of patients who are tested positive for COVID-19 has increased at the Valley hospitals especially within the Srinagar City.

They said it has been observed that the number of COVID positive cases in Srinagar district have shown a steep rise in the last few days, which spurs the requirement for augmentation of infrastructure to

accommodate increasing patient footfall.

Officials said that a total of seven COVID Care Centers have been established at Kashmir University Zakura Campus, Hyderpora facility, NIT Srinagar, Indoor Stadium Haft Chinar Srinagar, Marriage Hall Sanatnagar, Haj House Bemina and IMPA Hostel MA Road.

They said 1300 beds will be made available in these Centers, saying that bed capacity at KU Zakura Campus will be 324, 300 at Hyderpora facility, 294 at NIT Srinagar, 120 at Indoor Stadium Haft Chinar Srinagar, 100 at Marriage Hall Sanatnagar, 80 at Haj House Bemina and 80 at IMPA Hostel MA Road.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Muhammad Aijaz Asad said that the additional 1300 beds will be ready in next three days.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Srinagar, Syed Muhammad Hanief Balkhi



while giving details in this regard said that the patients with mild symptoms will be accommodated in the COVID-19 Care centers.

"Like previous year, many COVID-19 centres have been established again in Srinagar where oxygen facilities other than the beds will be made available," he said, adding that the administration has geared up in this regard since morning and is

ensuring that all the facilities including oxygen is made available at the Centers.

Meanwhile, with regard to the COVID care centres, several officers have been assigned with different responsibilities.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Srinagar has been asked to make adequate security arrangements at all Covid Care Centers while Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation

(SMC) has been asked to ensure proper sanitation and Waste Management on a daily basis.

SE P W (R&B) has been asked to develop and upgrade the facility at designated Covid Centres while SE PDD has been asked to provide proper electricity facility at designated Covid Care Centres, officials informed, adding that SE PHE has been directed to ensure proper water supply at the designated Covid Care Centres while Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Srinagar will provide a well-equipped medical team and other related requirements headed by a Doctor to be stationed round-the-clock at the designated Covid Care Centres.

Officials said that the Food Safety Officer has been asked to check quality of food provided to the patients, adding that the officers have been asked to ensure adequate staff to be stationed round-the-clock at designated COVID Care Centers.

LIKE PREVIOUS YEAR, MANY COVID-19 CENTRES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED AGAIN IN SRINAGAR WHERE oxygen facilities other than the beds will be made available," he said, adding that the administration has geared up in this regard since morning and is ensuring that all the facilities including oxygen is made available at the Centers.



COVID CASUALTY: Son mourns the loss of his mother who became yet another victim of the coronavirus in Kashmir on Monday. KO Photo/Abid Bhat

Tourists Roam Inside Tulip Garden Despite Govt's Closure Order

'Will Look Into The Matter'

SRINAGAR: Despite the government ordering the shutting down of Tulip garden in Srinagar, on Monday tourists were seen enjoying inside the Garden.

The State Executive Committee in view of spurt in Covid-19 cases had ordered closure of all paid parks across Jammu and Kashmir.

A group of tourists were seen taking selfies inside the sprawling Tulip garden raising many eye-brows. The pictures of the same went viral on social media platforms.

Interestingly, a poster pasted on the main entry gate of the garden read: "In view of Covid, garden closed for visitors."

Pertinently, the decision to close the garden was taken in

view of the spike in Covid-19 positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir after 2381 Covid-19 Positive cases were reported on Sunday.

Government's Official Twitter handle on Sunday posted a tweet that read: "Due to the prevailing COVID situation in J&K, State Executive Committee, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 24 of Disaster Management Act, 2005, hereby orders that all paid public parks in the UT of J&K shall remain closed for visitors till further orders."

Commissioner Secretary Floriculture Sheikh Fayaz said that he will get it checked, however, "we have already closed the parks as per the orders of the SEC," he said. (KNO)

Div Com Flags Off Two NHIDCL Ambulances In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir Pandurang K Pole Monday in presence of Executive Director, National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), Gurjeet Singh Kambo flagged off two ambulances at TRC, Srinagar.

NHIDCL handed over the ambulances equipped with basic life saving support to Divisional Administration under MoRT&H as a CSR initiative.

The ambulances were flagged off to operate in Anantnag and Baram-

ulla districts while as a similar facility was extended to District Ganderbal in January-2021.

On the occasion, Div Com said that NHIDCL helps to ensure medical comforts to the residents of Kashmir valley during the trying times of the current COVID-19 situation and subsequent times.

He hailed NHIDCL for providing ambulances and said it shall greatly help in improving the health care facilities in these districts.

Among others, Director Tourism, GN Itoo, JD Tourism, SP Headquarter, DD Tourism were also present on the occasion.

Power To Remain Shut In Srinagar Parts On April 27, 29

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: According to the Power Controller of the Kashmir Province, Bemina Srinagar, that in order to carry out the fixing of braces for stability of 33kv incomer for 33/11kv Chowgam Substation, the power supply from 33KV Qazigund Kund Line to Qazigund Receiving Station shall remain off on April 27 & 29, from 10AM to 4PM. The areas fed from Qazigund Kund line shall remain affected during the said schedule

DDC Srinagar Visits City Hospitals, Inspects Medical Oxygen Plants

SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad Monday visited SMHS hospital, Chest Disease hospital and Kashmir Nursing Home and took stock of the availability of Medical oxygen supply. He also inspected various Medical Oxygen Plants in these hospitals.

At SMHS hospital, DC was informed that 3 Medical Oxygen plants of 2600 mpl capacity are presently functioning in the hospital and work on one more plant of 1000 lpm capacity is being carried out on war footing basis.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned to work in double shifts to make additional plant functional within two days to increase the supplies in the hospital.

While inspecting the Medical Oxygen plants at Chest Disease hospital, the Deputy Commissioner was apprised that two



Oxygen plants of 430 mpl and 500 lpm capacity are already functioning in the hospital, while work on 1500 lpm capacity is also going on at fast pace.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned authorities to expedite the pace of work and ensure its completion within next 10 days so that sufficient

Medical oxygen supply is made available to the patients.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner also visited Kashmir Nursing Home and took stock of the pace of work on 1000 lpm capacity new Medical Oxygen plant.

On the occasion, the DC directed the concerned to ensure early completion and commissioning of the plant at the earliest so that it could be made functional to cater the demand of oxygen in hospital.

During his visit, the Deputy Commissioner directed all the Medical Superintendent to work with added zeal and dedication and left no stone unturned while delivering patient care facilities particularly while dealing Covid-19 patients.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner directed for establishing oxygen cylinder bank in the district and asked the concerned to work out the proposal within two days.

NIT Signs MoU With BNUT Iran To Collaborate In Academic Activities

SRINAGAR: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Babol Noshirvani University of Technology (BNUT), Iran to explore collaborative, academic, research activities and understandings.

According to a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the MoU was signed by Director, NIT Srinagar Prof. (Dr.) Rakesh Sehgal and Chancellor, BNUT, Iran Prof. (Dr.) Javad Vaseghi Amiri to collaborate on different academic activities.

BNUT was founded in 1973 by one of the greatest philanthropists of Iran, Late Seyed Hossein Fallah Noshirvani in Babol, a city of Iran. Since the year 2008, it is known as Babol Noshirvani University of Technology.

The scope of collaboration on academic and research activities in

MoU includes promoting and expanding international development by stimulating, supporting education, professional, and intercultural activities, involving projects among students, staff, and faculty members of BNUT and NIT Srinagar.

Director, NIT Srinagar Prof. (Dr.) Rakesh Sehgal said it is indeed a matter of great pleasure as two technological institutions are coming together to sign the historic MoU.

"We will take it forward for the benefit of students, faculty members, and other staff members of both respective intuitions. It will help us to serve humanity through technological dimensions", he said.

Prof. Sehgal said it is a very positive step that the MoU will encourage academic partnership and fruitful research collaboration between NIT Srinagar and BNUT

Iran. We are aiming forward for the joint research projects and faculty exchange programs," he said.

Director NIT Srinagar expressed his gratitude to Prof. (Dr.) Javad Vaseghi Amiri, Chancellor of BNUT Iran for agreeing to sign this MoU between the two intuitions.

"Both intuitions are quite old institutions and I can see we have many common interests from the aims, objectives, and mandate of BNUT University including common programs ranging from UG, PG, Ph.D. degrees," he said.

Dr. Sehgal said the signing of this MoU will bring these two intuitions closer and we will definitely exchange faculty, students and moreover the exchange of ideas for the benefit of students, faculty, and humanity in general.

"The aim and objectives of any technical institution or any medi-

cal institution is clear ultimately to enhance the quality of life of a common man," he said.

On the occasion, Prof. (Dr.) Javad Vaseghi Amiri, Chancellor of BNUT Iran said the faculty from both the institutes will also collaborate in the joint submission of research project proposals, supervision of exchange students, and joint research in disciplines of mutual interest.

"I am happy to sign this MoU between the two intuitions and it will boost the mutual coordination between faculty, students and other staff workers. We are confident that this partnership will help us produce industry-ready graduates who are prepared to contribute towards the fast-growing global society, he said.

Prof. Amiri expressed his gratitude to Director NIT Prof. (Dr.) Rakesh Sehgal for signing an MoU with their university.

Registrar NIT Srinagar, Prof. Kaiser Bukhari said the main objective of the MoU is to support reciprocity in university extension activities of common interests.

"It will include the exchange of books, scientific publications, study programs, academic projects, course information, seminars, conferences, and any other data and information of common interest," he said.

Prof. Bukhari said it will develop joint research projects and joint publications. Conduct mutual international conferences and workshops and offer dual certificates.

The event was also attended by Prof. M. F. Wani, Coordinator of TE-QIP-III and Central Research Facility, Prof. Najeib-ud din, Dean of Academics, Prof. G. A. Harmein, Dean of R&C, Prof. Shamim Lone, Dean of Faculty Welfare, Prof. Abdul Liman, Dean of Student Welfare.

DIAL-EMMA

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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 1296 - Battle of Dunbar: The Scots are defeated by Edward I of England.
- 1518 Treaty of St Truiden: anti-French Trapdoors/Bourgondisch covenant
- 1522- Battle of La Bicocca: a combined French and Venetian was decisively defeated by a Spanish-Imperial and Papal army
- 1522 Battle at Bicacca: Charles I & Pope Adrianus VI beat France
- 1526- Mughal King Babur beats sultan of Delhi
- 1650 - The Battle of Carbisdale: Royalist army under Marquess of Montrose invades mainland Scotland from Orkney; defeated by a Covenanter army.
- 1662- Netherlands & France sign military covenant
- 1805 - US Marines attack shores of Tripoli
- 1861- US President Abraham Lincoln suspends writ of habeas corpus (US Civil War)
- 1863 - Battle of Straight's raid: Tuscumbia to Cedar Bluff, AL
- 1865 - Steamboat "SS Sultana" explodes in the Mississippi River, killing up to 1,800 of the 2,427 passengers in the greatest maritime disaster in United States history. Most were paroled Union POWs on their way home.
- 1890- French troops under Capt Archinard occupy Oussebouyou West Sudan
- 1909- Sultan of Turkey Abdul Hamid II is overthrown
- 1911 - Following the resignation and death of William P. Frye, a compromise is reached to rotate the office of President pro tempore (for the time being) of the United States Senate.
- 1911- Indian passive resistance is suspended when Gen. J.C. Smuts enters into negotiations with Mahatma Gandhi.
- 1915-Counterattack launched by Turkish forces under the command of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk against allied troops
- 1941- German troops occupy Athens, Greece
- 1942- Belgian Jews are forced to wear stars
- 1943- Soviet Union breaks contact with Polish government exiled in London
- 1945-Italian partisans capture Benito Mussolini at Dongo (Lake Como)
- 1945- World War II: The Völkischer Beobachter, the newspaper of the Nazi Party, ceases publication.
- 1946- 1st radar installed aboard a commercial ship
- 1951- Mohammed Mossadeq chosen as premier of Persia
- 1959- Liu Sjau-chi elected president of China People's Republic.
- 1960- 1st atomic powered electric-drive submarine launched (Tullibee)
- 1960- Togo (formerly French Togo) declares independence from French administration
- 1961- NASA launches Explorer 11 into Earth orbit to study gamma rays
- 1961- Sierra Leone declares independence from UK
- 1972- Apollo 16 returns to Earth
- 1976- Arabic Monetary Fund established in Abu Dhabi
- 1978- Afghanistan revolution (National Day), pro-Russian military coup
- 1981- Xerox PARC introduces the computer mouse.
- 1989-Hurricane in Bangladesh kills 500.
- 2002 - The last successful telemetry from the NASA space probe Pioneer 10
- 2012 - Four explosions in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, kill 27 people
- 2013 - 10 people are killed and 25 are injured after a bomb attack in Karachi, Pakistan.

From KO Archives

INDIA, PAK HAVE ACHIEVED 'BREAKTHROUGH': MUSHARRAF

ISLAMABAD - India and Pakistan have achieved a "breakthrough" in their peace process and have "clearly resolved" to move towards a "final settlement" of the Kashmir problem, President Pervez Musharraf has said.

"My talks (in New Delhi) with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yielded positive results and led to a joint statement which reflected a clear resolve to address all issues and a resolve to move towards a final settlement at the Kashmir issue," the president said in an interview with state-run APP news agency.

"A breakthrough has been achieved in the peace process between the two countries," the president said.

"Prime Minister Singh has unambiguously expressed the resolve to solve all issues, including Kashmir, as also stated in the joint statement.

"The Indian prime minister also committed himself to resolving all disputes at the"

multi-lateral forum of the Asian-African Summit in Jakarta when he said we want to resolve all issues in an amicable manner," the president said. He said he was hopeful of progress towards a fair resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. "I am optimistic - there is sincerity as it has been accepted that all issues should be addressed - we have to address the Kashmir issue."

Musharraf said the general environment between Pakistan and India had improved "substantially" after his visit

Musharraf, who also watched the final India-Pakistan one-day cricket match in New Delhi April 17 before his talks with Manmohan Singh, said he was pleased with Pakistan's victory in the series. The president said he told UN Secretary General Kofi Annan during a meeting on the sidelines of the Jakarta summit that the expansion of the Security Council should be only in the non-permanent category.

India is bidding for a seat in an expanded Security Council. Pakistan has made known its opposition to India's candidature. (IANS)

(Kashmir Observer, 27 April, 2005)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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

Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001

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

RNI Registration No: 69503/98

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

Editor-in-Chief : Sajjad Haider

Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja

Switchboard: (0194) 2106304

Editorial: (0194) 2502327

Email editorial: editor@kashmiroserver.net

KO VIEW

A people-driven effort

The social media video of Mufti Nazir Ahmad Qasmi urging people to offer nimaz at home should be welcomed by all. The role of religious leaders in ensuring Covid-appropriate behaviour among the people amid the ongoing runaway surge of the pandemic cannot be over-emphasised. They have a large following and people look up to them for guidance and take them seriously. So, it was sensible of Mufti Qasmi to come out with a video message to people to not attend mosques. More religious leaders in the Valley need to follow the example of Mufti Qasmi and urge Muslims to observe Covid-19 protocol. Not only Muslims, Hindu, Sikh and Christian leaders need to be the same. This will go a long way to jolt the community into engaging in a responsible behaviour in public to ensure we also defeat the virulent second wave.

And why only religious leaders, the society, as a whole, needs to contribute. The administration should seek the support of the civil society to create awareness and urge observance of Covid-19 protocol. Let mohalla be a unit for this initiative where a mosque committee, elders or a group of youth can take the lead in promoting a Covid appropriate conduct.

The administration can certainly play a role in encouraging this community effort. This is because, a long term lockdown as a measure to control the contagion is now ruled out. The devastation that lockdown wrought on the economy last year makes its repetition unthinkable. The administration has now imposed weekend curfew to at least restrict widespread social contact for two days. This will make some redeeming difference. For the rest of the days, the administration, however, needs to check its instinct to lock things down.

So what should the government be doing instead? Many things other than an easy recourse to a curfew. For one, there's an urgent need to enforce the safety precautions in order to contain the pandemic. And to start with, there has to be an aggressive campaign to enforce the use of masks. More alarmingly, the masks are still absent from the faces of most of the people walking on the streets or those of the passengers using public transport. And none of these violators is taken to task.

The administration needs to urgently work on two fronts: one, run an earnest awareness campaign alerting people to the deadliness of coronavirus and the urgency of observing safety precautions. Second, take strict action against the people who go out without masks or participate in large gatherings. These are the only pragmatic and hopefully helpful tools to tackle the contagion. That too, with least damage to the economy.

OTHER OPINION

Overwhelmed

Taking suo motu cognizance of the 'national health emergency', the Supreme Court directed the Centre to come up with a feasible plan within 24 hours to address some of the glaring paucities that have been exposed by the lethal second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. The apex court's energy has, however, caused some dismay. This is perhaps because as many as six high courts were examining — critically — some of the shocking instances of administrative failure; India's highest court is likely to transfer these issues to itself to avoid 'confusion'. Clarity is, indeed, a virtue. It must be made clear that the government of the day is to be held accountable for its monumental lapses. There is a view that it has got away rather lightly on several occasions in the course of this pandemic. The horrors suffered by India's migrant workers on account of myopic policy decisions are just one example.

There can be no doubts about the scale of the 'national emergency'. Each passing day, data bear out both its enormity and its cruelties. On Thursday, India logged over three lakh new cases and witnessed over 2,000 deaths: this is yet another grim milestone globally. The human suffering has been amplified by other raging crises. In several states — Gujarat and Haryana are examples — the demand for oxygen has outstripped supply even though an Empowered Group of Officers had raised a red flag last year. Health institutions are running short of not just oxygen but also beds and even life-saving drugs. Laboratories — the first line of response in a medical crisis — have been equally overwhelmed; the delay in diagnosis has added to citizens' woes. India's health apparatus is under unprecedented strain.

What is shameful is that this crisis was entirely avoidable. The Narendra Modi government had smugly declared victory over the virus instead of preparing for a lethal second wave that was already lashing many other parts of the world. This criminal hubris encouraged non-compliance among the people. Even as the need to curb mass gatherings — religious and political — was ignored, people let down their guard, refusing to wear masks or adhere to other safety protocols. Mr Modi's government did not pay attention to Bangladesh — a smaller country with finite resources — which reinforced Covid regulations by combining public awareness campaigns with shaming mechanisms. Equally inexplicable has been the Centre's refusal to keep the health infrastructure battle-ready and the snail's pace of the vaccination programme. Did Mr Modi's government have a robust strategy in place to deal with an unexpected turn of events?

Hindsight, of course, offers some advantages. The virus can be expected to return, again and again, with newer mutations and it is to be hoped India will not repeat the mistakes it committed that made the second wave possible. But this government needs to be asked tough questions. If the vanguards of democracy desist from doing so, the powers that be would no longer think it is answerable to the people for their sufferings.

Telegraph India

Violence Begets Violence

MEHVISH KHURSHED

These distressful children then grow up to become abusive adults and also show aggressive behaviour towards their spouses as well. Our society is currently suffering from domestic violence, assaults and many other aggressive crimes, and the offenders most usually have a history of being victims of such aggression themselves

Some actions are normalized and engrained into our society in such a way that even if it's physical abuse, it's okay. Earlier in the times when our parents used to be children, they were subjected to certain correctional methods and corporal punishment was one of the most used methods. It was a norm back then to spank, beat or even use harsh words for children who misbehaved. It was considered necessary to incorporate fear in a child's mind in order for them to behave in a certain way. Corporal punishment is still practiced in the 21st century in most Indian schools. The Delhi high court banned its use in Delhi schools in 2000. Many schools claim to apply the ban — though the enforcement is lax.

Corporal punishment often turns into serious physical abuse. It also lends itself to the wrong messaging that is, it teaches the children that violence is an acceptable way of dealing with issues. It teaches them it's okay to use violence.

Children face many emotional and social hurdles growing up especially when they are in their adolescence; this is when they become very sensitive to their environment and the way people treat them. They face the wrath of an unmitigated identity crisis and confusion. With this pain of growing up, they only see two figures from whom to seek guidance — parents and teachers. The image of a teacher or a parent is carved as an ideal and a perfect picture in a child's mind. Every action taken to solve a situation by them is considered the right way of handling them. Many times when a child feels his or her needs are not being met such as the need for attention, he or she misbehaves and causes a fuss; the lack of skill to handle it makes many

of the teacher and parents strike out at children and use corporal, verbal, mental or other forms of emotional punishment.

There is a very thin line between correcting a child and abusing a child, very often authority is misused by a teacher or an elder who uses dictatorship methods over a child. Violence in many forms has been accepted in the society in such a way that it feels normal. It's widely used by teachers and parents regardless of its evident lack of effectiveness. Therefore, layers of beliefs and practices that cloak corporal punishment under the guise of love care and protection — when in reality its abuse of authority that harms the child.

Many studies have shown that Physical punishment including spanking, hitting and other means of causing pain can lead to increased aggression, antisocial behaviour, physical injury and mental health problems in children. Corporal punishment is associated with a variety of psychological and behavioural disorder in children and adults like anxiety, depression, withdrawal, low self-esteem impulsiveness, delinquency and substance abuse.

It is globally recognised that punishment in any form or kind in school comes in the way of the development of the full potential of children. When adults use corporal punishment it teaches children that hitting is an acceptable means of dealing with conflict. Corporal punishment leads to adverse physical, psychological and educational outcomes — increase aggressive, destructive behaviour, vandalism, poor school achievements, poor attention span, increase dropout rates, low self-esteem, anxiety, somatic complaints retaliation

against teachers. Many people support the use of corporal punishment and recall their childhood days where getting beaten up by teachers and extreme physical punishments were a part of teaching. But change is a law of nature and with the advancement of time and growing field of research we know now what effects such type of punishment leaves on a child's mental health.

There are a number of alternative methods of dealing with a child or an adolescent that include Distraction, removing them from the situation, moral conversations, loss of privileges etc. The not wanting to change the old traditional methods of teaching attitude is found in many teachers and parents who now have become a source of distress instead of comfort. These distressful children then grow up to become abusive adults and also show aggressive behaviour towards their spouses as well. Our society is currently suffering from domestic violence, assaults and many other aggressive crimes, and the offenders most usually have a history of being victims of such aggression themselves. Corporal punishment and other cruel and degrading forms of punishment are forms of violence and states must take all appropriate, legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to eliminate them.

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

The author can be reached at
mehvishkh036@gmail.com

RTI Stonewalling and Covid-19 Information

VINITA DESHMUKH

cell/office i.e COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Cell (CVAC) of the MoHFW does not have such specific data. However, for statistics/data as available you may visit Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's website mohfw.gov.in or Arogya Setu App (refer link <https://dashboard.cowin.gov.in>) or 'mygov.In/COVID-19' or 'mygov.app'."

RTI applicant Mr Gaurav states that, while none of these links or apps has any relevant information, "Ministry of Health said that it does not have such specific data but yesterday in the press briefing they came out with some data. While the ministry replied to me under RTI that health is a state subject, then how come they suddenly gave selective information at the press briefing? This is rather strange and unjust."

Puducherry-based Saurav Das, journalist and transparency activist, who has filed a series of RTI applications related to COVID-19 since the past several months, has been denied information without exception.

For example, one of his RTI applications was addressed to MoHFW from which he sought details on its COVID vaccine administration cell. His RTI application requisitioned the exact dates on which the expert group has met till date; certified true copies of detailed agenda of meetings till date; certified true copies of presentations made before the group and detailed information about each of them; the certified true copies of minutes of meeting of each and every meeting that has been held till date ; a certified true copy of notification or office order by which the group was formed; a certified true copy of the list of names and designation of every person of the group; certified true copies of each and every file noting and correspondence related to the formation of the group and certified true copies of each and every noting and correspondence related to the presentations made at each meeting; details of every

meeting in which the matter of National Health ID was discussed and; all file notings, correspondences, internal communications, minutes and memos relating to them.

The reply from the CPIO of the ministry parroted the same exemption clause under the RTI Act. That, "the information sought is exempted under Section 8(1)(a) of RTI Act, 2005 as this may prejudicially affect the strategic, scientific and economic interest of the State. As such, no information can be provided."

RTI research scholar Venkatesh Nayak has also persistently filed RTI applications regarding the export commitments of the COVID-19 vaccines to various countries; the vaccine purchase agreements with various states in the domestic market and; on the setting of and the working of the COVID Pandemic Joint Monitoring Group (JVG).

In fact, Mr Nayak, had filed an RTI application in April 2020 to the MoHFW, seeking information, including the district-wise number of hospitals and healthcare facilities designated as COVID-19 treatment centres and the postal addresses and telephone numbers of such facilities. His RTI application was pushed around from one public authority to another.

He filed a second appeal with the information commission. In July 2020, chief central information commissioner CIC Bimal Julka had given a stern order and advised the MoHFW to appoint a nodal officer to put up all details on the website in a chronological manner.

He rightly observed in the order, "It is well recognised that the impact of COVID-19 pandemic will be far reaching and that all the stakeholders need to be cognizant of the importance of proper data and record management. Such records could also be useful for research and educational institutions involved in tracing the disease, mapping and analysing the pathogens genome to develop vaccines

that requires records and data accuracy. Sound records management is more important than ever before with governments initiating unprecedented steps to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic."

Stating that Mr Nayak has asked relevant information which must be disseminated, he observed in his order, "keeping in view the facts of the case and the submissions made by all the stakeholders and in the light of the decisions cited above as also the observations made in the previous paragraphs, the Commission observed that very pertinent information pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic situation was sought by the complainant which could not be made available by any of the respondents."

He qualified his directive to appoint a nodal officer by stating, "the fact that the application shuttled from one division of the public authority to another indicates that there is a very urgent requirement for notifying a nodal authority in the MoHFW/DGHS to compile, collate and consolidate the information sought in the RTI application and suo motu upload the same on the website of the public authority."

Mr Julka went a step further to state that transparency in this vital public issue matter is important even for scientific and academic data. He stated, "there is an immense necessity to evolve a strong, robust and effective documentation mechanism and its continuous updation which will be mutually beneficial not only for the government but also for the scientists, researchers, academicians, historians, law makers, etc for future. Therefore, the Commission advises the secretary, MoHFW to designate an officer of an appropriate seniority as a nodal officer to examine the matter and suo motu disclose the information sought in the RTI application on the website of the public authority within a period of 15 days from the date of receipt of this order in the larger public interest."

However, several months down the line after this order, there has been no attempt to make anything transparent so far, leave alone voluntarily uploading information on the website. Every RTI application is stonewalled, in the name of secrecy! Dangerous for transparency and good governance, isn't it?

Money Life



OBSERVER
MAIL

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

MAIL YOUR LETTERS

P.O.Box # 337, GPO, Srinagar-190 001
email: editpage.ko@gmail.com

No One Cares about Teachers

We live in a society where the importance of teachers is often overstated. It comes as a shock then that we care so little for their safety.

The second wave of covid-19 has been devastating in India and Kashmir has also witnessed a monumental rise in the cases. All guidelines have been asking people to avoid unnecessary gathering and gatherings which are avoidable. Why then are the teachers who have to teach children via their phones, being asked to attend

schools?

Initially, when the schools shut, teachers were supposed to still be physically present. The irony is quite embarrassing here. It is actually the age demographic that teachers occupy who are at a higher risk of having severe infection due to covid-19 and not the students. Even then, it is teachers who are being asked to attend schools.

Now, schools are being asked to function on 50% attendance and a roster has to be made for the same. This is sheer

mockery of science and lives. What difference does it make that teacher's will visit schools alternately or thrice a week? They might all still come across the same infected contact.

Additionally, everyone doesn't own private vehicles. They will have to risk their lives and the lives of their family members as they'd have no alternative but to board public vehicles. This is an absolutely avoidable exercise.

Although physical classes have been suspended, teachers are taking all the

classes virtually. In what world is this farce of an order justified? Why do teachers have to be physically present to teach virtually?

Teachers who go to school will return to their families. Are their families expendable? Education is important and an alternative has been found to work. Stop these thoughtless declarations and allow all teachers to work from home.

Tania Saeed
Tanias@rediffmail

Covid-19 In India: An Unfolding Humanitarian Crisis

MICHAEL HEAD

It is the mixing of susceptible populations that ultimately drives the transmission of respiratory infectious diseases. There were bold declarations from senior political figures, with Health Minister, Harsh Vardhan, saying in early March that India was in “the pandemic end game”

There have been many predictions about how many people have had COVID-19 and whether or not this or that country has reached herd immunity. We have seen this before in Manaus, Brazil, and in India. The optimism is alas always misplaced and occasionally used irresponsibly.

We have seen approaches to naturally acquired herd immunity proposed as high-profile ideas for public policy in the UK and internationally, such as the Great Barrington declaration. These proposals have been widely decried by health experts, including in the John Snow memorandum. The World Health Organization described the idea as “scientifically problematic and unethical”.

There is no doubt that a humanitarian emergency is unfolding in India right now. India is a catastrophic example of a population that has certainly not reached herd immunity against COVID-19. The stories of a collapsing health system are numerous, with reports of a lack of oxygen for hospitalised patients and bodies burning on pyres in the streets.

India has locally made vaccines, which are being rolled out, including the AstraZeneca vaccine. But the proportion of the population that is immunised is still very low, and alas, there are more than enough susceptible people for the virus to keep spreading.

The numbers are stark too. The Financial Times put together a sobering review of the data, with unwanted new world records being set for new confirmed cases in one day. One of the most worrying aspects is the level of under-counting that will be happening.

The test positivity rate (the proportion of people tested for COVID that return a positive test) in India is high – around 18%. This is well above the WHO threshold of 10%, suggesting that a lot of positive cases are being missed because of a lack of testing capacity and timely reporting.

Indeed, one of the key concerns is the lack of high-quality real-time data to give an informed picture of the scenarios that are unfolding in India. The numbers of deaths are starting to rise on a steep trajectory, and that graph will surely soar further over the next few weeks.

When there was speculation around a possible reaching of herd immunity, India was relatively becalmed with much lower levels of COVID-19, vaccines becoming available and a pandemic that was appeared to be under control in South East Asia.

So what changed all that? There has been a lot of focus on the B1617 variant, which was first detected in India. There is still a lot to learn about this variant, such as whether it is more transmissible and thus contributing to an increased community transmission. It is a plausible theory, but as yet unknown.

But it is the mixing of susceptible populations that ultimately drives the transmission of respiratory infectious diseases. There were bold declarations from senior political figures, with Health Minister, Harsh Vardhan, saying in early March that India was in “the pandemic end game”.



Super-spreading events

Since then, there have been mass gatherings in India. In March and April, there were state-level elections across several Indian states, which comes with associated campaigning and population mixing. Fans attended the international cricket matches between India and England, with full stadiums and few wearing masks. And there have been several large religious festivals, such as the Kumbh Mela, an event that occurs once every 12 years and is attended by millions.

There are recent examples from China, Saudi Arabia and Israel where key religious calendar events have been cancelled or scaled-back, to reduce the mixing of infectious and susceptible people during the pandemic. This includes the Hajj and Chinese New Year.

India may have scaled back on their celebrations a little, but millions have been gathering for Kumbh Mela across different sites, and thousands of new coronavirus cases are already confirmed in revellers.

Knock-on effects

The Serum Institute of India is one of the most important buildings in the world at the moment. It is producing the AstraZeneca vaccine in large numbers, and is a key provider to many countries including the Covax Initiative. However, exports from India have fallen in recent weeks and it would not be a surprise to see the Indian government move to keep even more of the precious vaccines

within India.

This will affect the supply for other lower-income countries. There will be a significant knock-on effect from the humanitarian crisis within India that sustains the pandemic for even longer. It shows how reliance on few manufacturing sites for such vital products is vulnerable to lethal consequences.

This highlights the importance of global preparedness. When the fire service is summoned to the burning building, it has already bought and fitted the hose beforehand. Public health fire-fighting during the pandemic is close to impossible when the main tool to put out the fires (vaccines) is not available for the first 12 months and in short supply thereafter.

The world needs all the vaccines it can get, so factors such as equity of distribution and public confidence have to be addressed to ensure that AstraZeneca and other vaccines are made available far and wide and not just to wealthy countries.

For while countries around the world look on, we may easily have “the next India” just around the corner. How much excess death must we see before global cooperations overcome the “me first” approaches from the wealthier countries?

By arrangements with
The Conversation

Explained: Infections after the Covid-19 vaccination

'Breakthrough infections' are expected in a small number of people after vaccination. No vaccine is 100% effective. Some may have been infected before the jab; also, some strains may evade vaccine protection.

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS

Coronavirus vaccines are supposed to protect the individuals from getting infected. In the last few days, however, there have been several cases of vaccinated people, even those who have received both doses, testing positive for the virus. Such cases are referred to as “breakthrough” infections, indicating that the virus has been able to break through the defences created by the vaccine.

Very few cases of breakthrough infections have been reported, but these have led to some doubts being expressed about the effectiveness of the vaccine, and contributed to the already prevailing vaccine hesitancy. Earlier this week, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) released data that showed breakthrough infections were extremely rare in India's vaccinated population, with an incidence rate of less than 0.05%.

Full protection not possible

It is very well understood that no vaccine offers 100% protection from any disease. That means that there are breakthrough cases for all kind of vaccines — including Covid-19 vaccines. According to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) in the United States, vaccinated people are much less likely to get sick, but it is never entirely ruled out.

During trials, various Covid-19 vaccines have been shown to be between 60% and 95% effective. In actual use scenarios, a vaccine is usually less effective than what is reported in the trials. It is not surprising, therefore, that some vaccinated people do get the infection.

Also, it typically takes about two weeks for the body to build immunity after being vaccinated, so the chances of a person falling sick during this period are as high — or as low — as the chances for any person who has not been vaccinated. Then there is



the emergence of new variants of the virus. Some are able to evade the human immune response, and therefore have a greater chance to break through the defences created through the vaccine.

Breakthrough cases in India

In a bid to settle doubts about the effectiveness of vaccines in the wake of reports of breakthrough infections, the ICMR last week released data from the Indian population that showed that only about two to four people from a vaccinated group of 10,000 had so far been detected to be infected.

Until then, 11.6 crore doses of the Covishield vaccine had been administered. Among 10.03 crore people who had taken only the first dose, 17,145 had got infected.

That translates into a 0.02% prevalence. Among the 1.57 crore people who received the second dose as well, 5,014, or about 0.03%, had got infected later.

Again, about 1.1 crore doses of Covaxin have been administered until now. Of the 93.56 lakh who took only the first dose, so far 4,208 have got the infection. That is about 0.04% of the total. Among the 17.37 lakh who have taken the second shot, only 695 had been infected, again 0.04%.

As can be seen, the numbers are very small, and we do not know how many of these got the infection within a few days of receiving the vaccine dose. Also, those in the priority list of vaccination, such as health-care workers and frontline workers, have been prone to getting infected due to the pro-

longed occupational exposure to the virus, according to Dr Balram Bhargava, director general of ICMR. Bhargava also suggested that the new, faster-transmitting mutant strains could be contributing to the breakthrough infections.

Breakthrough infection milder

Vaccines protect not against the infection, but against moderate or severe disease and hospitalisation. Most breakthrough infections are mild, according to Dr Ashish Bawdekar, principal investigator of the Covishield vaccine trial at KEM Hospital in Pune.

Dr Shashank Joshi, expert on the Maharashtra state Covid 19-task force, pointed out that the vaccines currently in use are early

generation emergency use authorisation vaccines. “In a conventional vaccine timetable, it would take years to develop a vaccine but these are early generation fast track vaccines and we need more data and strong pharmacovigilance to get a better insight on their effectiveness. Better and more effective vaccines would eventually be developed that would reduce the rate of breakthrough infections,” he said.

According to CDC data that was released this week, over 87 million Americans were fully vaccinated and 7,157 cases of Covid-19 were reported among them. (See table)

The CDC said breakthrough infections are expected and not happening at an alarming rate. Experts said it is possible that mutated variants of coronavirus infection may be finding ways of escaping the vaccine.

According to a new US study reported on April 21 in the New England Journal of Medicine, the risk of contracting Covid-19 after having two doses of vaccine remains low. In their study, two rare cases of Covid-19 from 417 fully vaccinated people were reported. The participants had been vaccinated with Pfizer or Moderna jabs. The two who tested positive, both women, had mild symptoms and recovered quickly.

“These patients got vaccinated, had great immune responses, and nonetheless broke through with a clinical infection,” Robert B Darnell, investigator at Howard Hughes Medical Institute Laboratory of Molecular Neuro-oncology, said in a news update from Rockefeller University.

“Given the scope of the pandemic, there's a huge amount of virus in the world right now, meaning a huge opportunity for mutations to develop and spread. That is going to be a challenge for the developers of vaccines over the next months and years,” he said.

Indian Express

Pakistan deploys Army to help enforce COVID-19 SOPs

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday deployed army across the country to help civil institutions in implementing the standard operating procedures against the coronavirus, amid the surge in the COVID-19 cases. Army spokesman Major General Babar Iftikhar said that enhanced deployment was done in 16 major cities with "very high positivity rate".

These cities include Peshawar, Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda and Swabi (in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province), Rawalpindi, Lahore,

Faisalabad, Multan, Bahawalpur, Gujranwala (Punjab), Karachi and Hyderabad (Sindh), Quetta (Balochistan), Muzaffarabad (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) and Islamabad.

"The primary purpose of deployment of army troops is to help civil institutions and law enforcement agencies," he said while addressing a press conference in Rawalpindi.

He said that the positivity ratio is more than 5 per cent in 51 cities and soldiers have been sent to those cities also to help the civil administration implement the official guidelines.

Maj Gen Iftikhar said army

teams would be led by brigadiers at the administration division level and by lieutenant colonels at the district level.

"In this testing time, Pakistan Army will use all its capabilities to take every possible step for the protection of citizens and their lives. [We] will go to every corner of Pakistan to ensure the protection of citizens," he said.

Talking about the challenges of COVID-19, he said that the third wave was more dangerous and fatal and the death rate was increasing, putting the health-care infrastructure under stress.

He said that 75 per cent of Pakistan's oxygen production

was dedicated to the healthcare sector currently but it would be enhanced if required by reducing the share of industry.

"The monthly average of corona deaths has been the highest in April. The worldwide fatality rate is 2.12 per cent while the fatality rate in Pakistan has risen over the world fatality rate for the first time during this pandemic to 2.16 per cent," he said.

Earlier, interior ministry on Sunday issued a set of notifications to deploy the army after Prime Minister Imran Khan said the armed forces would be called to implement the coronavirus related guidelines.

The army deployment comes as Pakistan's coronavirus tally crossed 800,000 on Monday after 4,825 new cases were detected, while another 70 people succumbed to COVID-19, taking the number of deaths to 17,187, according to the official data.

The Ministry of National Health Services said 4,862 patients were in a critical condition and the number of active patients was 89,219.

Pakistan is scrambling to control the spread of the virus by imposing smart lockdowns and increasing vaccination. Pakistan has imposed smart lockdowns and ramped up vaccination programmes.

India sinks deeper into COVID mire, battle for Bengal goes on

KOLKATA: As the country sank deeper into its worst humanitarian crisis triggered by the COVID-19 carnage, West Bengal Monday celebrated the 'festival of democracy' amid cacophonous cries for more votes for a poll three days away.

A robust 75 per cent of the 85 lakh electorate had cast their ballots by 5 pm for the 34 seats that went to poll in the 7th and penultimate phase of polling for the 294-member state assembly. Voters in 35 remaining constituencies will exercise their franchise on April 29.

The voting happened on a day

when the Madras High Court poured scorn on the Election Commission, "singularly" blaming it for the second surge of the pandemic and calling it "the most irresponsible institution" whose officials may be booked for "murder".

But, as the country faced an unprecedented health crisis in living memory, the politically turbulent state not only saw men and women, young and old, throng the polling stations guarded by burly central forces personnel in camouflage, but also fusillade of fire-counterfire between the BJP and the TMC.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Corona Crisis

the victims include a 32-year-old man from Shopian and three persons aged between 45 to 60 years.

They said the 32-year-old man from Shopian was admitted on April 15 at SMHS hospital and was suffering with bilateral community acquired pneumonia.

A 45-year-old man from Muslim Peer area of north Kashmir's Sopore town also died at SMHS hospital, a week after he was admitted with bilateral CAP, the officials said.

A 50-year-old woman from Qamarwari Srinagar, admitted on April 21 with Bilateral CAP also died at SMHS hospital, they said.

A 59-year-old man from Brain Nishat Srinagar, admitted to SMHS hospital with bilateral CAP, succumbed six days after he was admitted, they said.

An 82-year-old man from Pampore in Pulwama district died at the hospital, four days after he was admitted with bilateral CAP, they said.

An 85-year-old man from Safapora Bandipora died at SKIMS Soura, five days after he was admitted to the tertiary care hospital ahdn diagnosed to be suffering "bilateral Covid Pneumonia", they said.

A 75-year-old man from Tangmarg died two days after he was admitted to the hospital with "critical Covid pneumonia with Hypothyroidism with BHP." Four more people from Valley and 14 from Jammu also succumbed to the virus.

Among the fresh cases detected Monday, officials said, 791 were from Jammu division and 1344 from Kashmir Valley, taking the overall toll 162890.

Providing district wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 632 cases, Baramulla 136, Budgam 133, Pulwama 26, Kupwara 81, Anantnag 93, Bandipora 53, Ganderbal 43, Kulgam 139, Shopian 8, Jammu 472, Udhampur 20, Rajouri 46, Doda 33, Kathua 33, Samba 13, Kishtwar 13, Poonch 22, Ramban 4, and Reasi 135.

Moreover, they said, 1067 more patients have recovered—478 from Jammu Division and 589 from Kashmir Valley. There are 20601 active cases—8488 in Jammu and 12113 Kashmir, they added. (With Agency inputs)

Virtual Hearings

of the High Court.

"For filing of cases, Registrars Judicial of both wings of the High Court shall create a dedicated email address of their respective filing counters and notify the same to the advocates/litigants by making it available on the website of the High Court."

'Ordinarily Before Notice' matters shall be taken up by each Bench unless urgency in respect of any 'After Notice' matter is shown to the satisfaction of the Bench concerned, the order reads.

"Physical hearing in respect of any listed matter will be at the discretion of the Bench concerned subject to the satisfaction of the Bench regarding extreme urgency involved in such matter and thereafter such case shall be taken up for physical hearing on the date fixed by the Bench" reads the order.

"On account of virtual hearing, entry of lawyers in the High Court premises is not required unless any advocate is permitted for physical hearing in any extremely urgent matter."

In order to decongest the sections/offices/Courts, the Chief Justice said the officials shall be permitted to function in batches with 50 percent reduction on rotation basis.

The roster in this regard, shall be formulated by the Registrar Judicial of the concerned wing."

The officials, who as per the roster are not on duty in the office, shall not leave the station and shall remain available on telephone and electronic means of communication at all times.

Regarding District and Subordinate Courts and Tribunals in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, the Chief Justice ordered that entry of litigants, public and clerks of the Advocates into the Court premises from the very outer gate shall be strictly prohibited. "For filing of cases, the Presiding Officers shall create a dedicated email address of their respective courts and make it available to the advocates/litigants by posting the same on the website of their District Courts concerned or through any appropriate electronic mode."

The Pr. District & Sessions Judges, the Chief Justice said, shall categories the emergent nature of cases of their respective courts and the courts subordinate to them which shall be taken up for hearing through virtual mode. "Physical hearing in respect of any listed matter will be at the discretion of the Judge concerned subject to the satisfaction of the Judge regarding extreme urgency involved in such matter."

In order to decongest the sections and offices of the Courts, the Chief Justice ordered that the officials working in the Subordinate Courts shall be permitted to function in batches with 50 percent reduction on rotation basis, he said.

"The roster in this regard, shall be formulated by the Presiding Officer of the Court. The

officials, who as per the roster are not on duty in the office, shall not leave the station and shall remain available on telephone and electronic means of communication at all times."

"The staff on duty in courts and the counsel, if any permitted for physical hearing, shall take necessary precautions, ensure physical distancing, wearing of mask and observance of SOPs and guidelines issued by the respective Governments from time to time."

CUK Postpones

examinations would be notified when the Covid-19 situation improves and offline exams are possible.

The meeting, officials said, also decided to start Online Classes, for the next semesters, from May 3rd.

"This was done to save time and ensure the new semesters are not delayed. The ITSS section was directed to make suitable arrangements for facilitating the online teaching and learning and also maintaining a proper record of the online lectures delivered," officials said.

"The Deans and the Heads were asked to prepare a proper academic calendar for the next semester, including the dates for the Continuous Internal Assessment and tentative dates for the end term exams," they added.

Govt Mulls Tele

the Tele and radio classes. Besides, the online classes will also be held as per the already notified schedule."

"Most probably, the schedule of the Tele and Radio classes will be the same as the previous academic year," he said.

Pertinently, the schools in Jammu and Kashmir have consistently remained closed for physical academic activities for more than a year now following the outbreak of COVID-19 in March-2020.

Earlier, in 2019, the government closed all educational establishments in August following the abrogation of Article-370.

On March-15, physical academic activities for elementary classes resumed in the Kashmir division.

However, last week, the government ordered closure of all Universities and Colleges across Jammu and Kashmir till May-15.

Besides, the government also ordered extension for closure of all schools to May-15—(KNO)

Hurriyat Worried

of one and all, including human rights organisations, on this issue has led the authorities to show this indifference and inhumanity towards prisoners," the amalgam said.

The Hurriyat said such is the "apathy" that separatist leader Mohammad Ayaz Akbar, who is also lodged in Tihar jail, was not released even for a day on parole despite repeated appeals to see his wife who was suffering from cancer for past three years till she breathed her last recently.

"Political prisoners, youth, civil society members even female political leaders continue to languish in jails for years together now, without any case and proper judicial trial, with authorities playing with their lives and their health, especially in times of COVID as it is rapidly spreading in jails," it said.

The Hurriyat appealed to the human rights organisations, civil society members and "all those people who have a heart to being focus upon the plight of these prisoners in jails and ensure their release before it's too late".

"We also once again ask the government authorities to release these political prisoners, youth and others, especially in view of the rapid spread of COVID in jails," the amalgam said.

The Hurriyat also expressed strong resentment over the continued "arbitrary" house detention of its chairman during the holy month of Ramazan, saying the 21-month-long detention of the "valley's top leader is hurting the sentiments of the people".

30 KAS Officers

immediate effect:

Puneet Sharma, Shabir Hussain Bhat, Altaf Ahmad Khan, Haris Ahmad Handoo, Ashwani Khaiuria, Kapil Sharma, Syed Qamar Sajad, Abid Hussain, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, Suraj Parkash Rukwal, Pawan Kumar, Mohammad Farooq Dar, Akramulla Tak, Bharat Singh, Abdul Star, Jyoti Rani Slathia, Sham Lal, Krishan Lal

The above-referred order also said that the officers figuring at S.Nos 2, 9, 10, 12 and 18 above, presently functioning as Additional Secretaries in different departments, are hereby designated as Special Secretaries in their respective departments.

In yet another order the Government ordered the promotion of 12 more selection grade KAS officers to special scale KAS as another order issued from the General Administration Department said "sanction is hereby accorded to the promotion of the following Selection Grade officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service to the Special Scale of KAS in pay level 13 (123100-215900), with immediate effect:

Bashir Ahmad Lone, Rishpal Singh, Vikas Gupta, Pankaj Raj Katoch, Tassaduq Hussain Mir, Narinder Khajuria, Ashok Kumar Sharma,

Khalid Majeed, Charandeep Singh, Kanta Devi, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, Rajinder Kumar Sharma.

Consequent upon the above, the officers figuring at S.Nos 6, 8 and 9 above, presently functioning as Additional Secretaries in different departments of the Civil Secretariat, are hereby designated as Special Secretaries to Government in their respective departments.

LG Assures

"I am truly grateful for the amazing work you and your team members, health workers are doing. You are an inspiration for all of us. You have served the people of J&K with dedication, courage, and patience. With your support, we will effectively control the spread of Coronavirus in the UT", the Lt Governor told the Doctors.

The Lt Governor invited suggestions from the HoDs and Doctors for effective management of the second wave of corona virus and the requisite steps needed to be taken in this direction.

"All necessary measures must be taken to ramp up the availability of Beds and Medicines for Covid Patients", observed the Lt Governor.

The Doctors informed the meeting that Hospitals across the UT have enough supply of oxygen and availability of beds for providing the patients with the necessary care.

The Lt Governor called upon the senior doctors and Religious Leaders to spread awareness for Preventive Measures and Covid Appropriate Behaviour, besides making optimal utilization of communication medium like Social Media, Print Media, TV and Radio for reaching out to maximum population with requisite information regarding the pandemic and also for clearing the misconceptions regarding the vaccines, if any.

He advised the doctors to appeal to the religious leaders for restricting the entry of people, who are without face-masks, in all religious places.

In order to increase the vaccination among the common masses, the Lt Governor asked the doctors to motivate people to get inoculated.

He also mentioned that out of the total 88% personnel of JKP who were vaccinated with the coronavirus vaccine, only six were found infected and they too become well now after successfully fighting the virus.

To break the chain of infection, the night curfew has been put in place across all municipalities and urban areas of the UT. Places which attract large crowds like public parks have also been temporarily closed, public gathering has been restricted and markets have been asked to remain open at 50% capacity and on alternate day-wise basis, observed the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor assured the Medical fraternity that there will be no lacunas from UT administration in providing the necessary support, equipment, additional manpower to the hospitals and doctors.

During the interaction, the Lt Governor also received suggestions from the Medical fraternity.

Director Health Services Kashmir suggested the strict compliance of the SoPs and the ceiling on the number of people permitted to attend gatherings/functions set by the government for lowering the risk of spread of Coronavirus.

The Principal of GMC Srinagar informed the Lt Governor that Corona Curfew was effective in curbing the unnecessary movement of people and the same needs to be continued for some time in the future.

Similarly, Senior Doctors and HoDs from Jammu, Baramulla, Anantnag, Kathua, and Doda also put forth their suggestions for the effective controlling of the second wave of coronavirus. The suggestions included meticulous inoculation of all people, intensifying covid precautions and measures, following covid appropriate behaviour, effective policy of admissions through referrals from Sub hospitals and health centers to GMCs, and regular awareness among the people, besides morale-boosting of corona warriors.

The Principles of various Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals also apprised the Lt Governor regarding the daily admissions of Covid patients, oxygen consumption, and availability of beds in their respective hospitals.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lt Governor; BVR Subrahmanyam, Chief Secretary; Atal Dulloo, Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education also attended the meeting.

Ready For Talks

a policy of that nature. So, we need to sit and we need to talk," Qureshi said

He also said it was India, not Pakistan, who ran away from talks and suspended the composite and comprehensive dialogue.

However, he said, one recent development of recommitment to ceasefire during the conversation between the directors general of military operations from both sides was a positive development.

"So, when they expressed an interest in recommitment, we welcomed it. Kashmiris have welcomed it. And that has, in my view, lowered tensions and has gone well on both sides. Sensible elements on this site and on that side have welcomed this new development,"

Qureshi said.

India and Pakistan in a surprise announcement said on February 25 that they have agreed to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir and other sectors.

Ties between India and Pakistan nose-dived after a militant attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in 2016 by militants.

Subsequent attacks, including one on Indian Army camp in Uri, further deteriorated the relationship.

The relationship dipped further after India's war planes carried out an airstrike at Jaish-e-Mohammed training camp on February 26, 2019 in response to the Pulwama suicide attack in which 40 CRPF jawans were killed.

The relations deteriorated after India announced withdrawing special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcation of the state into two union territories in August, 2019.

Last month, Pakistan's powerful Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa said that it was time for India and Pakistan to "bury the past and move forward as he asserted that the peace between the two neighbours would help to unlock the potential of South and Central Asia.

The powerful army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 70 plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in the matters of security and foreign policy.

Gen Bajwa's remarks came a day after Prime Minister Imran Khan made a similar statement.

Delhi Tight-Lipped

to deliver essential medical supplies.

Even the fast-spreading pandemic, which regional experts believe, provided a unique opportunity for cross border cooperation, has failed to bridge the chasm between the two nuclear neighbours.

"Border closures and suspended trade activities will not resolve the disputes between India and Pakistan, both countries will have to take a step forward and initiate dialogue," said Dr. Devika Mittal, a New Delhi-based peace activist.

A proponent of peace, Dr. Mittal urged the political leadership on both sides to extend unconditional support to each other at all times and particularly during the pandemic.

"India and Pakistan should aim for better ties under all circumstances," said Dr. Mittal from New Delhi which is under complete lockdown since the recent surge in coronavirus cases.

Armed to the teeth, Dr. Mittal said, both India and Pakistan, have failed to defeat the coronavirus. One country, she explained, does not have the vaccine while the other lacks oxygen. "Both nations are nuclear powers, but we have collectively failed in our fight against the deadly epidemic," she said.

Shortly after the onset of the pandemic last year, India decided to cut off whatever limited border exchange was left between Islamabad and New Delhi, even closing the newly inaugurated Kartarpur Corridor, which was hailed as a glimmer of hope in the perennially tense relationship.

The move not only prevented regular movement, but also Sikh pilgrims from visiting Pakistan to attend some of Sikhism's holiest rituals. After the community pleaded, New Delhi relaxed the rules, allowing a little more than 800 pilgrims to visit Pakistan.

"India wants to keep Pakistan entangled in the restoration of bilateral trade, religious tourism, and train service," said Abdul Basit, who served as Islamabad's top envoy in New Delhi. "The BJP administration is simply buying more time to continue the process of demographic change in Kashmir," he alleged

Mercury Up

Kashmir was below 2.3 degree Celsius during this time of the season in the area, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of 1.5 degree Celsius against previous night's 4.1 degree Celsius, the official said.

Kupwara recorded a low of 4.2 degree Celsius against 2.7 degree Celsius on the previous night which is below normal by 3.6 degree Celsius for this time of the season in north Kashmir district, the official said.

Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, recorded a low of 4.5 degree Celsius against 1.6 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said. It was 0.3 degree Celsius above normal in the resort, the official added.

The MeT office has predicted "dry and warmer" weather till 3rd May in both J&K and Ladakh. (GNS)

EC Responsible

Ramamoorthy asked the EC officials.

The bench made the stinging observation on a public interest writ from Karur AIADMK candidate and Transport Minister M R Vijayabaskar for the April 6 Assembly polls, seeking a direction to authorities to ensure fair counting of votes on May 2 in Karur by taking effective steps and proper arrangements with COVID-19 protocols.

Since as many as 77 candidates are contesting from Karur constituency, it would be very difficult to accommodate their agents in the counting hall. It may affect observance of the

protocols, the petitioner alleged.

When counsel for the EC told the judges that all necessary steps were underway, the bench shot back saying that by allowing the political parties to take out rallies and meetings, it (Commission) had paved the way for the resurgence of the second wave of the deadly virus.

Irked over the submission of the EC counsel that all precautionary measures would be taken at the counting centres, the Chief Justice replied that the EC must be 'singularly' held responsible for the second wave of the pandemic spike in the country.

The bench even said that EC officials may be booked under murder charges.

The judges also orally warned that they would not hesitate to stop the counting of votes on May 2.

"Public health is of paramount importance and it is distressing that constitutional authorities have to be reminded in such regard. It is only when a citizen survives that he will be able to enjoy the rights that a democratic republic guarantees", the judges said.

Observing that the situation now is of survival and protection, the bench directed the Election Commission to file a detailed report by April 30 on the blueprint of Covid-19 protocol to be followed on the counting day.

The court directed the commission for the blueprint to be filed after a detailed consultation with the state Health Department Secretary.

On Sunday, Tamil Nadu reported 15,000 new covid cases, while its active cases are in excess of one lakh.

Elections had been held in four states—Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal and the union territory of Puducherry and the counting of polled votes will be taken up on May 2.

While voting is over in all the other states, the seventh of the eight-phase polling in West Bengal was held on Monday, with the last phase scheduled on April 29.

Earlier, the Calcutta High Court had expressed dissatisfaction with the EC over the enforcement of COVID-19 health safety norms during the ongoing West Bengal assembly election process, including campaigning.

On April 22, hearing three public interest litigations (PILs) seeking enforcement of Covid protocol during the polls, a division bench presided by Chief Justice T B N Radhakrishnan had said issuance of circulars and holding meetings on Covid safety were not enough.

It later directed the competent authorities to make the people of West Bengal abide by the restrictions imposed by the Commission on public behaviour regarding protective protocol for Covid-19 in the state, which also has witnessed an alarming rise in infections.

Entrepreneurs Becoming

that their cases will be lost in the courtroom dust now."

On his part, Tanveer—after losing track of his case—was forced to sell his land to rebuild his house, so that his family doesn't have to sleep under the open sky.

"After suffering for so many years and spending so much money from the pockets, we have no assurance, if our cases will be ever heard in the court again or not," Tanveer says.

Arms Cache

containing two pistols, 40 rounds of ammunition, two wireless sets and other war-like stores, officials said.

Chhatru forest lies along the known movement route of militants between south Kashmir and Kishtwar, they said.

These caches have been created by militants in these remote areas to be used for destabilising the security situation which is heading towards normalcy, they added.

The Army and police along with other security forces deployed in Kishtwar have recovered IEDs, explosives, arms and ammunition in recent months to thwart the nefarious designs of militants and their supporters.

2 'OGWs' Held

spokesperson said. He said that during the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that both the arrested militant associates were involved in trading, smuggling and arranging of arms and ammunition for Hizbul Mujahideen.

"A case FIR number 30/2021 under section 7/25 Arms Act has been registered in police station Boniyar in this regard and investigation has been set into motion," he added.

CASO Conducted

The joint operation, the report said, was carried out by police and the personnel of CRPF 132 Battalion

No arrests were made during the operation that ended on a peaceful note, the report added.

Militant Hideout

During searches, the officials said, one Pika machine gun, 126 AK-47 rounds, 2 hand grenades, 34 rounds of Insas rifle, 5 cell phones, 4 chargers, 4 jackets, 3 pouches, 3 blankets, a cutter and a book of holy Quran were recovered from the hideout.

JKPCC Casual Labourers Demand Release Of Pending Wages

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Casual Labourers of J&K Projects Construction Corporation (JKPCC) Monday staged a protest demonstration at Press Colony Lalchowk, Srinagar and blamed authorities for not releasing their wages.

While talking to CNS, he said, "We have been working in the said Department for the last fifteen years. Today we came here only to appeal to Lt Governor to release our pending wages which are pending

since the last eight months."

They added that their families are forced to starve as their wages are the only sources of income for them.

One of the employees Imran Farooq said, "I have 10 family members and to fulfil all of their needs is my obligation."

He added that due to pending wages, he is not able to clear tuition fees of his children.

They sought the personal intervention of LG Manoj Sinha in this regard. (CNS)

NC Asks Admin To Ensure Availability Of Oxygen, Critical Care Drugs

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) on Monday asked the government to explore methods to boost up the availability of oxygen at all government designated COVID-19 hospitals across Jammu and Kashmir as the demand for medical oxygen from hospitals and nursing homes is increasing in wake of increasing rate of infections.

Asking the government to ensure seamless availability of oxygen at all government designated hospitals, party's spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said while drawing attention of the government towards facilitating, controlling and coordinating the supply of oxygen to health establishments.

In a statement, he also stated that the areas declared as COVID-19 containment zones should also be provided with auxiliary oxygen beds.

The measure, he said, will ease the burden from primary, secondary, and tertiary health-care facilities. He stated that the arrangement could be made possible by procuring spaces within the COVID-19 containment zones. Having such oxygen beds thickly available, he said will ensure hassle free critical care to infected persons at their doorsteps.

"It would have been better if the responsibility of monitoring, controlling and overseeing the availability of oxygen is entrusted to special nodal officers at every tehsil level. These nodal officers would also report to the government on the status of the cylinders at local health care centers, nursing homes on a daily basis. We are facing unprecedented times, unprecedented situation demand unprecedented efforts. The retort of the government to the current situation should not be fragmented; at this juncture all the government agencies are expected to work in sync with each other. The divisional administration should

ensure minimum 36-hour oxygen back up in every hospital across J&K," he said.

While expressing concern over the reports of scarcity of critical COVID-19 drugs in hospitals, Imran said the patience of the people waiting in queues to get the drug is thinning out as the government owned hospitals are running out of stock.

"The insufficiency of critical COVID-19 drug like Remdesivir is a point of concern, which the government should address urgently. The government should ensure that COVID-19 patients in hospitals and in home isolation do not face shortage of medicines. A control room to keep a round-the-clock vigil on the required stocks to ensure the supply chain of critical covid-19 drugs is the need of the hour. In addition to that there should be no let up on RTPCR tests," he said.

On the staff shortfall in south Kashmir hospitals particularly in Kulgam, Shopian, Pulwama, Anantnag, he said that the acute shortage of medics, Para medical staff at all primary, secondary health care centers across south Kashmir is hampering day to day operations in these hospitals.

He said despite locals making fervent appeals to higher-ups many a time, the administration has failed to increase the staff strength of hospitals and health care centers across south Kashmir. He also added that the absence of quarters at places for medics, Para medics is also hampering the availability of night staff at primary, secondary health care facilities across south Kashmir.

"Hospitals spent months building stockpiles of medical equipment and other required things, but the supplies are of little use without adequate staffing. Care is more than a room with a hospital bed. It's about professionals taking care of patients. Staff shortage is a serious concern, which the government is duty bound to address. I hope the administration wakes up on this issue as soon as possible," he said.

Authorities Seal Nine Shops In Kunzer For Violating Covid SOPs

Observer News Service



SRINAGAR: The authorities Monday sealed nine shops for violating Government issued Covid19 protocol in Kunzer town of north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

The shops were sealed by a joint team of officials including, Chairman MC Kunzer Abdul Karim Dar, Tehsildar Kunzer and SHO Kunzar Athar Parveez for violating the government orders of keeping shops shut.

The officials appealed the public to cooperate with authorities and follow the precautionary measures like social distancing, wearing masks and washing hands and using sanitisers. (KNS).

Vaccine Must For Recovered Covid-19 Patients: DAK

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) Monday said people who have recovered from Covid-19 infection should also get vaccinated for the infection.

In a statement, DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan said those who have contracted the disease should also get inoculated two weeks after their recovery.

"Earlier, individuals who tested positive for the virus required to wait for 3 months between recovery and vaccination. However, that has changed now."

Under the new guidelines, he said, Covid-19 patients only need to wait for 2 weeks to get the shot.

He said people who recover from Covid-19 are getting infected with the virus again. "We were under the impression that if a person gets infected with the virus, he/she will develop antibodies and will not get the disease again. "But, many people who recover from Covid-19 do not develop antibodies," he said adding "even those who mount adequate antibody response, their antibodies fade within a few months and they become susceptible again."

"Some have second bout of Covid-19 as soon as one month after their first infection and some people have been hospitalised and even died," he said, adding, "and, the new variants put the recovered patients at risk of reinfections."

The DAK president said that people who have recovered from Covid could get infected with a mutated strain of the virus.

"Natural immunity from the infection is simply far too unreliable in the face of such a devastating virus," Dr Nisar said.

He said vaccine generates much stronger and more consistent immunity than



Mufti Nazir Urges People To Take Covid Vaccine

'It Won't Break Fast, Will Decrease Mortality'

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: Renowned Islamic scholar and jurist Mufti Nazir Ahmad Qasmi on Monday said that the vaccination against Covid-19 pandemic is compulsory for all the people of Kashmir and everybody must take a jab.

Mufti Nazir said that it is important during this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis that everyone in Kashmir has to be vaccinated and everyone must come forward and should not pay heed to rumours.

"People should not be afraid of it as it is halal for Muslims and I urge all the people of Kashmir that it is very important for us to be careful in order to prevent further spread of the virus," he said. "Taking a vaccine jab won't break the fast and instead will help prevent the spread of the virus."

He said, "We should not be afraid of this covid-19

the natural infection.

"There is evidence that vaccine induced immunity lasts much longer than immunity built by contracting the virus. Vaccines have been found to be effective against the variants too," he added.

"A new study showed that

disease, nor should we suffer or panic from it. We simply have to be much more careful and not come in contact with this disease," he added.

He said that the elderly people and people suffering from any disease should offer prayers at their homes as any callousness will lead to closure of prayers in mosques as seen earlier.

He said that people who believe that everything lies in the hands of Allah and do not follow any safety measures are not on the right path.

"People should strictly follow every direction as advised by administration and medical professionals time to time," he said.

Mufti Nazir also appealed to Mohalla-Masjid Committees to do needful arrangements including, availability of masks, social distancing stating that people should follow every guideline strictly while offering prayers in mosques—(KNO)

vaccination after infection produced six times more antibodies than a vaccine by itself. That means administering vaccine to recovered persons will further strengthen their immune response and make them well protected," said Dr Hassan.

SOME HAVE SECOND BOUT OF COVID-19 AS SOON as one month after their first infection and some people have been hospitalised and even died," he said, adding, "and, the new variants put the recovered patients at risk of reinfections."

400 Lecturers Promoted In 2019 Yet To Be Posted

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Department of Education is yet to issue adjustment orders of 400 lecturers who were promoted in July 2019.

The Directorates of Jammu and Srinagar had started the process of their adjustment, however, it was stopped after the administrative department barred them from doing it through a circular.

With regard to this pending adjustment, the Administrative Secretary School education department issued an order vide No 13 of Edu on 8th January 2021 wherein Director Finance SED was given the task to sort out the pending postings of lecturers in the light of govt order 940 Edu of 2017 dated 17/11/2017 within a period of 15 days but after more than three months it has yet to sort out the issue.

A group of agitating in charge lecturers lamented over the callous attitude of some of the officers of the department for its non-seriousness towards their adjustment issue. These lecturers further showed their dismay on the selective implementation of the govt orders Viz 940 Edu of 2017. Narrating their ordeal the lecturers said the in-charge lecturers promoted in the same order having the same nomenclature of the degrees, a degree

from same universities from the Jammu division were adjusted 18 months back and Kashmir based lecturers are suffering for none of their faults. This selective implementation of govt orders is unacceptable. They further said that they represented the case at the concerned quarters but were given hollow assurances. They hailed the work of the then Director School education Jammu for implementing the orders in letter and spirit. They further appealed to the Administrative Secretary School education department to issue their adjustment orders on the basis of merits and relevant govt orders.

Secretary School Education BK Singh said, "Only those having distance education degrees and some other clearances pending are waiting for adjustment." (KNS)

from same universities from the Jammu division were adjusted 18 months back and Kashmir based lecturers are suffering for none of their faults. This selective implementation of govt orders is unacceptable. They further said that they represented the case at the concerned quarters but were given hollow assurances. They hailed the work of the then Director School education Jammu for implementing the orders in letter and spirit. They further appealed to the Administrative Secretary School education department to issue their adjustment orders on the basis of merits and relevant govt orders.

Secretary School Education BK Singh said, "Only those having distance education degrees and some other clearances pending are waiting for adjustment." (KNS)

Don't Let Non-Local Labourers Enter Kashmir Without Covid Test: Mufti Nasir Tells Govt

SRINAGAR: Kashmir's Grand Mufti, Nasir-ul-Islam Monday expressed serious concern over the reports of a large number of non-local beggars and labourers entering Kashmir without undergoing the mandatory Covid tests and urged the J&K administration to launch a probe as to how such a huge number of people are entering Kashmir without Covid tests.

He said that if the reports about non-local labourers and beggars entering Kashmir without undergoing mandatory Covid screening is true, the move will further aggravate the Covid situation prevailing in the Kashmir Valley and pose

a biggest challenge for the administration.

"I have come across many reports that a large chunk of non-local labourers and beggars have managed their entry into Kashmir without undergoing Covid screening. If this is true, it will be a disaster for Kashmir. I urge the government to look into the reports and if it is found true, take appropriate measures to address the issue on war-footing basis," Mufti said, adding that "government especially the District Administration Srinagar must start mass Covid testing of non-J&K beggars and labourers wherever they are found."

Since Inception 36K Beneficiaries Receive Rs 144 Cr Under Marriage Assistance Scheme

JAMMU: For Shabnum (name changed), like hundreds of poor girls, the Jammu and Kashmir government's State Marriage Assistance Scheme (SMAS) has come as a saviour, providing enormous relief during marriage arrangements. Shabnum, 25, from a remote hamlet of southern Shopian district of Kashmir valley was married in 2019 after her parents arranged a good match for their daughter in a nearby village.

"To find a suitable match always remains a tough task but more cumbersome is expenditure a marriage incurs. Marriage assistance scheme helped us in a big way. We felt relieved after my sister was married in 2019 with the amount (Rs 40,000) provided by the government," the brother of Shabnum said.

SMAS for poor girls is a Social Assistance Scheme meant for those un-married identified girls of the UT living below the poverty line who may not find themselves in a position to marry due to financial constraint.

Widening its endeavor to reach out to the poor section of society to take the benefits, the government under this scheme is lending a helping hand to the poor families who couldn't afford to marry their daughters.

In this regard, during the 2020-21 financial year, the J&K Government under the scheme which is being run by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has sanctioned 8254 cases and provided an assistance of Rs 32.78 crore.

For the year 20-21, in Kashmir division the department has sanctioned 4940 cases, releasing marriage aid of Rs 19.58 crore.

The highest number of marriage assistance cases was sanctioned for Kulgam district of Kashmir division with disbursement of Rs 4.20 crore. Similarly, in Baramulla district the department has sanctioned 947 cases with an amount of Rs 3.78 crore followed by Pulwama district where 615 cases were sanctioned and 2.40 crore was released as marriage aid to the BPL families.

The Social assistance scheme is proving a great succor for unmarried girls of the J&K UT living below the poverty line, who may not find themselves in a position to marry due to financial constraints.

Under this scheme an unmarried girl above 18 years of age belonging to BPL family will receive Rs 25,000 cash assistance and cost of 5 grams of gold at

the time of her marriage.

The norms for availing benefit under the scheme are that the prospective beneficiary girl should be above 18 years of age, should be an identified poor girl in the survey list available with the concerned DDCs and DSWOs.

The Social Welfare Department is the nodal department for implementation of the scheme.

Likewise, in Jammu division of the Union Territory, the SWD has approved 3314 cases during the year 2020-21 and released an amount of Rs 13.20 crore.

And during the same year, the most number of marriage assistance cases were approved in Poonch district of the division with 597 and an amount of Rs 2.39 crore was released in favour of the girls followed by Udhampur where an amount of Rs 2.32 crore has been released in favour of brides among below poverty line families.

Rajni's (name changed) parents, who hail from a village from district Kathua's Billawar area, had more worries than to cherish as their daughter's marriage date was drawing close back in 2020 with little resources for marriage arrangements.

"Being a manual laborer as I earn hand-to-mouth, we were worried how we could arrange marriage stuff for our daughter," Rajni's father said and added that a relative informed him about the government's marriage assistance scheme where the family could get financial aid for their daughter's marriage.

"Such schemes for distressed and poor families mean a world for people like us," he said. Subsequently the family received Rs 40,000 from the Social Welfare Department after few formalities and the marriage was organized in a smooth manner.

So far 36,378 persons have benefited under the scheme since its inception with the cumulative financial assistance to Rs 144.30 crore provided to the beneficiaries.

Also, Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Farooq Khan, who is also the incharge of Social Welfare Department, has termed the Scheme as a big boon for poor girls, and added the scheme has greatly benefited the deprived section of the society.

He reiterated that the present government is committed to help people like old age, handicapped, widows and poor families to give them a hope that they could live their life in a better way and independently.

NEWS MAKERS

HDF Employees Of JLN Hospital Demand Pending Salaries



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The employees of JLN hospital in Srinagar engaged under the Hospital Development Fund (HDF) on Monday staged a protest against the authorities for failing to release their pending salaries for the last 15 months.

The employees assembled at Srinagar's Press Enclave and chanted slogans in favour of their demands.

State President of HDF Health Employees, Nisar Ahmad said that they have not received their salaries for the last 15 months, saying that they are in direct contact with COVID-19 positive patients, and are

working along with other COVID warriors but their job and dedication is being neglected and they have not being paid salaries for the last 15 months.

"Our 50 per cent of staff got infected by COVID while one among us has also died due to the virus. Our children got infected but the government is not paying any heed towards our sufferings," he added.

He further said they are moving from pillar to post to seek justice but nothing has been done in this regard.

The protesting HDF employees threatened to begin hunger strike, saying that "if our salaries are not paid till May 01, we will begin a hunger strike in the hospital for which the government will be held responsible."

Congregational Prayers In Tangmarg Village Prohibited

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Amid rising covid-19 cases, authorities prohibited congregational prayers in mosques in a village in Tangmarg area of north Kashmir after it was reported that the residents do not follow the covid-19 SOPs.

"In the larger interest of lives of General public of Village Ferozpora, it is hereby ordered that the congregational prayers in all mosques of the said village shall be strictly prohibited, for a period of one week in the first instance," reads an order issued by SDM.

It mentions that the District Magistrate Baramulla (Chairperson DDMA) on April 22 declared Village Ferozpora in Tehsil Tangmarg as Micro-containment zone for containment of Covid-19 disease.

"The mass sampling of the Village was carried out by Medical Block Tangmarg and it has been detected that 21% residents have tested positive for Covid-19 infections which reflects a sharp surge in the Covid positive cases," the order reads, adding, "It has been reported that the inhabitants of the village do not follow SOPs/guidelines during the indoor gatherings viz congregational prayers."

The SDM has underlined that any violation to order shall invite punitive action.

"The Tehsildar Tangmarg and SDPO Tangmarg shall implement the order in letter and spirit," the order added.

To Operate With 50 Percent Capacity Not Viable: Kashmir Transporters

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Kashmir Transporters on Monday said to operate the vehicles with 50% capacity is not economically viable.

Talking to reporters, the Hazratbal wing of Transporters said that from August 05, 2019, they have been continuously off the roads and no assistance was provided to them by the Government.

They said that as the 2nd wave of Covid-19 engulfed the Country along with Jammu and Kashmir again, the government issued an order that Transporters have to operate with 50% of passengers only.

"It is not feasible for transporters to ply their vehicles with 50 per cent passengers on board. The fuel prices are skyrocketing and the transporters are the hardest hit since the outbreak of the pandemic," they said.

Pertinently, among the new COVID-19 control measures announced, Govt said that public transport (matadors/minibuses/buses) shall be permitted to ply only at 50 per cent of its authorised seating capacity, and only half of the shops in market complexes, bazaars and malls within the municipal or urban local body limits shall be opened on an alternate basis through a rotation system.(KNS)

'We Are Safe But Situation Outside Is Grim,' Says DC Coach Ricky Ponting

Press Trust of India

CHENNAI: The IPL has created the "safest" bio-hub for its participants but Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting says he is also well aware of the "grim" COVID-19 situation outside the bubble in India and often discusses it with his players.

The Australian great, while admitting that IPL can be a welcome distraction in these tough times, said that COVID-19 has dominated the conversations within his team.

"This IPL, probably more than any other, has become more about what's happening on the outside rather than what's happening here. We are probably the safest people in the country probably because of the bubbles we are in," Ponting told the DC 'YouTube' channel.

"Continually, I am asking the boys at the breakfast as to what's happening on the outside and if their families are safe, happy? That's really an important thing.

"I think IPL in a situation that the country is in, cricket can bring a lot of joy to people," he added.

However, there is no denying that state of affair is pretty gloomy

at the moment as Ravichandran Ashwin has pulled out of the tournament, citing the COVID-19 "fight" his family is enduring.

"Here in DC, we are talking about being one big family and it's important that we are thinking about extended family not just us here because it's quite grim. Yes, it's hard for the players to be away from their families and I can't even imagine putting myself in the situation," Ponting known for his straight talk said.

He, in fact, didn't name Ashwin but spoke about the kind of mental state he was in before he left home after the match against SunRisers Hyderabad.

"Guys living in Chennai, they are actually at home now but can't see their families. It's incredibly difficult. The more we can share these experiences, the better off we are," Ponting had said after the win against Mumbai Indians.

"We can keep our fingers crossed and hope people on the outside remain safe. Players can take care of their families on the outside and we can do whatever we can on the inside," he said.

Pat Cummins Donates \$50,000 To India's Fight Against COVID-19



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Kolkata Knight Riders' Australian pacer Pat Cummins on Monday announced a USD 50,000 donation towards PM CARES Fund for oxygen supplies in India's COVID-19 ravaged hospitals and backed the IPL to continue, saying he has been "advised" that the Indian government views it "as few hours of joy" in a difficult time.

In a statement on his official Twitter handle, he made the announcement and urged other top players to do the same as the country battles a deadly second wave of the pandemic recording more than 2,000 daily deaths for the past few days.

"As players, we are privileged to have the platform that allows us to reach millions of people that we can use for good. With that in mind, I have made a contribution to the PM CARES Fund, specifically to purchase oxygen supplies for India's hospitals," he stated.

He also said that he is aware of the ongoing discussion on whether the IPL should continue amid the destruction caused by the virus but has been told that the event offers some respite from the gloom.

"There has been a lot of discussion over here as to whether it is appropriate for the IPL to continue while COVID-19 infection rates remain high," he said.

"I am advised that Indian government is of the view that playing

the IPL while the population is in lockdown provides few hours of joy and respite each day at an otherwise difficult time for the country," Cummins said in his statement.

India recorded over 3.53 lakh cases on Monday, the highest across the world since the pandemic began last year.

"To know so many are suffering so much at this time saddens me greatly," he said.

The world's premier fast bowler, who was bought for a whopping Rs 15 crore by KKR at the IPL auction, hoped his donation would make a difference in its own little way in India's fight against the unprecedented health crisis.

"At times like these, it is easy to feel helpless. I've certainly felt that of late. But I hope by making this public appeal we can all channel our emotion into action that will bring light into people's lives.

"I know my donation isn't much in the grand scheme of things, but I hope it will make a difference to someone," he added.

"I encourage my fellow IPL players -- and anyone else around the world who has been touched by India's passion and generosity -- to contribute. I will kick it off with USD 50,000," Cummins said.

He described India as a country "I have come to love dearly over the years and the people here are some of the warmest and kindest I've ever met."

Man City Beats Tottenham 1-0 To Win 4th Straight League Cup

Agencies

LONDON: A rare goal from Aymeric Laporte produced a familiar outcome: Manchester City winning the League Cup. For the fourth successive season, Pep Guardiola's side triumphed in the final of the competition on Sunday with a 1-0 victory over Tottenham.

With Tottenham proving hard to find a way past despite City's domination, it needed Laporte to head in his second goal of the season in the 82nd minute from Kevin De Bruyne's free kick.

"We have to keep this rhythm, this way to win more titles," center-back Laporte said.

What was less familiar for the finalists was officially being allowed to play in front of supporters from both teams. That hasn't happened since March 2020, but pandemic

restrictions were eased to allow a crowd of 7,773 inside Wembley to see the first piece of silverware of the season handed out.

"It was good for us to share it with our people," Guardiola said.

"There was some good noise. We did it for them. They represented the people at home."

There was also an unfamiliar sight on the touchline, with 29-year-old rookie coach Ryan Mason managing Tottenham following Jose Mourinho's firing on Monday. A change in manager couldn't end Tottenham's trophy drought since lifting this cup in 2008.

The pain in the dressing room was all-too-familiar for Mason, who was in the Tottenham side that lost the 2015 League Cup final to Chelsea before a head injury ended his career.

Srinagar Indoor Stadium A COVID Emergency Care Centre Now



Agencies

SRINAGAR: In wake of rising number of positive COVID-19 cases, Srinagar's District Administration on Monday converted Indoor Stadium, Haft Chinari as a COVID Emergency Care Centre.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Muhammad Aijaz Asad told a local news agency KNO that

a COVID centre for emergency has been set up at Indoor Stadium.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Srinagar, Syed Muhammad Hanief Balkhi said that the patients with mild symptoms would be accommodated in the COVID-19 centres.

Officials told the news agency that the Indoor Stadium will hold up to 120 beds. The Stadium

turned health centre will also provide oxygen facility to patients.

"Like previous year, many COVID-19 centres have been established again at Indoor Stadium, Sanat Nagar Marriage hall, Kashmir University's Zakura campus, NIT Srinagar and Hajj house," the ADC said.

The Administration has already suspended all close-contact sports and activities in the region.

IPL 2021

Fearing COVID, Players Flee IPL But BCCI Says The League Will Go On

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Anxiety pierced through IPL's bio-secure bubble on Monday with leading Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and some Australian players withdrawing from the league amid the escalating COVID-19 crisis in India even as the BCCI insisted that the glitzy league will go on.

The 34-year-old Ashwin, competing for Delhi Capitals, decided to take a break saying that his family is currently "putting up a fight against COVID-19" and he wants to support them. He hopes to return to the side "if things go in the right direction".

However, Andrew Tye (Rajasthan Royals) and the duo of Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa (both Royal Challengers Bangalore) withdrew as apprehension set in after a couple of weeks went by smoothly for the league being held in front of empty stands across six venues.

While Zampa and Richardson have not yet spoken about their "personal reasons" for leaving, Tye



said he feared getting locked out of his own country owing to mounting quarantine cases from India in his hometown Perth.

"I just thought to try and get on the front foot and get home before I got locked out of the country...think I've had 11 days at home out of the bubble since August, so for me I just wanted to get home," Tye told 'SEN Radio' from Doha, the transit point before his flight to Perth.

The BCCI, on its part, insisted that the event will continue and it wouldn't come in the way of those

wanting to leave.

While leg-spinner Zampa was bought for Rs 1.5 crore, RCB spent Rs 4 crore to buy pacer Richardson at the players' auction.

Richardson featured in one match for RCB, returning figures of 1 for 29 in three overs against Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai, but Zampa couldn't make it to the playing XI this season.

The 34-year-old Tye had also not got a game with the Royals so far and his contract with the franchise was worth Rs one crore.

Hit Hard By Foreign Pull-Outs, Royals Seek To Loan Players From Other Teams

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Rajasthan Royals have approached fellow IPL teams to loan players after the departure of their four foreign players due to various reasons that include injuries, bubble fatigue and COVID-19 fear.

Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer are out of the IPL due to injuries while Liam Livingstone had gone back home citing bubble fatigue. On Sunday, Andrew Tye left for Australia, citing fear due to surge of COVID-19 cases in India, making Royals the worst affected team from player pull-outs.

"The team is looking to loan players and has written to other

franchisees but nothing is decided at this point," a source close the team management told PTI.

The IPL loan window started on Monday and will end with the conclusion of the league stage.

Tye, who had not played a game this season, flew back home on Sunday fearing being locked out of his own country with India reporting record COVID-19 infections for the past few days.

IPL rules state that a player who have played less than two matches in the season can be loaned and cannot play against his home franchise.

Royals have two wins from five games and play their next game in Delhi on Thursday.

Ashwin Leaves IPL To Support Family In Fight Against COVID



Press Trust of India

CHENNAI: Senior Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has decided to take a break from the ongoing IPL, saying his family is currently "putting up a fight against Covid" and he wants to support them.

The 34-year-old is competing for the Delhi Capitals this season and hopes to return to the side "if things go in the right direction".

"I would be taking a break from this years IPL from tomorrow. My family and extended family are putting up a fight against #COVID19 and I want to support them during these tough times," Ashwin posted on his Twitter page after DC's game against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Sunday night.

"I expect to return to play if things go in the right direction. Thank you @DelhiCapitals," added the Chennai-based player.

It is learnt that a very close member of his family has tested positive for the virus.

His franchise promised full support to him in a twitter post of its own.

"Extending our full support to you in these difficult times, @ashwinravi99. Sending you and your family all the strength and prayers from all of us at Delhi Capitals," DC said.

Ashwin has become the first Indian player to pull out of the league because of a Covid situation in the family.

Given that the IPL is being held in a bio-bubble, Ashwin will have to be in quarantine for some days if he decides to come back and compete, which would also impact his availability going forward in the tournament.

In an earlier tweet, Ashwin had expressed concern about the pandemic ravaging the country right now.

"Heart breaking to see what's happening around my country! I am not in the healthcare fraternity, but my sincere gratitude to each of them. I would also like to make an earnest appeal to every Indian to exercise caution and stay safe," he had said.



(MARCH 21, 1945- APRIL 27, 2006)

SCHOLAR OF REASON MAULANA MUSTAFA HUSSAIN ANSARI

An erudite scholar, Maulana Mustafa Hussain Ansari would always stress the importance of rational thought in removing cobwebs of ignorance and modernising Muslim society.

Born on March 21, 1945 in Srinagar, Maulana Mustafa Hussain Ansari went on to become one of the top religious scholars of Kashmir till date. One of the best orators, his religious insights helped many to understand the complexities of religion better. Unlike many of his contemporaries who rely heavily on arousing sentiments, Maulana Mustafa always made it a point to talk logic.

During sixty three years of his eventful life Maulana waged an unrelenting battle with the verbal and written word, which the history will record in golden letters, to dispel doubts from the minds of believers and to create a pious society. Known for his forceful and penetrating discourse, Maulana Mustafa has scores of specialist treatises to his credit, including the first ever Kashmiri commentary of the Holy Quran, and biographical works on Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Imam Hussain (AS). Maulana was always logical. He was a preacher, who never believed in playing with the sentiments of the Muslim ummah.

Having dedicated his life to scholarly pursuits, the Maulana was a highly sought-after figure in society at home and outside the country, and was often called in to defuse grave crises involving confrontations arising between sects due to misunderstandings.

By tackling "unthinkable" domains such as the problems associated with the rise of 'establishment clergy' within Muslim community of Kashmir, Maulana embarked on topics that have preoccupied Muslims for most of the past 1,400 years.

Maulana has about forty scholarly works to his credit, among them a commentary on the Holy Qur'an, both in Urdu (Minhaj-ul-Qur'an) and in Kashmiri (Misbah-ul-Qur'an) the latter being unpublished except for the

first two chapters titled Kashaf-ul-Aneeq-fe-Sharh-e-Qanoon-al-Ameeq. The first-ever Kashmiri translation and commentary of the Nahj-ul-Balagha is another of his noted achievements. The Maulana has also penned down the biography of the Blessed Prophet, PbuH, (Aftab-e-Nabuwat, his first work after his return from Iraq, and the life of Hazrat Imam Hussain, AS, (Qateel-e-Nainava) which was published after he passed away.

Maulana Mustafa was also a remarkable novelist and debuted three highly successful historical novels (Inteqaam, Qabeelah, and Saazish) based on events in the tumultuous course of Islam. Some of his well-known write ups include Aakhri Tabassum, Mujrim, Al Meezaan, Khayaban, Islam Mein Haq-e-Talaq, Ameer-e-Madani Bajawab Kaled Ludni, Mere Jigar Ka Lahu, Noor-se-Naar Tak and so on.

His final work, Rakht-e-Safar, which he wrote two years before he passed away, deals with a human-beings final journey. As if to indicate that his time was near, the Maulana had concluded his long tryst with the world of thought and letters with a treatise on the hereafter.

Throughout his lifetime, he was busy in shaping up the future of the modern youth and he never failed in his endeavours. The religious and tireless efforts in working for unity among the Muslims and addressing misunderstandings between various sects will always be remembered.

His forceful expression, better understanding of Islam, history and his logical approach were his main assets. He was a preacher belonging to a particular community but was not communal in approach and conduct. He was deeply entrenched in Qur'an and Sunnah and was well aware of the basics of Islam. His speeches were very impressive and interesting no matter which topic he was talking on.

The tireless, dynamic and knowledgeable Maulana will always be remembered with moist eyes throughout our lives.

MUSTAFA ANSARI FOUNDATION, SRINAGAR