



P5 STATE

DIV COM FOR COMPREHENSIVE FLOOD MANAGEMENT PREPAREDNESS

A day after leading hospitals of Kashmir were facing shortage of Remdesivir, several health centres in Kashmir division mainly in Srinagar have run dry of Covid-19 vaccines. A top health official...

P6

COVID CHALLENGE 2.0: TIME FOR SOCIETY TO RISE TO THE OCCASION

The nature of pain and tragedy is such that only its victim feels the real brunt. The rest can perhaps just relate to a victim's pain or empathize with it. The old Kashmiri adage...



P3 CITY

COVID: SEVEN MORE SRINAGAR LOCALITIES DECLARED CONTAINMENT ZONES AS CASES SURGE

The district administration Srinagar has declared seven more areas as Containment Zones in the capital city...



Widom Quote!

Jabir related that the Prophet said: May Allah show mercy to a man who is kind when he sells, when he buys, and when he makes a claim.

—Bukhari

Govt Sanctions Loyalty Bonus For NHM Staff

Observer Monitoring Desk

JAMMU: The government sanctioned experience/loyalty Bonus in favour of the contractual staff hired under National Health Mission (NHM) for the financial year 2020-21.

"Sanction has been accorded for 10 per cent experience/loyalty bonus to those employees who have completed minimum three years of service under NHM. Moreover employees who have already drawn the experience/loyalty bonus for the period of three years and completing five years of service during the financial year (2020-21), will be entitled to the deferential percentage (i.e 15-10) of 5 per cent of experience/loyalty bonus, reads an order issued by Mission Director, NHM, J&K.

Choudhary Mohammed Yasin (IAS), Mission Director NHM, J&K while thanking Atal Dulloo, Financial Commissioner Health & Medical Education Department for according formal approval for releasing the experience/loyalty bonus in favour of NHM employees for recognition of their services said that the bonus will be drawn as arrears by all the DDOs which will be the part [● More On P10](#)



City's commercial hub Lal Chowk on Friday wore a deserted look due to a lockdown imposed to tackle coronavirus spread. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Coronavirus Tightens Grip On J&K

Cases Hit Record High, 3532 Test Positive, 30 More Die

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases continue to show no sign of decline as Jammu and Kashmir reported on Friday the biggest ever single day spike of 3532 fresh cases even as the deadly infection claimed the lives of 30 more people across the Union Territory during the last 24 hours.

While 2360 new cases

were reported from Kashmir Valley, 1172 were detected in Jammu division thus taking the total number of people infected by the virus since last year in J&K to 176083. The active case tally soared to 28359-10660 in Jammu and 17699 in Kashmir Valley.

officials said Friday that 17 people from Jammu division succumbed to the infection while 13 were residents of different parts of the Valley. With these deaths, the fatality count has reached 2283 in J&K—889 in Jammu and 1394 in the Valley. Among the victims include two women, aged 25-years and 27-years [● More On P10](#)

Curbs In Kashmir To Stop Virus

Observer News Service

Strict restrictions remained in place in parts of Jammu and Kashmir, including this capital city on Friday on the first day of lockdown that began on Thursday evening in an attempt to contain the spread of coronavirus in the [● More On P10](#)

330 Violators Arrested, 10,000 Fined

Srinagar: Police have arrested over 300 people and imposed fine on nearly 10,000 others for allegedly violating COVID-19 related standard operating procedures in Kashmir over the past 11 days, officials said on Friday. "During last 24 hours, police has arrested 118 persons, lodged 103 FIRs and also realised fine to the tune of Rs 90,610 from 730 people for violating the guidelines and rules throughout Kashmir valley," the officials said. They said since the outbreak of the second wave of coronavirus, police have enhanced their [● More On P10](#)

J&K Govt Aborts Vaccination Drive From May 1 We Expect To Get The Vaccines By May 20: Dulloo

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Amid a shortage of COVID-19 vaccine doses, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday said the third phase of the inoculation drive that will cover people in the 18-45 age group will not begin from May 1 in the union territory.

The new date will be announced once vaccine supply is established, it said.

Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education,



Atal Dulloo said the union territory expects to receive vaccines by May 20. The third phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive is set to roll [● More On P10](#)

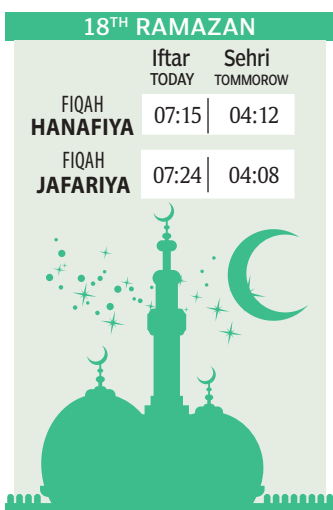
J&K Civil Services Decentralisation, Recruitment Act Amended

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir administration led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has decided to exclude Health and Medical Education Department identified Gazetted teaching and faculty posts on academic arrangement basis, from the operation of Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Decentralisation and Recruitment Act 2010.

A notification in this regard states that "in exercise of the powers conferred under clause

(ii) of proviso to section 3 of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Decentralisation and Recruitment Act, 2010 (Act No. XVI of 2010), the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir hereby excludes from the operation of the Act such categories of Gazetted Level teaching/faculty posts as may be identified by the Health and Medical Education Department from time to time for the purpose of appointment on academic arrangement [● More On P10](#)



NEWS DIGEST

Mild Intensity Quake Joins Ladakh

SRINAGAR: A mild intensity earthquake on Friday jolted parts of the newly carved Union Territory of Ladakh. The 4.1 magnitude earthquake occurred at 9:07 pm Friday with its epicentre latitude 34.63 north and longitude 77.07 east, official sources said. The depth of [● More On P10](#)

Army Porter Falls To Death

SRINAGAR: An army porter was killed after he slipped from a mountain top along the line of control (LoC) in Karnah sector of Kupwara district. The porter Muneer Ahmad lost his balance and fell into a gorge while climbing a mountain peak with an army team between Rawan Gali and Nath Gali along the LoC in Karnah sector, reports said Friday. An army party was on the [● More On P10](#)

Employee Dies As Tractor Overturns

SRINAGAR: A forest protection force employee died on Friday after his tractor overturned in Karnah area of north Kashmir's Kupwara district. Shakoor Ahmad Mir of Khawarpora was ploughing in his field at Karanu Niti top area of Karnah on Wednesday evening when his tractor overturned leaving him critically injured, reports said. Mir, as employee of forest protection Force (FPF) [● More On P10](#)

Ladakh Logs 108 Cases, Single Death

LEH: The total number of COVID-19 cases in Ladakh surged to 13,866 as 108 more people tested positive for the disease, while the death toll climbed to 140 with one more fatality, officials said on Friday. Ninety fresh cases were reported from Leh and 18 from Kargil, they said. Of the total 140 deaths, 96 were reported from Leh and 44 from Kargil. As many as 192 [● More On P10](#)

MeT Forecasts Erratic Weather Till Friday

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The Meteorological department has predicted erratic weather conditions across Jammu and Kashmir till next week, even as most parts of the Valley received light rainfall on Friday.

"Erratic weather conditions would continue till next Friday. The intermittent light rainfall as per the forecast would occur in the afternoon like today," Deputy Director of Meteorological department (MeT), Mukhtar Ahmad said.

A meteorological department official said Friday that Srinagar recorded a low of 11.4 degree Celsius against 11.6 degree Celsius on the previous night. The temperature was 2.1 degree Celsius above normal for this time of the season in the summer capital of J&K, he said.

Qazigund recorded a low of 8.2 degree Celsius against previous night's 8.6 degree Celsius and it was above normal by 0.4 degree Celsius in the gateway town of Kashmir, the official said.

Mercury settled at 4.2 degree Celsius against 5.7 degree Celsius on the previous night in Pahalgam. The temperature was below normal by 0.2 degree Celsius during this time of the season in the famous tourist resort in South [● More On P10](#)

Kashmiri Teacher's Blood Campaign Comes In Handy In Pandemic

Saqib Jameel

As siren-blaring ambulances are declaring a deafening health emergency in Kashmir, Sajad Hussain is marshalling his troupe to avert the blood crisis in the valley grappling with the contagion groundswell.

His crucial initiative is coming at a time when major health centres have once again become Covid- designed hospitals — tackling a warlike situation created by pernicious pandemic.

In his Magam home in central Kashmir's Budgam district, Hussain's cell phone is buzzing with distressing 'blood' calls. He answers with an assuring tone—knowing well that his battery of 'blood brothers' in Budgam is just a phone call away to handle



the crisis.

As someone who has witnessed a lot of bloodshed during his lifetime, Hussain knows how an ounce of blood can save someone's life.

But since the current circumstances are once again challenging non-covid healthcare operations in the valley, Hussain is focusing on supplying the vital fluid with the help of his

group.

Before becoming Kashmir's full-fledged blood campaigner, Hussain himself was an active donor. He hanged his boots 20 years ago to start

Imam Sajad Blood Donors Group tackling the emergency situations in the valley.

"I'm into blood donation from the last 30 years now," Hussain says with his modest gaze.

"I donate blood to please Almighty and not for any fame. I've donated blood irrespective of the caste, class, religion, and race. I've saved eighty one lives with my individual donations."

The blood drive started in 1990 when Hussain's homeland had become a raging conflict theatre. As the low-scale warfare left many bleeding, Kashmir hospitals at once felt the need of blood.

It was then college-goer Hussain decided to donate his blood for his bleeding brethren.

"In 1990, I first donated my blood to a child in critical condition," Hussain recalls his life-changing moment. "He needed O-Positive blood. And since it matched with my blood group, I rushed to the hospital swiftly."

Once done with donation, Hussain went to see the child in his ward.

"I saw happiness on his mother's face and for the first time I felt peace inside me," emotional Hussain recalls.

The moment he started walking out of that ward, the child's mother stopped him and put something in his pocket.

"I resisted, but she was unrelenting," the blood donor recounts.

"I checked and it was a five rupee coin. I realized then, that if she had got all the wealth in the world she would have happily [● More On P10](#)



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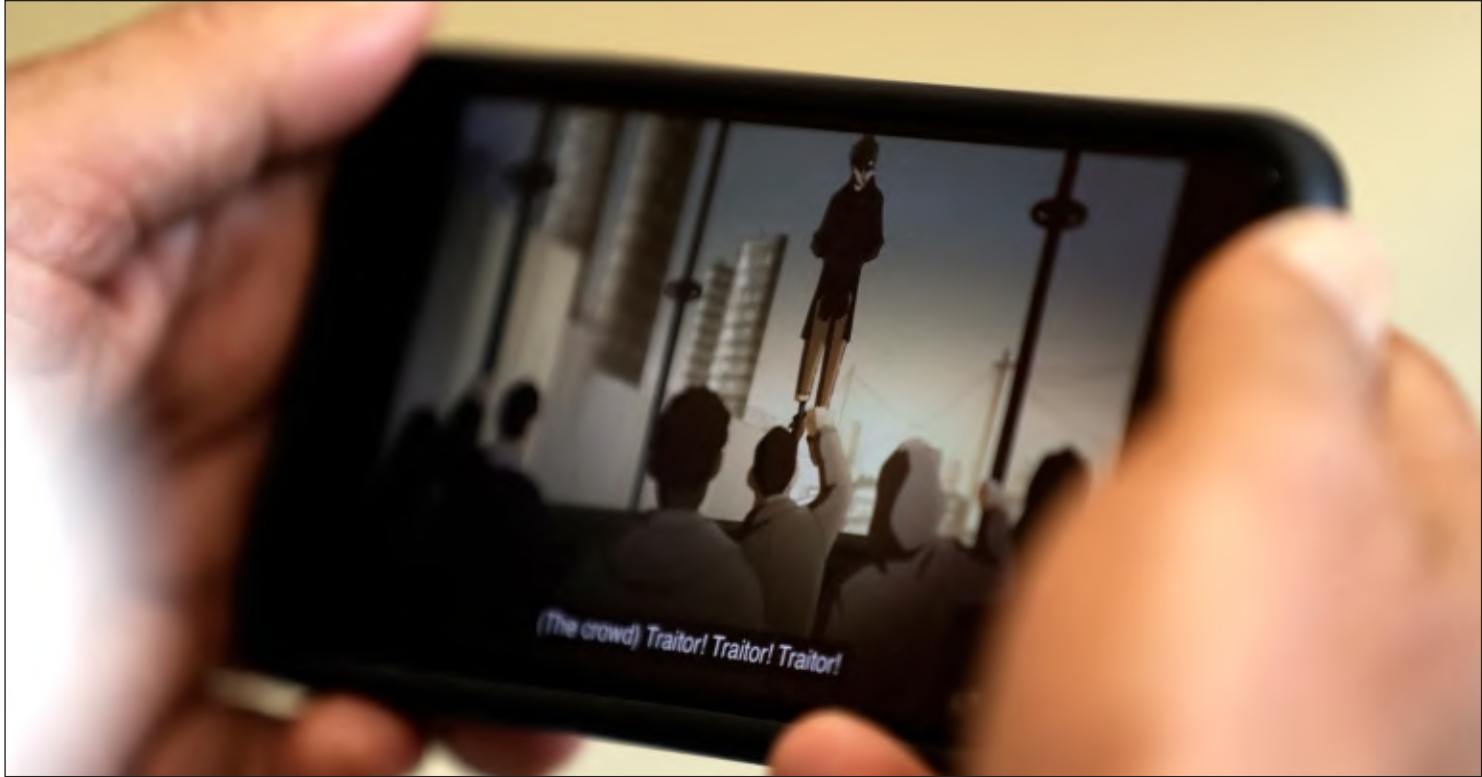
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KASHMIR
OBSERVER

Saturday| 01-05-2021

Alephia 2053 Animated Thriller Strikes A Chord In Arab World



Agencies

Alephia 2053, an Arabic-language animated feature set in a bleak future, has struck a chord in a region all too familiar with autocratic rule and bold, bloody resistance. Released on YouTube on March 21, 10 years after the Arab Spring uprisings, the Lebanese-made 60-minute thriller has already garnered more than eight million views. It is “proof that the movie reflects people’s thoughts”, says Rabiw Sweidan, the film’s Lebanese creator and executive producer. “Everyone sees it from their perspective and they see themselves and their communities in it,” Sweidan added. The storyline, set in 2053 in the fictional Arab state of Alephia, follows a group of undercover agents plotting to take down hereditary ruler Alaa Ibn Ismail and his oppressive regime, described as the most tyrannical in the world. Through a meticulous operation led by operatives who have infiltrated top government

ranks, the “resistance” succeeds in toppling the dictator in a coup and ending a century of despotic rule. They are buoyed by crowds taking to the streets chanting the now-famous Arab Spring refrain – “the people demand the fall of the regime” – in the face of heavily armed security forces who respond with live fire. The movie closes with a familiar scene: Fists thrown into the air as a euphoric crowd pulls down the statue of the fallen leader with ropes. Sweidan says Alephia 2053, with its uncannily familiar-looking dictator figure, is “a fictional movie but it is based on reality, it is a description of social reality”. It is not inspired by any single Arab country but depicts conditions familiar to many across the world, he says. “The world has become a small village, where the situation is the same in more than one place,” Sweidan said. “Alephia could be the 23rd country in the Arab League”, which has 22 members.

Brighter future Though the movie is highly reminiscent of the 2011 uprisings, Sweidan says it is an attempt to break away from what he calls an obsession with the past. “There is always a tendency in the Arab world to imagine what might have happened in the past, but there is no theatrical or cinematic work that imagines what the Arab world will be like in the future,” says Sweidan. “The idea for the film came from a question: What will the Arab world look like in 20 or 30 years?” According to Sweidan’s vision, the future holds more promise. The film tries to express this through colour grading: the closing scenes incorporate a livelier gradient than the dim and dusty scheme that dominates the first chunk of the film, says Sweidan. “Things can’t always remain dark,” he adds. “What this film wants to imagine is a future that’s not as bad as the past or the present.”

Like bees, wasps 'valuable' for ecosystems, human health

Agencies

Wasps deserve to be just as highly valued as other insects, like bees, due to their roles as predators, pollinators, and more, according to a new review paper led by UCL and University of East Anglia researchers. The study, published in Biological Reviews, compiles evidence from over 500 academic papers to review how roughly 33,000 species of stinging (aculeate) wasps contribute to their ecosystems, and how this can benefit the economy, human health, and society. Lead author Professor Seirian Sumner (UCL Centre for Biodiversity & Environment Research, UCL Biosciences) said: “Wasps are one of those insects we love to hate -- and yet bees, which also sting, are prized for pollinating our crops and making honey. In a previous study, we found that the hatred of wasps is largely due to widespread ignorance about the role of wasps in ecosystems, and how they can be beneficial to humans. “Wasps are understudied relative to other insects like bees, so we are only now starting to properly understand the value and importance of their ecosystem services. Here, we have reviewed the best evidence there is, and found that wasps could be just as valuable as other beloved insects like bees, if only we gave them more of a chance.” Wasps are top predators of other insects. Predation by insects -- as biocontrol to protect crops -- is worth at least \$416 billion per year worldwide. Yet, this figure almost completely overlooks the contributions of hunting wasp predation. The review highlights how wasps’ role as predators makes them valuable for agriculture. Wasps regulate populations of arthropods, like aphids and caterpillars that damage crops. Solitary wasp species tend to be specialists, which may be suited to managing a specific pest, while social wasps are generalist predators, and may be especially useful as a local source of control for a range of crop-eating pests. The researchers say that wasps could be used as sustainable forms of pest control in developing countries, especially tropical ones, where farmers could bring in populations of a local wasp species with minimal risk to the natural environment. Professor Sumner and colleagues recently published a study finding that common wasp species are effective predators that can manage pests on two high-value crops, maize and sugarcane,

in Brazil. The review also highlights the pollination services provided by wasps. Pollination by insects is vital for agriculture, and its economic importance has been valued at greater than \$250 billion per year worldwide. The researchers found evidence of wasps visiting 960 plant species. This included 164 species that are completely dependent on wasps for pollination, such as some orchid species that have evolved adaptations to attract the wasps they rely on, such as an appearance that mimics the back end of a female wasp. Many wasps are also generalist pollinators that visit a wide variety of plants, so the researchers say they could serve as ‘backup pollinators’ if a plant loses its local primary pollinator. The review also describes other uses for wasps such as wasp-derived medications, as their venom and saliva have



antibiotic properties, while yellow-jacket wasp venom has shown promise in treating cancer. Wasps may even be a valuable food source, as their larvae are already harvested in some tropical countries for food. Co-author Dr Alessandro Cini (UCL Centre for Biodiversity & Environment Research, UCL Bioscience and University of Florence) said: “The value of wasps in supporting our crops remains poorly understood; we hope that by rehabilitating their bad reputation, we can collectively get the most value out of these fascinating creatures.” The paper’s first author, Ryan Brock (University of East Anglia) said: “Alongside other insects, many wasp species are declining from factors such as climate change and habitat loss. As such, there is an urgent need to address their conservation and ensure that habitats continue to benefit from the far-reaching ecosystem services that wasps provide.” The research was supported by the Natural Environment Research Council and a Marie Curie fellowship from the European Commission.

JAMMU & KASHMIR POWER DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION BIJBEHARA,KPDCL

Phone No. 01932-234397 E-mail: xenstdbijbehara@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-NITNO.STB/09of 2021-22; Dated: 26-04-2021

For and on behalf of the Lt Governor, Jammu and Kashmir State, e-Tenders (In Two Cover System) are hereby invited from "A" Class Electrical Contractors issued by the Electrical Inspectorate of Govt of Central Inspectorial organization of Govt. of India/ other state Govt. In case bid submitted joint venture firm, any of partner should possess "A" class electrical license for Diversion of under construction of 33KV D.H Pora Nagam line via Mountain Terrian form D.H pora Police station to Nandimarg, including shifting of existing 11KV DK Marg feeder on 33KV line as per terms, conditions, technical specifications and schedules forming part of this tender document.Intending bidders are requested to submit their offer along with terms, conditions, technical specifications and annexure forming part of this tender document.The details are as under:

S #	Description	Estimated Cost Rs in Lacs	EMD Rs in lacs	Cost of Document in Rs.	Last date for submission of e-Bid
1	Diversion of under construction of 33KV D.H Pora Nagam line via Mountain Terrian form D.H pora Police station to Nandimarg, including shifting of existing 11KV DK Marg feeder on 33KV line.	16.70	0.34	500.00	10 May 2021; 2:00PM

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

A	Date & Time of downloading of Standard Bidding Document	The Standard Bidding Document can be downloaded over http://jktenders.gov.in from 27-04-2021;04:00PM
B	Clarifications start date	27-04-2021: 04:00PM
C	Clarifications end date	01-05-2021: 10:00AM
D	e-Bid submission (start) date & time (Submission of e-tender fee, EMD in pdf)	01-05-2021; 10:00AM
E	e-Bid submission (end) date & Time	10-05-2021: 2:00PM
F	Online Commercial and Technical e-Bid opening date & Time	11-05-2021: 2:00PM
G	Online financial e-Bid opening date & time (Only of the technically qualified bidders)	Will be communicated to the Technically Qualified Bidders
H	Venue of opening of technical & financial e-Bids	Office of Ex Engineer STD Bijbehara
I	Cost of e-Bid document (Bid Processing Fees)	INR 500.00 (Rupees One Thousand Five Hundred only)
J	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	INR 0.34 Lacs (Rupees thirty four Thousand Only)

2. There is no need of furnishing of hard copies of bids after submission of e-tenders . The same should be obtained only from the bidder who is declared as LI after opening of financial bid as per the instructions of Finance Department issued vide O.M No. A/24(2017)-651; Dated: 07-06-2018

3. All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of cost of tender document. The cost of tender document should be paid in the form of Demand Draft only, pledged to the Executive Engineer Subtransmission Division Bijbehara.

4. All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR/FDR/Bank Guarantee only, pledged to the Executive Engineer Subtransmission Division Bijbehara. No Interest would be payable on Earnest Money deposited with the Department. However the bidder who is declared LI after opening of financial bid has to submit the original EMD to the office of the Executive Engineer Subtransmission Division Bijbehara through speed post, Courier or by hand.

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

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

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

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

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

DIPK-NB-531/21

Executive Engineer
Sub Transmission Division
Bijbehara

NO:STB/ 203-07 :Dated:26-04-2021.

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RURAL ENGINEERING WING ANANTNAG

E-Tender Notice No: 04 of 2021-22 Dated: 26-04-2021

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Of Union Territory Of J&K , e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated/ Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of Tender Documents	Class of Contract	Time for Completion	Major Head	Panchayat/ Gram Sabha
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Repair/ Renovation of Patwar Khana at Logripora Block Pahalgam	1.80	200.00	DEE	30 days	Back to Village - III	Logripora
2.	Construction of Tile Path at Bongam Batkoot Block Pahalgam	2.00	200.00	DEE	30 days	Back to Village - III	Batkoot
3.	Construction of Fencing around Graveyard Ganeshpora Block Pahalgam	2.00	200.00	DEE	30 days	Back to Village - III	Ganeshpora
4.	Construction of Fencing around Graveyard Serchen Ganeshpora Block Pahalgam	1.50	200.00	DEE	30 days	Back to Village - III	Ganeshpora

Position of A/A:

Position of T/S:

Accorded

Accorded

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates.

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	26-04-2021
2.	Online Bid submission Start Date	26-04-2021 from 2:00 PM
3.	Online Bid Submission End Date	17-05-2021 upto 04:00 PM
4.	Date & time of opening of Online Bids	19-05-2021 at 11:00 AM or any convenient day in the office of the Executive Engineer REW Anantnag
5.	Note: Hard copy of original Tender Document Fee Receipt and Bid Security Self Declaration Form shall be deposited after the financial bid is opened. In case the original Tender Document Fee Receipt and Bid Security Self Declaration Form is not Deposited within 2 days after the Financial Bid is Opened for all responsive bidders who have participated online, the Department shall serve the Notice as per Rules.	

Special Condition:

Only the eligible contractor of respective Panchayat Halqa shall take part in the tendering process in light of the Government Order No. 251-FD of 2020 Dated: 17-09-2020. Bidders must upload a certificate from concerned Block Development Officer of residence proof that he/ she is residing in the respective panchayat. After opening of the tender if the rates quoted by the lowest bidder is found to be high and value of work is more than the advertised amount, he/ she is advised to negotiate his/ her quoted rates with the department/ offer his/ her consent within five days after opening of the tenders, failing which the work shall be put to fresh tenders as no allotment shall be made beyond the advertised amount.

1. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer REW Division Anantnag (tender receiving authority).
2. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of technical bids
3.The LI is required to deposit an EMD @ 3% of advertised value in the shape of CDR in favour of allotting authority (Executive Engineer REW Anantnag) at the time of finalization of allotment/ agreement with the Department
4.Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.
4.1.Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in to acquaint bid submission process.
4.2.To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved Vendor.
4.3.The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No bid will be accepted in physical form.
6.4. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.
6.5. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid. Besides, original / photocopies of documents related to the bid be submitted physically/ by registered post / through courier before the date specified in Para-1.
6.6 Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents in soft copies with the technical bid and no documents in terms of Hard Copies shall be entertained.
13.1.1 Extension of time shall be also admissible in the event of temporary suspension of work.
14 The tender / bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirements as laid down in NIT.
15 All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form)

DIPK-1045/21

No. REW-A/WS/NIT/2021-22/297-
Dated: 26-04-2021

-Sd-
Executive Engineer
Rural Engineering Wing
Anantnag

COVID: Seven More Srinagar Localities Declared Containment Zones As Cases Surge

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The district administration Srinagar has declared seven more areas as Containment Zones in the capital city in view of the fresh detection of Covid-19 positive cases.

According to the separate orders issued by the DDMA Srinagar, the areas which have been declared containment zones are Parimpora, Zoonimar, Peerbagh, Gulab Bagh, Jawhar Nagar, Boatman Colony Bemina and Mehjoor Nagar.

The order reads that in view of the detection of more than twenty and thirty cases respectively, the respective areas have been declared as containment zones.

District Magistrate Srinagar, who is also the chairman of DDMA, Mohammad Aijaz in separate orders said that it has become imperative to take preventive measures in these localities to contain the further spread of the Covid-19.

"More than twenty and thirty Covid-19 positive cases have been reported from these areas of Srinagar, developing into a cluster of MCZS. We apprehend that the Covid-19 positive patients in the said cluster might have come in contact with many other persons in the area and there are chances of further transmission of the deadly virus in the locality and its surroundings," the order reads.

It states that in order to break further transmission of Covid-19 in the area and its sur-



A POLICEMAN STANDS GUARD IN CITY CENTRE LAL CHOWK on Friday amid a lockdown across Kashmir valley, which authorities say, has been imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus.

roundings, it is felt expedient to take stringent measures by restricting movement of people and other activities in and around its surroundings.

"The area of 300 metre radius from epicentres, shall be a containment zone. There shall be no inward or outward movement of any person from/to the said area. In case the spread of clusters goes beyond 300 metre, the committee headed by the Administrator of the containment zone (Tehsildar) may decide the boundary of

the containment zone," it reads.

The order reads that Tehsildars concerned shall be the administrator of the Containment Zones. "They shall coordinate with all the fine departments to ensure the availability of all basic requirements including Food grains, LPG medicines etc in the Containment Zones."

As per the orders CMO Srinagar should activate the Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) immediately for survey and surveillance in the area besides line

listing and contact tracing.

"The Commissioner SMC shall depute teams immediately to sanitise the Containment zones and the exercise shall be repeated as per SOP. He shall submit a daily Action Taken report for perusal of Chairman DDMA. The SSP Srinagar shall ensure that all entry and exit points in the Containment zones are sealed, other than one designated entry and exit for emergencies and emergency and restric-

tions on movement of the people in the containment zone are affected in letter and spirit as per SOPs," the order states.

The order further states that he shall deploy a requisite number of personnel to man the entry and exit points. "Any person /group/institution found violating the directions of this order shall be booked under relevant act/ rule/ law."

The order states that accordingly the containment zones shall be managed and contained by a committee of officers including Tehsildar, Executive engineer PWD, SHO, TSO, ward officer SMC, medical officer nominated by ZMO, who shall be responsible for implementing SOPs and directions.

"The committee under supervision of Tehsildars shall be responsible for management and containment of the zone. Administrators should ensure that announcements are made inside the containment zone for restricting movement and implementation of SOPs."

It states that it shall be also ensured that all basic requirements of population are provided at their doorsteps for which administrator can involve any employee of any department within his jurisdiction.

"Tehsildars to establish 24*7 control room meant exclusively for the Containment Zone. Sub Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) shall be responsible for overall monitoring and supervision and shall ensure teams work in coordinated manner," it states.

MORE THAN TWENTY AND THIRTY COVID-19 POSITIVE CASES HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM THESE AREAS of Srinagar, developing into a cluster of MCZS. We apprehend that the Covid-19 positive patients in the said cluster might have come in contact with many other persons in the area and there are chances of further transmission of the deadly virus in the locality and its surroundings," the order reads.

AAC Grieved Over Demise Of Former President Transport Association Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Awami Action Committee (AAC) has expressed grief over the demise of former president of Transport Association Kashmir Haji Bashir Ahmad Matt.

Matt passed away at his residence in Qamarwari on Friday. AAC in a statement said that Haji Bashir was a gentleman and a social worker who wished best for everybody.

As the president of transport association, late Bashir always endeavoured to resolve the issues faced by the transporters and as a well-wisher of the Awami Action Committee he



used to play an active role in taking forward the programmes of the organisation.

On his demise, the AAC on behalf of its incarcerated chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq expressed

condolences with the bereaved family and prayed for Jannat-ul-Firdous to the departed soul.

A delegation of the AAC comprising Mushtaq Ahmad Sofi, Farooq Ahmad Saudagar, Haji Muhammad Yousuf Bhat and Abdul Qayoom Wani visited the bereaved family and conveyed the condolence message of the organisation's leadership. They also offered Fateha for the deceased.

Meanwhile, the AAC expressed condolence with Mufti Adil of Lal Bazar over the demise of his mother and expressed condolences with the bereaved family.

Police Arrests Two Drug Peddlers In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Police Friday arrested two drug peddlers and recovered contraband substance from his possession.

A police spokesperson said that acting on specific information, officers in the jurisdiction of PS Shaheed Gunj arrested two drug peddlers identified as Ajaz Ahmad Sheikh son of Ab-

dul Jabbar Sheikh, a resident of Alochibagh and Danish Bilal son of Bilal Ahmad Najar, a resident of Old Barzulla.

He said 270 grams of charas was recovered from their possession.

"They have been shifted to police station where they remain in custody. Accordingly, a case vide FIR No. 31/2021 under relevant sections of law stands registered at PS Shaheed Gunj and investigation has been taken up."

SMC Commissioner Reviews Implementation Of SOPs In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Amid lockdown in Srinagar, the Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Athar Amir Khan on Friday visited several areas of Srinagar city, to review the implementation of SOPs and other covid19 guidelines.

Talking to reporters, Athar Amir Khan said that lockdown has been imposed to reduce the intensity of the current wave of a surge in covid cases. He said, "I with my other officials went to different locations of Srinagar city to review the ground situation and

ensure that people are following the SOPs and other government guidelines in letter and spirit."

He expressed his satisfaction with the co-operation shown by the shopkeepers and other vendors in the implementation of covid lockdown and Covid appropriate behaviour, saying, "If we continue to do it, we will successfully break the increasing chain of the second strain of covid-19 pandemic."

Advising people to get vaccinated at the earliest the city municipal commissioner said, "We all have to work together to fight the pandemic."

JD Info Kashmir Accords Send-off To Retiring Officers

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Joint Director Information Kashmir Division, today accorded warm send off to Riyaz Ahmad Fazli, District Information Officer Ganderbal holding additional charge of Culture Officer Srinagar and Muhammad Sultan, Assistant Information Officer on their superannuation today after rendering more than three decades of dedicated services in the department.

The Joint Director Information, Haris Ahmad Handoo on the occasion highlighted the contribution of the Officers towards the department and congratulated them on attaining superannuation.

He also wished them a happy and prosperous post retirement life.

The other officers and officials of the department also lauded the contribution of retiring Officers and wished them a successful and healthy post retirement life.

The retiring employees thanked all their colleagues for their support and cooperation during their tenure in the department.

Sagging, Worn Out Wires Pose Threat To Kanitar Residents

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The sagging HT lines and dilapidated electric poles in Lane No 2 Kanitar Srinagar are posing a major threat to the lives and the property of people.

Aggrieved locals said the electric wires in the lane are lying low and the poles are also in a dilapidated condition.

"There are frequent short circuits and power failures in the area. Whenever there is a short circuit it sounds like a crash and the inmates feel threatened and run out of their houses," a local said.

The residents said that they have repeatedly pleaded with the Power Development Department officials about the threat posed by the dilapidated condition of the poles and sagging electric wires feeding electricity to the lane. However, they said, the officials have never bothered to address the issue.

A local resident said that they even filed a complaint on the J&K Grievance Cell but till date no official has visited the area.

Amar Singh College Bids Farewell To Prof. Maqsood Hussain

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Amar Singh College on Thursday felicitated Prof. Maqsood Hussain, Head Department of Physics, who attained superannuation on April 30, 2021.

Principal of the college, Prof. Bashir Ahmad Rather shared his experiences of long term association with Prof. Maqsood Hussain and applauded his dedication and untiring role for the overall development of the college in general and his parental department in particular.

Quoting verses of great Persian poet, Sheikh Saidi Sheerazi, he termed Prof. Maqsood Hussain, a person of high calibre and fragrant one, who makes

everything fragrant with his fragrance all around him.

Prof. Maqsood Hussain served the Department of Higher Education for a period of 32 years besides serving the School Education Department for two years. Born on 10th of April 1961 in a business family at Hassanabad Rainawari Srinagar, Prof. Maqsood Hussain graduated from Islamia College of Science & Commerce in 1981 and completed his masters in Physics from the University of Kashmir in 1983.

He carried out research on Microwave from the Department of Physics, University of Kashmir, under the guidance and supervision of Prof. K.K.S.

Jamwal, and was admitted to the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) in Physics in the year 1985-86. Prof. Maqsood Hussain was initially appointed as a lecturer in School Education Department in December 1986 and could later made his room in the Higher Education Department in October 1987.

Prof. Maqsood Hussain was promoted to the post of Associate Prof. In January 2006. Prof. Maqsood Hussain after serving in the various degree colleges of Union Territory, as a teacher was elevated to the post of Incharge Principal during his posting at AAA Memorial Degree College, Bemina and was posted at his then place of posting.

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DEATH ANNIVERSARY

The Saddest moment is when the person who gave you the best memories, becomes a memory

Shamshada Begum W/O Gh. Mohd Baba Khanyar, Srinagar

7 سال قبل آج ہی کے دن آپ ہمیں چھوڑ کر چلے گئے۔ آج تک آپ کے جانے کا غم کم نہ ہو سکا۔ اللہ آپ کو جنت الفردوس عطا کرے۔ آمین

لواحقین

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 1947 - Radar for commercial & private planes 1st demonstrated
- 1948 - North Korea proclaims itself Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- 1949 - Gerard Kuiper discovers Nereid, (2nd satellite of Neptune)
- 1951 - 600,000 march for peace & freedom in Germany
- 1956 - A doctor in Japan reports an "epidemic of an unknown disease of the central nervous system", marking the official discovery of Minamata disease.
- 1960 - India's Bombay state split into Gujarat & Maharashtra states
- 1962 - 1st French underground nuclear experiment in the Sahara
- 1965 - USSR launches Luna 5; later impacts on Moon
- 1965 - Battle of Dong-Yin, a naval conflict between ROC and PRC, takes place.
- 1966 - US troops shooting targets in Cambodia
- 1972 - North Vietnamese troops occupy Quang Tri Activities Committee
- 1977 - 36 people are killed in Taksim Square, Istanbul, during the Labour Day celebrations.
- 1978 - Naomi Uemura became 1st to reach North Pole overland alone
- 1984 - Great Britain performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1985 - US President Reagan ends embargo against Nicaragua
- 1986 - Russian news agency Tass reports Chernobyl nuclear power plant mishap
- 1991 - Angolan civil war ends
- 1991 - Last day of Test cricket for West Indian batsman Gordon Greenidge.
- 1993 - Bomb attack on Sri Lankan president (26 die)
- 1997 - Tony Blair elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- 2000 - President of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declares existence of "a state of rebellion", after thousands of supporters of her arrested predecessor, Joseph Estrada, storm towards the presidential palace at height of EDSA III rebellion.
- 2003 - In what becomes known as the "Mission Accomplished" speech, U.S. President George W. Bush declares that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended" on board the USS Abraham Lincoln off the coast of California
- 2008 - The London Agreement on translation of European patents, concluded in 2000, enters into force in 14 of the 34 Contracting States to the European Patent Convention.
- 2011 - Pope John Paul II is beatified by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI
- 2012 - China and Russia sign \$15 billion dollar trade deal
- 2012 - Guggenheim Partners make the largest ever purchase of a sports franchise after buying the Los Angeles Dodgers for \$2.1 billion
- 2013 - 15 people are killed by multiple bomb attacks across Iraq
- 2013 - 16 people are killed in a flash flood in Saudi Arabia
- 2013 - A digital camera is created that can mimic insect compound eyes
- 2014 - Hundreds march through Nigerian capital calling for the release of schoolgirls abducted by Islamic militants, Boko Haram, who oppose Western education
- 2015 - Expo 2015 opens in Milan (thru till 31st

From KO Archives

SOLVING KASHMIR KEY TO BETTER INDO-PAK TIES: MUSHARRAF

ISLAMABAD - Briefing top army commanders on the outcome of his India visit, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has said settlement of the Kashmir issue is the key to betterment of bilateral ties and the confidence building measures (CBMs) have to move in tandem with the progress on the dispute resolution.

"The key to Pak-India relations is die resolution of Kashmir dispute 6m- which Confidence Building Measures and dispute resolution will have to move at tandem," he told the officers at the 58th Formation Commanders conference here last night.

The Formation is regarded as the most influential body in the current power structure in Pakistan. The body meets once in a year to discuss a host of issues relating to policy as well as defence preparedness and promotions at top level.

Musharraf also elaborated on his assertions in New Delhi that the "era of conflict management is over and conflict resolution has to be done with sincerity," according to an official release. He dwelt at length on the prevailing environment encompassing international, regional and national issues, their impact on Pakistan, which preferred both challenges and opportunities and said the time has come for conflict resolution. "These issues offer both challenges and opportunities to us," it quoted him as saying. With pragmatic policies and careful utilisation of the nation's potential, Pakistan could play an important role and become an important geo-strategic location. Pakistan will continue to play its role in contribute positively to towards' peace and harmony in the region," he said.

(Kashmir Observer, 01, May, 2005)

Iran Welcomes Change In Saudi Arabia's Tone: Spokesman



Agencies

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh says Iran welcomes the recent "change in Saudi Arabia's tone" towards the Islamic Republic, adding that the "important" regional players can start revisiting their relations.

Earlier, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had told the Saudi-owned al-Arabiya TV that the kingdom viewed Iran as a neighboring country and aspired to have good relations with it.

"At the end of the day, Iran is a neighboring country. All we ask for is to have a good and distinguished relationship with Iran," he had said.

Regional powerhouse Iran's steady growth and burgeoning regional influence has hardly sat well with the Saudi kingdom over the past years. Riyadh cut its diplomatic ties with Tehran in early 2016 after the kingdom's execution of senior Saudi Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr prompted angry protests in front of Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran.

Bin Salman's remarks struck a different tone from Riyadh's normal rhetoric regarding Tehran, through which the kingdom would try to demonize Tehran for years on end.

Khatibzadeh recalled how the Islamic Republic itself has been originating proposals aimed at sewing up existing rifts among regional countries, most impor-

tantly the Hormuz Peace Initiative (HOPE). Devised by President Hassan Rouhani, the proposal seeks to establish a mechanism implemented by regional countries to ensure regional security.

He expressed hope that the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan inaugurates convergence among members of the regional Muslim society and rid the region of the scourge of warfare, displacement, and insecurity.

During the interview, however, Bin Salman added a touch of Saudi Arabia's former discourse to his remarks, claiming Riyadh "has a problem with Tehran's negative behavior, its nuclear program, and its support for militias."

The Islamic Republic has changelessly spurned any claims aimed at branding it with regional interference or tarnishing its nuclear activities.

It has routinely underlined that its peaceful nuclear program was neither geared towards any malign purposes, and nor was anybody's concern other than Tehran itself.

The Islamic Republic has similarly been standing up to the kingdom's incessant and continual claims alleging that it backs any regional fighting force.

Instead, Iranian officials, have been urging Saudi Arabia to stop meddling in the regional countries' affairs and put an end to the years-long Riyadh-led war on its impoverished southern neighbor Yemen.



A dose of AstraZeneca vaccine is prepared at Covid-19 vaccination centre in Maidstone, Britain February 10, 2021. File Pic Reuters

UK Study: Post-Vaccine Covid Infections And Deaths Rare

A very small number of mainly frail, elderly Covid-19 patients are being hospitalized and dying even after having a first dose of Pfizer's or AstraZeneca's vaccines, but this does not mean the shots aren't working, UK researchers said on Friday.

Presenting real-world data on a subset of hospitalized Covid-19 patients in the UK, the researchers said the findings showed some level of "vaccine failure" - in other words cases where vaccinated people still become infected and get sick - but that this was "not unexpected".

"It's mostly occurring in the group which are most at risk of severe disease anyway, which is the elderly. These people are very frail and very elderly," said Calum Semple, a University of Liverpool professor of child health and outbreak medicine, who co-led the research.

"We're not saying the vaccine doesn't work," he told a briefing. "In fact, this is good real-world evidence of it working. But it also shows that the vaccine isn't perfect."

The data, published as a preprint on Friday without having been peer-reviewed, showed that among just over 52,000 hospitalized Covid-19 patients studied, 526 had been vaccinated with a first dose of either the AstraZeneca or Pfizer shot at least three weeks earlier. Of those, 113 died.

The vast majority of the post-vaccination Covid-19 cases and fatalities were among vulnerable, elderly people, the researchers said.

AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine has been shown in clinical trials to be 76% effective against severe disease, while trials of the Pfizer shot found more than 90% efficacy.

Using first the Pfizer and then also AstraZeneca vaccines, Britain has one of the fastest Covid-19 vaccine roll-outs in the world - with more than 33.8 million first doses given so far and a quarter of adults receiving two doses.

Earlier this month, Public Health England said the roll-out had prevented more than 10,000 deaths of people aged 60 and older by the end of March.

Peter English, a specialist in communicable disease control, said the findings released on Friday confirmed "that the vaccine is not 100% effective" and were consistent with other data showing the overall positive impact of Britain's vaccination program. **REUTERS**

■ IT'S MOSTLY OCCURRING IN THE GROUP WHICH ARE MOST at risk of severe disease anyway, which is the elderly. These people are very frail and very elderly," said Calum Semple, a University of Liverpool professor of child health and outbreak medicine, who co-led the research.

Italy Tightens Travel Rules; 23 Passengers From India Test Covid Positive

Agencies

ROME: Italy on Thursday tightened the rules on people arriving from coronavirus-hit India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, while extending quarantine regulations for Europeans.

A devastating surge in cases of Covid-19 in India prompted Italy on Sunday to ban arrivals from the country, although legal residents were allowed home subject to testing and quarantine.

Twenty-three people on a flight that landed in Rome from India late Wednesday tested positive for coronavirus, out of 213 passengers and 10 crew, regional authorities announced.

Under new rules announced Thursday by Health Minister Roberto Speranza, however, only Italian citizens are allowed in from India -- a rule extended to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The regulation also extends to May 15 the rules currently in place for arrivals from European countries, who must have



a coronavirus test and self-isolate for five days.

Tests have not yet confirmed if those who tested positive on the Indian flight into Rome's Fiumicino airport Wednesday have the Indian variant of coronavirus, which is feared to be contributing to rapid spread

of coronavirus there.

The variant has already been identified in Italy among a dozen other countries.

The daily number of deaths in India climbed above 3,600 on Thursday, deepening a crisis which has seen hospitals and crematoriums overwhelmed.

NATO Says Afghanistan Withdrawal Has Begun



Agencies

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: NATO has started the withdrawal of its mission from Afghanistan following a decision by President Joe Biden to bring US forces home, an alliance official said Thursday.

"NATO Allies decided in mid-April to start the withdrawal of Resolute Support Mission forces by May 1 and this withdrawal has begun. This will be an orderly, coordinated, and deliberate process," a NATO official told AFP.

Members of the US-backed alliance agreed this month to wrap up their 9,600-strong mission in Afghanistan after Biden made the call to end Washington's longest war.

The decision -- which delayed by several months a deadline agreed by former US leader Donald Trump -- came despite fears it could allow the Taliban to regain power in the country.

The NATO official said the safety of the alliance's troops "will be a top priority every step of the way, and we are taking all necessary measures to keep our personnel from harm".

"Any Taliban attacks during the withdrawal will be met with a forceful response. We plan to have our withdrawal completed within a few months," the official said, refusing to give any further details on the timeline.

Biden said the US withdrawal would be completed by September 11, the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on America that sparked its military involvement in Afghanistan.

Germany's defence ministry has said it planned to get its 1,300 troops out of the country by early July.

'New chapter'
NATO's training and support mission, which includes around

2,500 US troops and relies heavily on Washington's military assets, has personnel from 36 alliance member nations and partner countries.

The US has said it is temporarily deploying extra troops to protect international forces as they withdraw and has prolonged the presence of an aircraft carrier in the region to support the pull-out.

Trump struck a deal with the Taliban last year that was meant to see US and allied troops leave Afghanistan by the start of May provided attacks decreased and peace talks progressed.

Biden decided to call time on the two-decade deployment of troops despite insurgent violence flaring and negotiations between the Taliban and the Kabul government stalling.

The US insists it has achieved its aim of stopping Afghanistan serving as a "haven for terrorists" after uprooting Al-Qaeda networks, and says it risks a never-ending military involvement if it does not pull out.

Top US general Mark Milley said Wednesday it was not possible to predict Afghanistan's fate after the withdrawal and warned of a "worst-case" outcome of a government collapse.

But along with its fellow NATO members, Washington insists it remains committed to Afghanistan.

"NATO Allies and partners will continue to stand with Afghanistan, its people, and its institutions in promoting security and upholding the gains of the last 20 years," the alliance said in a statement last month.

"Withdrawing our troops does not mean ending our relationship with Afghanistan. Rather, this will be the start of a new chapter."

44 Crushed To Death In Israel Pilgrimage Stampede

Agencies

MERON: A massive stampede at a densely packed Jewish pilgrimage site killed at least 44 people in northern Israel on Friday, blackening the country's largest Covid-era gathering.

The nighttime disaster struck in Meron at the site of the reputed tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a second-century Talmudic sage, where mainly ultra-Orthodox Jews flock to mark the Lag BaOmer holiday.

Closed last year due to coronavirus restrictions, this year's pilgrimage was expected to be a celebratory event in a nation that has largely re-opened thanks to a successful vaccination effort.

It had been "a tragic night," Shimon Lavi, northern Israel's police commander, told AFP, adding his officers did all they could to save lives, helping to ferry the injured to hospital.

The pilgrimage was the largest public gathering since the pandemic broke out, with reports of three times more participants, including children, than authorised by police.

Initial reports indicated the carnage began when a section of stadium seating collapsed but rescue workers later linked the casualties to a stampede.

A spokesman for the Magen David Adom, Israel's rescue service, told AFP "there were 38 dead at the scene but there were more at the hospital."

A source at the northern Ziv hospital, one of several receiving casualties, told AFP it had recorded at least six deaths, taking the overall toll to 44.

The rescue service said it was treating 150 injured, six of them in serious condition.

"They crushed each other"

"It was chaos as people tried to save themselves but they crushed each other," Dov Maisel of the United Hatzala rescue services told army radio.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netan-



yahu called it a "heavy disaster" and said he was praying for the injured.

"The whole of Israel is praying for the recovery of the survivors," said opposition leader Yair Lapid.

The army and emergency services deployed helicopters to evacuate the wounded.

Scenes from Meron hours after the accident showed an ultra-Orthodox Jewish crowd in distress, with debris scattered across the ground.

Some survivors had lit candles for the victims while other prayed nearby. Israeli media published an image of a row of bodies covered in plastic bags on the ground.

"Terrible disaster"

"This is one of the worst tragedies that I have ever experienced," said Lazar Hyman of the United Hatzalah volunteer rescue service, who was at the scene.

"I have not seen anything like this since I entered into the field of emergency medicine," he added.

Yehuda Gottlieb, one of the first responders from United Hatzalah, said he saw "dozens of people fall on top of one another during the collapse".

"A large number of them were crushed and lost consciousness."

Israel has fully vaccinated more than half of its 9.3 million population against the coronavirus, but restrictions on massive public gatherings remain in place to stem the spread of the virus.

Authorities had authorised 10,000 people to gather at the site of the tomb but organisers said more than 650 buses had been chartered from across Israel, bringing 30,000 pilgrims to Meron.

Pak PM Imran Khan Announces Rs 370 Billion Development Package For Gilgit-Baltistan



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday announced a development package of Rs 370 billion for Gilgit-Baltistan to help its youth through skill development initiatives and transform the region into a top tourism destination.

Khan visited the region's capital Gilgit along with Cabinet ministers and addressed a gathering attended by lawmakers of Gilgit-Baltistan and supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party to unveil the package.

"We are announcing a package of Rs 370 billion for Gilgit-Baltistan to be reimbursed over the next five years," he said.

Khan said the investment in tourism could transform the region of Gilgit-Baltistan as it was twice the size of Switzerland and more beautiful than the small European country known as a haven for tourists.

"By developing infrastructure for tourism, Gilgit-Baltistan would not

only become rich but would be in a position to support the rest of the country instead of looking towards Islamabad for help," he said.

Khan said Gilgit-Baltistan was the best place for food processing factories and hydropower projects, promising to invest in these sectors. He said the package will also focus on skill development and scholarships for the region's youth.

He said the government would build facilities to start operations of international flights to the region.

Khan visited the region last year during the election campaign for its legislative Assembly and had promised to give the status of provisional province to the region and initiate development. His party won the polls and is now ruling the region.

India has previously slammed Pakistan for its attempt to accord provincial status to the "so-called" Gilgit-Baltistan, saying it is intended to camouflage the "illegal" occupation of the region by Islamabad.

Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Anurag Srivastava had said India "firmly rejects" the attempt by Pakistan to bring material changes to a part of Indian territory which is under Islamabad's "illegal and forcible occupation" and asked the neighbouring country to immediately vacate such areas. **PTI**

NEWS MAKERS

Chinese President Xi Jinping Writes To Pm Modi, Offers To Help India Fight Covid-19

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed readiness to strengthen cooperation with India to fight the pandemic and provide support and help to deal with the current surge of COVID-19 cases in the country.

President Xi sent a message of sympathy to Prime Minister Modi over the COVID-19 pandemic in India, the official media here reported.

"I am very concerned about the recent situation of COVID-19 pandemic in India. On behalf of the Chinese Government and people, as well as in my own name, I would like to express sincere sympathies to the Indian Government and people," according to the message from President Xi to Prime Minister Modi.

"The Chinese side stands ready to strengthen cooperation with the Indian side in fighting the pandemic

and provide support and help in this regard. I believe that under the leadership of the Indian Government, the Indian people will surely prevail over the pandemic," Xi said.

"Humanity is a community with help to deal with the current surge of COVID-19 cases in the country. Only through solidarity and cooperation can countries around the world ultimately defeat the pandemic," the Chinese president said.

India on Friday logged 3,86,452 new coronavirus infections, the highest single-day rise so far, pushing the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,87,62,976, while active cases crossed the 31-lakh mark. The death toll increased to 2,08,330 with 3,498 new fatalities.

On Thursday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi promised to do the utmost in supporting India's fight against the COVID-19 surge and said that anti-pandemic materials produced in China were en-



tering India at a faster pace.

In his letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Wang said that the Chinese side "shares empathy for the challenges facing India and expresses sincere sympathy".

"The coronavirus is the common enemy of mankind, and the international community needs solidarity and coordination for a concerted response. The Chinese side firmly supports the Indian Govern-

ment and people in fighting the pandemic," he wrote in the letter.

Wang said that anti pandemic materials produced in China are entering India at a faster pace to help India fight the epidemic.

The messages from President Xi and Foreign Minister Wang to Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar came amidst tensions along the disputed border between India and China.

The militaries of the two countries are yet to agree on disengagement from the remaining areas of eastern Ladakh after the withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of Pangong Lake in February following a series of military and diplomatic talks.

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

Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told media briefing here on Friday that China has exported 26,000 ventilators and oxygen generators to India this month.

Since April, China has exported more than 26,000 ventilators and oxygen generators, more than 15,000 medical monitors, and nearly 3,800 tonnes of medical materials and medicines to India, he said in response to a question.

KPDCA Volunteers To Fight Covid-19 Pandemic

‘Will Assist In Covid Testing, Vaccination’

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As the valley remains under tight grip of Covid crisis with hospitals and primary health centres facing huge load of patients, Kashmir Private Diagnostic Centers Association has submitted a proposal to Divisional Administration Kashmir of offering the voluntary services including for Covid testing and vaccination.

President Private Diagnostic Centers Association Umer Iqbal Dhar said, being a part of the society they feel it is their responsibility to contribute towards the current covid-19 situation in the valley which is very challenging.

“We have submitted our proposal on volunteer basis and all the Labs and staff associated with the Association will help the Administration in Covid-19 testing and vaccination, if government provides us the testing kits and vaccines,” Dhar said. “Last year during covid-19 lockdown when there were asymptomatic covid-19 patients

and OPD services/testing was temporarily suspended, our labs were on the fore front, conducting the tests of the patients which include CT Scan, Ultrasound, ECG or other tests.”

Association's letter addressed to the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, reads: “Since the COVID-19 pandemic is posing a challenge to us all, we the private diagnostic service centres Association in Kashmir want to assist voluntarily the administration in this hour.”

The letter further states, “I urge you to utilise our services in testing and vaccination of the people in the valley. We urge the government to provide us testing kits and vaccination and we will offer free human resources and other utilities for this process. It will reduce rush on health centres and hospitals and will reduce the workload on health care workers of the government.”

Dhar said that he has got a good response from the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir. “Our proposal has been forwarded to the concerned department for exploring the possibility,” he said.

Accused Of Rape In Reasi, Banihal Resident Arrested 33 Years Later In Srinagar



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Police Friday said that the longest surviving absconding criminal, was arrested from Srinagar city, nearly 33 years after a rape case was registered against him.

A police spokesperson said that the accused Ghulam Muhammad, son of Abdul Ahad, a resident of Kherkote Banihal was underground and on the run for the last 33 years after a case of rape and abduction was filed against him in Police Station Mohore.

“Accused absconding in case FIR number 52/1988 sated 08/04/1988 U/S 366, 376, 109 RPC, Police Station Mohore, after commission of crime in 1988 was constantly evading arrest by changing his location and identity. Chargesheet was produced against him in a court of law,” the spokesperson said in a statement.

“Accused despite evading inves-

tigation couldn't evade long arm of law of the state. A warrant under section 512 CrPC was issued by the Court of Principal District & Session Judge Udhampur on 22/06/1989 and was executed after his arrest from Kashmir valley.”

While tracking traces of footprints of crime, meticulous planning and coordination, Reasi Police developed a specific input regarding his presence in Safakadal area of Srinagar and arrested the accused with the help of Srinagar Police, the statement said.

Thirty Three years ago, at the time of the commission of crime, neither Reasi was a sistrict nor there was a Session Court in Reasi. Mahore was under the jurisdiction of District Udhampur with only two Police Stations Reasi and Mohore.

The statement said that the other accused in the case Amkala, son of Bodhra, a resident of Bathoi; Ghulam Muhammad Sheikh, son of Rahiem Sheikh; Sonaullah, son of Aadha, a resident of Kherkote Tehsil Banihal Ramban were arrested and bailed out by the Court of Law.

He said that the Police has launched a drive to apprehend the absconders, who are evading arrest since years and this is the seventh absconder arrested by Reasi Police in last two weeks against whom warrant U/S 512 CrPC was pending.

J&K Bank Bids Farewell To Its Executive President

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: J&K Bank Thursday bid a warm send off to one of its top most officers Ghulam Nabi Teli, who retired today as the Banks Executive President.

With a wide-ranging experience spanning over three-and-half decades, G N Teli served the Bank in different capacities rising through the ranks to one of its top positions. Chairman and MD R K Chhibber along with Executive Presidents Arun Gandotra and Sunil Gupta, Presidents, Vice-presidents and other senior officers of the Bank attended a simple farewell meeting held at the bank's Corporate Headquarter lawns.

Commending his role in serving the bank, the CMD said, “I have seen Teli as one of the most diligent

and meticulous officers in the bank whose attention for detail remains outstanding. His punctuality and commitment towards this institution will continue to inspire us. I wish him a very happy and fulfilling post-retirement life.”

Speaking on the occasion, Teli said, “I feel immensely fortunate to see this long and eventful journey of thirty-five years concluding well. Whatever I have learned and earned during these unforgettable years of my life has mostly been possible because of this great institution.”

“Today I would like to thank all my seniors, friends and colleagues for their guidance, support and love throughout my career. I will take many wonderful friendships and fond memories of times shared with all of you during my service years,” he added.

Police Arrest 118, Fine 730 For Violation Of Covid SOPs

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Police Thursday during the last 24hrs arrested 118 persons, lodged 103 FIRs and also realised a fine of 90,610/- from 730 people for violating the covid-19 guidelines throughout Kashmir valley.

“Besides, 4 vehicles were also seized for violating guidelines/restrictions,” a police spokesperson said in a statement.

He said that review meetings were also facilitated with the Imams, religious leaders and Auqaf Committees.

During meetings it was emphasised upon the participants to reduce the gathering upto maximum possible in the Masjid. The imams were also impressed upon to revisit the SOPs being followed in the Masjid Sharief and ensure that preachers should wear face masks and maintain social distancing strictly and other hygiene related steps to contain Covid -19. The participants were requested to make the general public aware about the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic and motivate them to strictly adhere to the Govt. orders regarding lockdown.

Div Com For Comprehensive Flood Management Preparedness

Emphasises On Strengthening Of Vulnerable Spots On River Jhelum, Tributaries



SRINAGAR: The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole Thursday called for a comprehensive Flood Management Plan and preparedness to mitigate loss of life and property in case of any flood related exigency or situation.

He was chairing a meeting to review the preparedness, arrangements to combat flood like situations in Kashmir.

Stressing on all arrangements put in place, the Div Com emphasised on District wise Flood Preparedness plans and identification of rescue centres. He said that all required facilities including water and power supply are made available at these centres.

He reviewed the status of updating of inventory on Indian Disaster Response Network by all DCs. Besides establishment of control

rooms and database updation of population and rescue centre in low lying areas.

The Div Com instructed concerned to hold mock drills and carry out flood related rescue operation trainings.

He directed concerned to carry out restoration and strengthening works of all vulnerable and weak spots of river Jhelum and embankments of all tributaries.

Meanwhile, the DCs have been asked to ensure regular revision of Disaster Management plans, up-date the same on a regular basis and send the copies to the Div Com for further action. They were also asked to designate nodal officers who will update the inventory of disaster resources and equipment on the IRDA website regularly.

The I&FC authorities department have been directed

to update and list all its available tools and plants and upload it on the IDRM network besides preparing a list of boats available with government agencies and private Shikara owners along with their locations.

He directed concerned to conduct a mega cleanliness drive of all drains in urban areas besides start de-silting process at the earliest.

The Div Com also reviewed the status of availability of geobags, sandbags, dewatering pumps, DG sets, water tankers, running of non-stop dipper radar and its integration with IOFS (IMD Srinagar- JTFRP-ERA), machinery, equipments including satellite phones, establishments dedicated flood forecasting, EOCs and establishment of control rooms.

MD KPDCL Reviews Power Scenario At Healthcare Facilities Amid Covid-19

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In order to take stock of power supply to various health care facilities, Managing Director Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL), Dr Basharat Qayoom today visited various Hospitals and Receiving Stations for ensuring hassle free power supply.

During the course of visit at Government JLNH Hospital Srinagar, the MD was informed that Hospital Mechanical Engineering Department has augmented backup facility for power supply by way of installing 02 No 600 KVA and 300 KVA Gen Sets. The existing



250 KVA already installed shall be phased out.

The Superintendent JLNH Hospital informed MD KPDCL that the Gen Sets will be commissioned at an earliest.

The MD also paid a visit to Receiving Station Rainawari

feeding JLNH Hospital and directed Executive Engineer Sub Transmission Division 1st Srinagar for ensuring essential feeder supply to Hospital and remove all hindrances, including segregation of connections where ever needed.

Later, the MD visited Kashmir Nursing Home Sonawar Srinagar to take stock of power supply and was informed that there are no issues in providing round the clock supply. He was informed that there is sufficient backup supply through Gen Sets available.

He also visited newly commissioned oxygen plant at Kashmir Nursing Home.

No Prisoner Covid Positive In J&K Jails: DG Prisons

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: At a time when J&K is grappling with the Covid challenge with a massive spike in coronavirus cases, not a single prisoner lodged in 13 major jails of J&K has been found Covid positive so far.

Official figures suggest that in 13 major prisons of J&K, no prisoner has been found Covid positive. The zero positive figure in J&K jails comes at a time when reports continue to pour in from New Delhi about many Kashmiri prisoners testing positive for the Covid.

“In 13 prisons, there are 4550 prisoners lodged at the moment and none is positive for Covid,” official figures reveal. “In Kot-balwal jail Jammu, there are 884 prisoners lodged at present and nobody is positive for the

Covid. Similarly, in Central Jail Srinagar, there are 612 prisoners lodged at present, while 666 are lodged in district jail Jammu, 345 in District Jail Kathua, 474 in district jail Udhampur, 171 in District Jail Bhaderwah, 251 in District Jail Rajouri, 300 in District Jail Baramulla, 261 in District Jail Kupwara and 285 at District Jail Anantnag.”

The figures state that there are 171 inmates at Special Jail (Correctional Home) Pulwama, 80 at District Jail Kishtwar and 50 prisoners are lodged at Sub-jail Reasi.

There have been seven new arrivals to the various jails of J&K besides the previous figure of 206. The official documents suggest that there is no congestion in any of the prisons and the number of prisoners is less than the available capacity in all jails.

Director General Prisons J&K,

V K Singh said that all new arrivals are being accepted only with Covid negative certificate. “In case of a Covid positive prisoner, he/she is being shifted to GMC with guard till the same comes Covid negative. Even negative cases on arrival are put under mandatory quarantine,” he said. “We keep the immune system of inmates in good form by allowing inmates to talk to next of kins (NoKs), play cultural/sports, good sleep etc. Besides, every prisoner wears face masks, uses sanitizers while jails are being fumigated constantly.”

An official of the prisons department said that in District Jail Kathua, a new arrival was first sent to GMC Kathua and then accepted for lodgement after submitting the Covid negative status.

Kargil BJP Leader Accuses J&K Police Of Harassment To Ladakh Bound Passengers

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Senior BJP Leader and Former Chairman J&K Legislative Council Kargil Haji Anayat Ali Friday alleged that district administration Ganderbal has been beating and harassing Ladakh Bound passengers at different locations in the district.

He said that this issue remains there it was when Ladakh was part of J&K State and now when Ladakh has become a separate Union Territory.

He alleged that the police in Ganderbal act like goons thrashing passengers including women and children.

Referring to his conversation with Divisional Commissioner

Ladakh, he said that the UT Administration has no clue of the situation and is asking for a report from the complainant which is a very sorry state of affairs.

The UT administration should act swiftly and solve the issue of the passengers which was not expected in such a situation when the whole country is reeling under the threat of Covid-19.

He alleged that the Ganderbal police is thrashing Ladakhi vehicles and damaging the property also and requested the administration to form a committee to look into the matter and immediately evacuate the stranded passengers and vehicles of UT Ladakh.

NC Welcomes Quashing Of Re-Registration Circular By HC

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir National Conference on Friday welcomed the order of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir quashing the circular issued by RTO, Kashmir, mandating the vehicle owners to re register their vehicles purchased from outside J&K, saying the measure has brought respite to people.

Welcoming the order, the party Spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said, “The government circular on re registration was an unnecessary burden imposed on people. Our party had sought exception of toll tax on re registration of outside vehicles, urging the government to address the actual road blocks towards ensuring hassle free traffic on roads in Jammu and Kashmir. However the administration had turned blind eyes to our pleas ignoring the enormous burden that the circular would have put on people. The honorable court in its capacity as the guardian of constitution and individual rights has made a valid and accurate observation and quashed the circular.”

Far from shouldering the burden of people to tide over the rampage induced by the COVID-19 crises since 2020, the incumbent government has left no stone unturned to burden people with taxes and tolls of different hues. “Such irrational circulars won't help the government deal with the traffic mess but would only amplify the already existing traffic chaos,” he said adding that the best way to deal with the traffic mess is to augment the existing road infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir to meet the ever increasing demands of the people.

“The work on the construction of ring-road in Srinagar is yet to see the light of the day. The ambitious road project was supposed to ease traffic move-

ment on highways and facilitate hassle free inter district movement. Unfortunately there has been no headway on the project other than the foundation laying way back in 2018. It was also announced that the Srinagar city would go metro sooner with a light rail system having 25km length which included 12.5km length from Indira Nagar to HMT junction, and 12.5 KM length from Hazuribagh to Osmanabad with 24 stations on each corridor. The much touted idea didn't live to the hype. There is no abuzz on the project either; it seems it has also met with the same end as most of other mega transport projects have of late,” he said.

Imran also took strong exception to the newly announced result of J&K banking associate exams, saying the results reveal regional prejudice. He said that out of 1500 aspirants only 200 have qualified the said exam from Kashmir division. While questioning the results he stated that the youngsters of Kashmir have outshone their counterparts elsewhere in the country by qualifying highly prestigious exams and that the low qualifying percentage of aspirants from Kashmir is inconceivable. He sought an impartial probe into the entire scheme of exam so that the reality is brought forth. He said the results have disheartened the most meritorious aspirants who have burnt midnight oil to qualify the exam.

Youth Found Dead At Home In Doda

Observer News Service



JAMMU: A 25-year-old youth was found hanging with a rope at his home on Friday morning in Ward number seven of Thathri town in Doda district.

A senior police official said that the deceased has been identified as 25-year-old Ajay Shan son of Bihari Lal, a resident of Dhara Doda presently residing at Thathri.

Immediately after the incident, the locals informed police, who arrived at the spot and started investigation.

According to police, an FSL team was also called and a case under section 174 CrPC for suspicious death has been registered at Police Station Thathri.

NEWS MAKERS

Adv Khan Seeks Cooperation Of Religious Heads In Tackling Covid-19

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan, on Friday visited Bandipora district to take stock of Covid mitigation measures being put in place to tackle the global pandemic.

Advisor Khan also had an interactive session with the religious leaders, traders and transporters besides other delegations of the district seeking their complete cooperation in dealing with this pandemic effectively for good of the community. He urged upon them to ensure strict adherence to all SOPs and guidelines regarding Covid to save precious lives. He sought cooperation from the religious heads, PRI members, transporters, business community and civil society members to use their influence to motivate people to follow guidelines so that the lives are saved.

Advisor said that the Union Territory of J&K has enough resources to tackle any eventualities as there is no dearth of vaccines, drugs or oxygen.

Advisor, later, had a detailed review of Corona mitigation efforts being taken up by the district wherein a comprehensive PPT was presented by Deputy Commissioner, Bandipora, Dr Owais Ahmad, detailing therein various COVID containment measures.

Advisor was informed that 600 beds have been specified for COVID patients besides 14 ICUs are available in the district.

Regarding vaccination, the Advisor was told that 69 vaccination centers are functional in the district and more than 2000 samples are being collected on a daily basis for testing. Besides, 1000 LPM capacity oxygen plant is also functional at DH Bandipora.

While appreciating the efforts of district administration, Advisor



emphasized the officers to further take all necessary measures for effective containment of COVID19 in the district. He called for preparing an actionable plan to

address any medical emergency.

Khan impressed upon the officers to follow the COVID guidelines in letter and spirit while ensuring that basic ser-

vices like food, water, medicine etc are provided to the people uninterruptedly. He directed the officers to ensure that all target groups where chances of virus exposure are more should get vaccinated on priority.

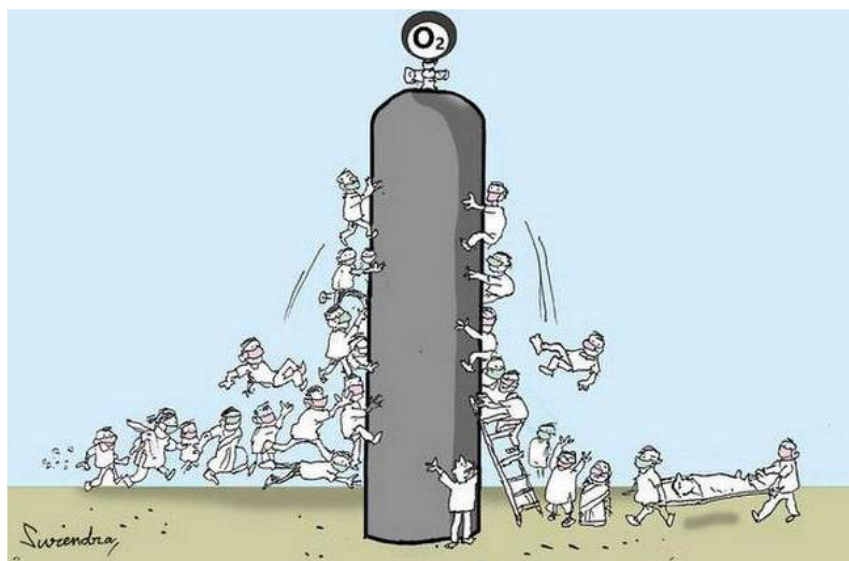
Khan asked the district administration to have resources assessment done in terms of infrastructure, oxygen availability, bed capacity, ventilators, manpower, bed capacity and other infrastructure to tackle any spike in COVID positive cases.

Advisor directed the Deputy Commissioner to conceptualise plans for efficient vaccination, management of containment zones, movement of people, food and supplies, medicine, emergencies, avenues of wages and other aspects that need prime focus at this stage. He directed them to have mobile supply vans ready to suffice to the needs of people at their door steps in the containment zones.

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NO HOLDS BARRED



Many, it must be said, will be victims of this pandemic and many, out of shame and embarrassment will not ask for financial help. But, our collective and individual empathy must factor this into our consideration and reach out, preferably quietly but if need be a collective response might even be warranted.

Covid Challenge 2.0: Time for Society to Rise to the Occasion

Wajahat Qazi

Parsed and pared to essence, it means attempting to feel the pain of others as one's own. By way of a digression here, it must be pointed out the Covid 19 and its mutant variants are totally and absolutely non-discriminatory: the rich, the poor, the healthy or the ailing and so on are all vulnerable to this blighted pandemic

The nature of pain and tragedy is such that only its victim feels the real brunt. The rest can perhaps just relate to a victim's pain or empathize with it. The old Kashmiri adage, 'only the one upon whom the ember falls feels pain' is as apt as can be. This has a searing resonance in times as calamitous as these, where Covid 2.0 has struck with a vengeance. Under and in these extraordinary times, it is imperative and incumbent upon society to rise to the occasion.

What does this mean?

Parsed and pared to essence, it means attempting to feel the pain of others as one's own. By way of a digression here, it must be pointed out the Covid 19 and its mutant variants are totally and absolutely non-discriminatory: the rich, the poor, the healthy or the ailing and so on are all vulnerable to this blighted pandemic. But, of course, when, God willing, the gale of this pandemic will be over, there will be both survivors and victims. Under these conditions and scenario, at the risk of repetition, to underscore and reinforce the point, our society, instead of turning inward in a measure of a selfish focus on survival of the self must dig deep into its collective reservoirs of resilience and care for others, draw on empathy as the central redeeming focus and feature, with more vehemence, under conditions of the pandemic.

Broadly speaking and yet again, by way of a digression, we, as a society have, over time, gyrated to a crude, vulgar and warped form of capitalism-a capitalism that would be unrecognizable in the lands where it originated. (This is not to suggest the author's absolute aversion to capitalism: in relative terms, and bound within a moral framework, capital and its abundance,



distributed more or less equally (and with equity) to the extent it can be, capital can have a redemptory impact, in economic terms). This should neither be confused with socialism or with its economic extreme: conspicuous consumption- a bane and blight that our society has, over time, become afflicted with. The nature of conspicuous consumption in Kashmir like capitalism here flows from a social dynamic, more or less, where conspicuous consumption, serves to elevate prestige and pride (both false and meretricious) to its garish consumers.

Consider an illustrative example here. The typical Kashmiri, all other things held equal and other variables considered, focuses his life's energy to the duo of owning a palatial house and extravagant weddings (nowadays one or two motor vehicles are thrown in the mix). This obsession besides breeding moral corruption also becomes the

breeding ground of other toxic social evils. As a consequence, broadly society and its moral compass becomes the victim and the less privileged suffer. One social blight of this is zero sum selfishness that puts paid and gives short shrift to what was once a hall mark of our society: empathy.

But, the times we are going through, are extraordinary: these call for an extraordinary push by society to recover and reclaim this noble ideal of empathy, defined here in narrow terms as, 'the ability to feel others' pain as one's own'. This ideal is one that is also emphasized in vigorous by our religion.

In practice, what would empathy in Covid 2.0 times mean?

Among other things, because of the economic hardship that this bout of the pandemic will exact, especially on the vulnerable segments of society, empathy would mean curtailing not

just conspicuous consumption (which would be, in any case, difficult under the conditions), curtail our consumption- individually and collectively- think of those who live by the day, who will lose livelihoods and whose savings will either take massive dip or vanish. It means reaching out to these victims of the pandemic, quietly, so that their dignity is maintained, and helping them and their children, to ward off economic and financial pain, effectively helping them survive. Many, it must be said, will be victims of this pandemic and many, out of shame and embarrassment will not ask for financial help. But, our collective and individual empathy must factor this into our consideration and reach out, preferably quietly but if need be a collective response might even be warranted.

This is not charity. It is a duty of compassion that we owe not to the victims of the pandemic but to ourselves. We have empathy in us. It has been somewhat obscured by a degree of selfishness and self centredness. The very nature of Covid 2.0 calls for rediscovering our empathetic nature, and rise to the occasion. It is said that adversity is a tough task master. It can either bring the best or the worst in societies and individuals. We must also remember that, 'this too shall pass' but from the ashes of this adversity, we, as a society, must rise to the occasion and help those who need it.

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

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In case India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party wins the all-important West Bengal assembly election on May 2, it may try to suggest the victory is an endorsement of its handling of the devastating second wave of Covid.

In case the BJP loses Bengal, the party's critics might suggest the result is a reflection of public anger about the BJP's poor handling of the Covid second wave. Some from within the BJP might suggest this as well, so as to deflect attention away from the real causes of the defeat.

In truth, Covid has had no impact on voter behaviour in West Bengal. It is important to flag this point and flag it now, because the post-facto election reasoning that lazy TV studio pundits come up with, tends to stick.

Phase 5 is when it began

The West Bengal assembly election was held in 8 phases from 27 to March to 29 April. A cursory look at the intricate way these 8 phases were organised tells you that the BJP's strongest areas were in phase one. The incumbent Trinamool Congress' strong areas, such as Muslim-dominated regions, polled in the latter phases.

By the time Covid second wave story overwhelmed the Bengal election story in the media and in public consciousness, the BJP's strongest areas had already polled. It was after phase 5 that Prime Minister Modi cancelled his rallies.

No matter how many seats the BJP wins in Bengal, they will have no relation whatsoever to the first or second wave of Covid.

The hub of Kolkata

Most seats in the city of Kolkata also polled in these last three phases. Kolkata is also where Covid cases, the fear and panic of the second wave, is the highest.

Like elsewhere, it is the large metropolitan city that's the hub of Covid. Again, Kolkata is a TMC stronghold and if the BJP does poorly here it won't be because of Covid. It was anyway going to do poorly here.

Outside Kolkata, in the predominantly rural districts, Covid has, even now, not become an overwhelming story to cause the sort of resentment that Kolkata might be feeling about Modi's poor handling

Not the Public Mood

Shivam Vij



of the second wave.

BJP should hope it loses Bengal

Right now, the BJP should hope it loses Bengal.

Winning Bengal will increase public resentment among the general public about the BJP focusing too much on politics and elections, not enough on governance and serving the people. The prime minister seems to realise this risk and has said, on more than once occasion, that the BJP is not an election-winning machine but a vehicle to serve the people.

If the BJP wins Bengal, it will mark a bitter contrast in the headlines with people dying because they can't get oxygen and hospital beds. On one hand you see mass cremations and on the other hand you see the BJP winning Bengal. That's going to make a victory look bad. It will look even worse as Covid is bound to flare up in Bengal in May.

Winning Bengal can only increase the sort of arrogance of power that has led the government to not prepare for the Covid second wave. The BJP's electoral successes makes it overconfident about its per-

formance in governance. They start believing in their own propaganda.

It is important for not just India but the BJP itself that they lose Bengal to get vaccinated with humility against the virus of power.

Uttar Pradesh opens up

The 2nd of May won't tell us anything about the political repercussions of Covid second wave. But we won't need to wait till the 2024 general elections either.

In the never-ending saga of Indian elections, up next is Uttar Pradesh in February 2022. That's just 8 months away. It's closer than it looks.

UP is the second most important election in India after the general election. This is the state from where Narendra Modi is elected into Parliament.

Until two months ago, it seemed the BJP could not lose UP. The tsunami of Covid second wave has opened Uttar Pradesh up for a real political contestation. The BJP's anxiety about UP is already showing, with chief minister Yogi Adityanath threatening to seize the property of those who spread 'false rumours' about oxygen shortage in the state.

The real test of how the BJP performs politically after Covid second wave will be UP, not Bengal.

Yogi versus Akhilesh

Over the next few months, UP will be the primary battlefield. All eyes will now be on Yogi Adityanath and his chief opponent, Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party.

In UP now, the BJP will drown out anti-incumbency noises with high-pitched propaganda, some intimidation and lots of resources. It will be fascinating to watch how they defend their record on Covid second wave, which is being felt too widely to be covered up with mere data fudging.

It will be a do-or-die election for both Yogi Adityanath and Akhilesh Yadav. If Yogi Adityanath can ride this storm, he will emerge larger than life. And if Akhilesh Yadav can't win even after this, he will be history.

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

Gulf News

Dante's Delhi

Living through the merciless second wave of covid-19 in New Delhi

Jeffrey Gettleman

I was out reporting in January and February, driving through towns in central India. No one — and I mean no one, including police officers — was wearing a mask. It was like the country had said to itself, while the second wave was looming: Don't worry, we got this



NEW DELHI — Crematoriums are so full of bodies, it's as if a war just happened. Fires burn around the clock. Many places are holding mass cremations, dozens at a time, and at night, in certain areas of New Delhi, the sky glows. Sickness and death are everywhere. Dozens of houses in my neighborhood have sick people. One of my colleagues is sick. One of my son's teachers is sick. The neighbor two doors down, to the right of us: sick. Two doors to the left: sick. "I have no idea how I got it," said a good friend who is now in the hospital. "You catch just a whiff of this....." and then his voice trailed off, too sick to finish. He barely got a bed. And the medicine his doctors say he needs is nowhere to be found in India. I'm sitting in my apartment waiting to catch the disease. That's what it feels like right now in New Delhi with the world's worst coronavirus

crisis advancing around us. It is out there, I am in here, and I feel like it's only a matter of time before I, too, get sick. India is now recording more infections per day — as many as 350,000 — than any other country has since the pandemic began, and that's just the official number, which most experts think is a vast underestimation. New Delhi, India's sprawling capital of 20 million, is suffering a calamitous surge. A few days ago, the positivity rate hit a staggering 36 percent — meaning more than one out of three people tested were infected. A month ago, it was less than 3 percent. How to Help India Donors are giving money for meals, medical expenses, P.P.E. and oxygen tanks, among other essential supplies, amid the Covid crisis. The infections have spread so fast that hospitals have been completely swamped. People are turned away by the thousands. Medicine is running out. So is lifesaving oxygen. The sick have been left stranded in interminable lines at hospital

gates or at home, literally gasping for air. Although New Delhi is locked down, the disease is still rampaging. Doctors across this city and some of Delhi's top politicians are issuing desperate SOS calls to India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, on social media and on TV, begging for oxygen, medicine, help. Experts had always warned that Covid-19 could wreak real havoc in India. This country is enormous — 1.4 billion people. And densely populated. And in many places, very poor. What we're witnessing is so different from last year, during India's first wave. Then, it was the fear of the unknown. Now we know. We know the totality of the disease, the scale, the speed. We know the terrifying force of this second wave, hitting everyone at the same time. What we had been fearing during last year's first wave, and which never really materialized, is now happening in front of our eyes: a breakdown, a collapse, a realization that so many people will die.

New York Times

Ramadan – a feast for spirit and soul

In Islamic mysticism, Ramadan is more than just a period of prescribed abstinence, signifying an opportunity for inner contemplation. Marian Brehmer explores the spiritual dimensions of the month of fasting against the background of Sufism

Ramadan is the month in which, with the communication between God and the Prophet, a new light and lifeline between Allah and mankind emerges. Anyone who is willing to receive a piece of it may benefit." In a calm voice, Muhyiddin Shakoor, a retired American professor of psychology who lives between Turkey and the U.S., talks about the blessings of the fasting month. He pauses frequently while the consecutive translator beside him searches for the best Turkish equivalents for his words.

The audience consists of several hundred viewers who, at half past nine, have just begun digesting their iftar. The desire for spiritual uplifting is strong during the second Ramadan of the pandemic, which the Turkish government heralded with curfews and bans on public gatherings. Using the live TV feature of the social platform Instagram, thousands of Turkish spiritual seekers have been appeasing their hunger for soul food every evening since the beginning of the fasting month; a function that otherwise would be fulfilled by communal fast-breaking or gatherings at dergahs and Sufi centres.

On Instagram, spiritual masters, academics and explorers of mysticism speak on topics such as spiritual fasting, self-improvement and contemporary Koranic interpretation. The format is based on a particular culture of conversation that springs from Sufism – sohbet. The word sohbet is derived from the Arabic suhba (companionship) and describes the practice of inspired discourse within the circle of a spiritual community. Sohbet combines group communication and knowledge sharing with an atmosphere of unconditional love, which the Sufis seek to cultivate in their hearts.

COVID-19 has taken this conversational culture, which has characterised Anatolian Sufism for centuries, into the virtual realm. The Instagram account of Sufi Kitap – an Istanbul publishing house that has been releasing classical Sufi literature and works by contemporary teachers from the tradition for 16 years – possesses a following of nearly thirty thousand users. Sufi Kitap hosts sohbet several times a week, including the conversation with Shakoor, who has brought out two diaries about his spiritual path with the publisher.

Purification of mind and soul

Anyone who has ever fasted – even if it was only to lose weight – has experienced the decelerating effect of this practice. Not only does our digestive system shut down, but also the ever-spinning carousel



Many Muslims around the world, who are currently abstaining from food and drink from dawn until sunset, see their abstinence as more than just a prescribed test of patience. They take Ramadan as a precious opportunity to turn their senses, that are otherwise outwardly directed, inward and – in Rumi's words – make them receptive to God's light

of thoughts in our heads. But while the modern wellness industry with its detox recipes completely lacks any spiritual framework, Ramadan fasting is primarily intended as a purification of mind and soul. After returning from Syria, the famous Sufi saint Rumi was sent into retreat by his mentor Borhanuddin Tirmidhi. Instead of one week, as instructed by his teacher, Rumi is said to have spent forty days fasting in prayer and meditation. The retreat prepared the young Jalal ad-Din Mohammad (at that time he was not yet called "Rumi"), who had studied Islamic jurisprudence and Koranic exegesis at a renowned academy in Aleppo, for the mystical path. Book learning alone, the Sufis emphasise, is not only insufficient on the spiritual path, it can sometimes even prove an obstacle for those seeking true knowledge – knowledge which is the fruit of direct mystical experience and brings with it a certainty of heart. Decades later, Rumi, now at the height of his hu-

man potential, spoke in the Masnavi: "Man's original food is the Light of God: animal food is improper for him / But, in consequence of disease, his mind has fallen into this, that day and night he should eat of this water and clay." Now, Rumi is far from the asceticism of the world-weary and frugal exponents of early Sufism, who devoted their lives to strenuous religious exercises. After all, joy, hope, and divine ecstasy predominate in his verse, especially in the love-intoxicated ghazals of the Divan-e Shams, which tell of Rumi's metaphysical experiences. And yet Rumi recommends abstaining from physical food more clearly than any other spiritual practice. Fasting, as the U.S. scholar of Sufism William Chittick writes in his book The Vision of Islam, is the most personal and spiritual of the five pillars of Islam, a test of people's sincerity in their religion. Many Muslims around the world, who are cur-

rently abstaining from food and drink from dawn until sunset, see their abstinence as more than just a prescribed test of patience. They take Ramadan as a precious opportunity to turn their senses, that are otherwise outwardly directed, inward and – in Rumi's words – make them receptive to God's light. The "fasting of the mind", which Al-Ghazali calls the "fast of the elect", requires close observation of one's thoughts and patterns of behaviour. The Sufis speak of fasting with the eyes, ears, tongue, and hands: they turn their eyes and ears away from anything that weakens their remembrance of God, refrain from gossip and negative words, avoid quarrels, and use their hands to serve their fellow human beings.

Honing one's awareness of God

The goal of this month-long abstention is not to humiliate the body, but to hone one's awareness of God by turning the focus inwards. In fact, the word "Ramadan" derives from the Arabic root r-m-d, which describes the heat of the blazing sun. The "heat" of Ramadan, according to the etymological interpretation, causes the "immature" individual to boil from within – a verb Rumi likes to use for man's spiritual development process.

In addition to cultivating patience, contentment and empathy for those suffering from hunger, Ramadan is an invitation to leave one's ego behind. In Islamic mysticism, the ego is sometimes compared to an insatiable animal. Withdrawing physical food deprives the "commanding soul", the nafs al-ammara, of some of its fuel and puts a stop to its plays. In Sufi psychology, the nafs is regarded as an idol that we place next to God on a daily basis. As idol worshippers in the clutches of our indwelling tyrant, we live in a state of separation from God, when in fact, as the Koran asserts, he is closer to us than our own jugular vein. So close that the sole obstacle can only be ourselves.

Fasting interrupts this habitual rut, it pulls us out of the "sleep of ignorance" (kh b-e gheflat in Persian). While the thoughts of the fasting person keep wandering to food, during this time of contemplation the unrecognised ego patterns – our "shadow", as Carl Gustav Jung called it – begin to surface more clearly. Ramadan, when consciously experienced, is an invitation to introspection; it helps to discover and correct negative thought structures and selfish tendencies. The Sufis call this muhasaba, a form of self-accounting.

Qantara

Fasting lowers blood pressure by reshaping gut microbiota, here's how

Agencies

For the first time researchers demonstrate that intermittent fasting can reduce hypertension by reshaping the gut microbiota in an animal model. Nearly half of adults in the United States have hypertension, a condition that raises the risk for heart disease and stroke, which are leading causes of death in the U. S.

At Baylor College of Medicine, Dr David J. Durgan and his colleagues are dedicated to better understand hypertension, in particular the emerging evidence suggesting that disruption of the gut microbiota, known as gut dysbiosis, can have adverse effects on blood pressure.

"Previous studies from our lab have shown that the composition of the gut microbiota in animal models of hypertension, such as the SHRSP (spontaneously hypertensive stroke-prone rat) model, is different from that in animals with normal blood pressure," said Durgan, assistant professor of anesthesiology at Baylor.

The researchers also have shown that transplanting dysbiotic gut microbiota from a hypertensive animal into a normotensive (having a healthy blood pressure) one results in the recipient developing high blood pressure.

"This result told us that gut dysbiosis is not just a consequence of hypertension, but is actually involved in causing it," Durgan said.

"This groundwork led to the current study in which we proposed to answer two

questions. First, can we manipulate the dysbiotic microbiota to either prevent or relieve hypertension? Second, how are the gut microbes influencing the animal's blood pressure?" added Durgan.

Can manipulating the gut microbiota regulate blood pressure?

To answer the first question, Durgan and his colleagues drew on previous research showing that fasting was both one of the major drivers of the composition of the gut microbiota and a promoter of beneficial cardiovascular effects. These studies, however, had not provided evidence connecting the microbiota and blood pressure.

Working with the SHRSP model of spontaneous hypertension and normal rats, the researchers set up two groups. One group had SHRSP and normal rats that were fed every other day, while the other group, called control, had SHRSP and normal rats with unrestricted food availability.

Nine weeks after the experiment began, the researchers observed that, as expected, the rats in the SHRSP control had higher blood pressure when compared to the normal control rats. Interestingly, in the group that fasted every other day, the SHRSP rats had significantly reduced blood pressure when compared with the SHRSP rats that had not fasted.

"Next, we investigated whether the microbiota was involved in the reduction of blood pressure we observed in the SHRSP rats that had fasted," Durgan said.

The researchers transplanted the mi-



crobiota of the rats that had either fasted or fed without restrictions into germ-free rats, which have no microbiota of their own.

Durgan and his colleagues were excited to see that the germ-free rats that received the microbiota of normally fed SHRSP rats had higher blood pressure than the germ-free rats receiving microbiota from normal control rats, just like their corresponding microbiota donors.

"It was particularly interesting to see that the germ-free rats that received microbiota from the fasting SHRSP rats had significantly lowered the blood pressure than the rats that had received microbiota from

SHRSP control rats," Durgan said. "These results demonstrated that the alterations to the microbiota induced by fasting were sufficient to mediate the blood pressure-lowering effect of intermittent fasting."

How the microbiota regulates blood pressure

The team proceeded to investigate the second question of their project. How does the gut microbiota regulate blood pressure?

"We applied whole-genome shotgun sequence analysis of the microbiota as well as untargeted metabolomics analysis of plasma and gastrointestinal luminal content. Among the changes we observed, alterations

in products of bile acid metabolism stood out as potential mediators of blood pressure regulation," Durgan said.

The team discovered that the SHRSP hypertensive animals that were fed normally had lower bile acids in circulation than normotensive animals. On the other hand, SHRSP animals that followed an intermittent feeding schedule had more bile acids in the circulation.

"Supporting this finding, we found that supplementing animals with cholic acid, a primary bile acid, also significantly reduced blood pressure in the SHRSP model of hypertension," Durgan said.

Taken together, the study shows for the first time that intermittent fasting can be beneficial in terms of reducing hypertension by reshaping the composition of gut microbiota in an animal model. The work also provides evidence that gut dysbiosis contributes to hypertension by altering bile acid signaling.

"This study is important to understand that fasting can have its effects on the host through microbiota manipulation," Durgan said.

"This is an attractive idea because it can potentially have clinical applications. Many of the bacteria in the gut microbiota are involved in the production of compounds that have been shown to have beneficial effects as they make it into the circulation and contribute to the regulation of the host's physiology. Fasting schedules could one day help regulate the activity of gut microbial populations to naturally provide health benefits," added Durgan.

Researchers find avocado may offer route to leukemia treatment

Agencies

A new University of Guelph study suggests that a compound in avocados may ultimately offer a route to better leukaemia treatment. The compound targets an enzyme that scientists have identified for the first time as being critical to cancer cell growth, said Dr Paul Spagnuolo, Department of Food Science.

Published recently in the journal Blood, the study focused on acute myeloid leukaemia (AML), which is the most devastating form of leukaemia. Most cases occur in people over age 65, and fewer than 10 per cent of patients survive five years after diagnosis.

Leukaemia cells have higher amounts of an enzyme called VLCAD involved in their metabolism, said Spagnuolo. "The cell re-

lies on that pathway to survive," he said, explaining that the compound is a likely candidate for drug therapy. "This is the first time VLCAD has been identified as a target in any cancer."

His team screened nutraceutical compounds among numerous compounds, looking for any substance that might inhibit the enzyme. "Lo and behold, the best one was derived from avocado," said Spagnuolo.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHE (HYD) DIVISION BANDIPORA

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS E-NIT NO 08-PHE/HYD/BPR OF 2021-2022

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor, J&K Union Territory, e-tenders are invited (in single cover system) on "item rate basis" from Eligible Registered/ Approved and valid agencies registered with J&K Government for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (In Lacs)	Cost of T.D	Time	Class of Contract	M.H of Account	Position of Funds	Administrative Approval
01	Providing water supply facilities by way of tapping of source at Check including commissioning of service reservoir for providing water supply to Kralpora/ Check Kralpora WSS Kralpora/Check Kralpora	Rs.11.81 Lacs	600.00	21 Days	BEE/ CEE/ DEE	CSR/RR PLAN		

01. The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, drawings (if any), book of quantities (BoQ) set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below.

01	Publishing Date	29/04/2021 (10.30 AM)
02	Download date Starts	From 29/04/2021 (10:30 AM) to 10/05/2021(4:00 PM)
03	Bid submission date starts	From 29/04/2021 (10:30 AM)
04	Bid submission date ends	10/05/2021 (4:00 PM)
05	Submission of hard copies	Hard copies shall be obtained only from the bidder who is declared as 1 st lowest bidder (L1) at the time of opening of tenders. The cost of tender documents will be collected through e-challan / receipt under head of account 0215. However, the unsuccessful bidders will submit the same separately after the opening of bids online. NOTE:- All Bidders have to submit Bid Security Declaration form as per Annexure "A" instead of Earnest Money (EMD) as per the Circular issued by Finance Department vide order No A/Misc (2018)-III-895/J/ Dated 22/12/2020
06	Date and time of opening bids online	11/05/2021 at 11:30 AM in the office of Executive Engineer PHE (Hyd) Division Bandipore

02. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document as specified in the table above and pledged in favour of the Executive Engineer PHE (Hyd) Division Bandipore. The lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of contract as Performance Security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of work. Bid security will have to be in any one of the forms as specified in the bidding documents and shall be valid for six months after the opening of bid. Online bids will be opened in the office of the Executive Engineer PHE (Hyd) Division Bandipore on scheduled date. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. Hard copy of bid documents shall be obtained from 1st and 2nd lowest bidder as specified.

03. The date and time of opening of bids shall be notified on website www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an email message on their e-mail address. The bids responsive bidders shall be opened online on same website in the office of the Executive Engineer PHE (Hyd) Division Bandipore (Tender Receiving Authority)

04. The bids shall be valid for a period of 120 Days reckoned from the date of opening of bids.

05. The earnest money shall be forfeited if:
a). Any bidder/ Tenderer withdraw his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in the terms and conditions of the bid.
b). Failure of successful bidder to furnish the required bidding documents and performance security within the specified time limit.

06. Failure of successful bidder to execute the agreement within 07 days after fixation of contract.

07. INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS REGARDING E-TENDERING PROCESS

a). The interested bidders can download the NIT/bidding document from the website: <http://www.jktenders.gov.in>
b). To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get "Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)" as per Information Technology Act 2000 to participate in online bidding.

c). The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with Digital Signature. The bids cannot be uploaded without Digital Signature and no proposal will be accepted in physical form.

d). Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in the para-1.

e). Before submission of online bids, bidders must ensure that scanned copy of all the necessary documents have been attached with Bid. Details of documents required available alongwith downloadable tender documents on <http://www.jktenders.gov.in>.

f). The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission of bids whatsoever reasons may be.

g). All the required information for bid must be filled and submitted online.

h). The details of cost of documents specified in the tender documents should be the same, as submitted online (scanned copies) otherwise bid will not be accepted.

i). Bidders can contact the undersigned for any guidance for getting DSC or any other relevant details in respect of the e-tendering process.

j). The guidelines for submission of bid online can be downloaded from the website: <http://www.jktenders.gov.in>

08. GENERAL CONDITIONS OF THE CONTRACT

09. Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in.

10. The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission in any reasons.

11. The tender receiving authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

12. Bidders are advised not to make any change in BoQ contents. In no case they should attempt to create similar BoQ manually. The BoQ downloaded should be used for filling the item rate inclusive of all taxes upto completion of work unless otherwise specified. Deduction on account taxes shall be made from the bills of the contractor on gross amount of the bill as per the rates prevailing at the time of recovery.

13. Successful bidder has to produce valid E-Challan, PAN Card and Registration Card with latest Renewal alongwith the last months GST clearance certificate.

14. The bidder at his own responsibility and risk should visit and examine the site of work and its surroundings before submission of bid.

15. All documents relating to the bid shall be in the English language only.

16. The departmental materials shall be supplied to the contractor on following rates from the divisional stores.

a). Cement from Srinagar @ 510/Bag and Cement from Jammu @ 590/Bag

b). Structural Steel @ 70/Kg c). Rounds TMT bars @ 61/Kg d). Gabions @ 1360/Cum

e). Chain link @ 32/\$ft f). Crates @ 21/\$ft g). EC Bags @ 5/No

h). If the bidder does not quote rates for any item of the rate list/ quantity schedule, cost of such items/ items shall be deemed to be part of the overall/ total contract value. No rate shall be allowed for such item/ items in the allotment of the contract.

i). The date of start of the work shall be reckoned within one week from the date of issuance of LOI/ contract allotment as the case may be.

j). In case of delay in completion of work beyond stipulated period of completion, penalty upto maximum @ 10% of the contract shall be imposed. However, suitable time extension shall be granted in case of increase in scope of work or in the event of delay beyond control of contractor to be determined by the department.

k). The tender/ bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirements as laid down in the NIT.

l). Nothing shall be paid to the contractor on account of construction of coffer dam, diversion bund and dewatering during execution of work extension if involved at site.

m). All other terms and conditions shall be same as are laid down in detailed general NIT and in PWD Form 25/33 double Agreement Form.

n). Other details can be seen in the bidding documents.

No:- PHE/Hyd/Bpr/605-16
Dt:- 29/04/2021

DIPK-1078/21

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
PHE (Hyd) Division Bandipore

Office of the Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Bandipora

Detailed Tender notice No: 05 (FIVE) for the year 2021-22

For & on behalf of the Lt.Governor of Jammu& Kashmir UT, the Executive Engineer R&B Division Bandipora hereby invites tenders from the Registered PWD contractors of the class as shown against each work as per Annexure "A" enclosed. The tenders should be addressed to the Executive Engineer R&B Division Bandipora and should reach to his office on or before 03-05-2021 upto 4.00 pm whereas the tender documents will be issued upto 03-05-2021 against TR in production of valid registration card.

- The Tender not accompanied by the call deposit receipt / declaration form equivalent to the full amount of earnest money pledged to the name of the tender receiving /opening authority shall not be entertained. The opening authority reserves to himself the right of rejecting any or all the tenders without assigning any reason there of.
- The tenders will be opened on the same date or any other subsequent date convenient to the opening authority in presence of the contractors who may like to be present. In case the last date of the receipt of tenders is declared as holidays/Hartal, the same will be received on the next working day upto 02 PM
- Tender forms without Revenue stamps amounting to Rs:4 shall also be rejected.
- Tenders shall hold good for three months from the date of opening of tenders.
- In case the contractor fails to execute the work within the stipulated period of time his earnest money for the same work shall be confiscated and extra cost involved shall be recovered from the defaulted contractor.

S.No	Name of Item	Unit	Rate for the year 2021-22
01	Cement	Bag	600
02	Iron of Sorts	Qtl.	6000
03	6" dia M.S Pipes (6-Mtr Long)	Pipe	17000
04	8" dia M.S Pipes (6-Mtr Long)	Pipe	20000
05	Crate Mesh 4" x 4"	Sft	22
06	CGI Sheets (24-Gauge)	Qtl	7500
07	Angle Iron.	Qtl	5800
08	Asphalt	M.T	52000

S.No	Name of Item	Unit	Rate for the year 2021-22
09	RCC Spun Pipes		
10	8" dia.	NO	2100
11	9" dia.	No	2500
12	10" dia.	No	2800
13	12" dia.	No	4000
14	15" dia.	No	6200
15	16" dia.	No	6700
16	18" dia.	No	7500
17	20" dia.	No	9500
18	24" dia.	No	11000
19	28" dia.	No	13500
20	36" dia.	No	16000
21	Dolomite/Interlocked Tiles	No	20
22	Rapidite	Kg	63
23	Quick Setting Powder.	Kg	75
24	60mm thick concrete designer paving tiles (Interlock)	No	35
25	Chain link fencing	Sft	22

Stock Clerk AAO Executive Engineer
R&B Division Bandipora

No:
Date

ANNEXURE "A"

Fresh E-NIT No: (05) of 2021-22 DATED:- 27-04-2021.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Union Territory J&K e-tenders (in single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Civil registered with Union Territory J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/ Central Governments for the following works.

SNo	Name of work	Estt. Cost (Rs in lacs)	Cost of Tender document (IN Rs.)	Time of completion	Time & Date of opening of Bid	Class of contractor	Major Head of Account
1	Constructions of 1x5 mtr span RCC Culvert at Rawatpora KGV B Ajas Road.	11.00	600 (indicate name of work with NIT serial no. on TR)	15 days	04-05-2021 at 10.30 A.M	BEE/CEE	NABARD

Position of AAA
Position of TS

1.	Date of issue of Tender Notice	27-04-2021.
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 27-04-2021.06:00 P.M.
3.	Bid Submission Start date	27-04-2021. From 06:00 P.M.
4.	Bid Submission End date	03-05-2021 up to 04.00 P.M.
5.	Last Date for receiving the hard copy (Original DD & EMD)	Hard Copy shall be obtained only from the Bidder who is declared as Lowest Bidder (L1) at the time of opening of Tenders. The cost of tender documents will be collected through e-challan / Receipt. However the successful bidders will submit the same separately after the opening of bids online. All Bidders have to submit Bid Security Declaration Form as per Annexure "A" instead of Earnest Money (EMD) as per the circular issued by Finance Department vide order No:A/Misc(2018)-III-895/J Dated 22-12-2020.
6.	Date & time of opening of Bids (online)	04-05-2021 at 10.30 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Bandipora.

Note: The Bidder will mention the Contact No. and Bidder Name in the BOQ

1. The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q.), set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the Departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

2. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender documents in shape of Treasury Receipt favor of Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Bandipora (tender inviting authority) indicating Sno of Nit and Name of work. The

Lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of contract as Performance Security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of work.

3. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on website www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened on same website in the Office of Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Bandipora (tender receiving authority).

4. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of technical bids.

5. The earnest money shall be forfeited, if:-
a). Any bidder/ tendered withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in the terms and conditions of the bid.

b). Failure of successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.

c). Failure of successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

d). Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

e). Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in in acquaint bid submission process.

To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get "Digital Signature Certificate" (DSC) as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get Digital certificate from any approved vendor.

b). The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital signature. No bid will be accepted in physical form.

c). Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in para-1.

d). Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid. Besides, original/ photocopies of documents related to the bid be submitted physically/ by registered post/ through courier before the date specified in para-1.

a). The defects notices in the work during execution or DLP shall be corrected by the contractor within the length of time specified by the Engineer, if the contractor does not correct the defects pertaining to DLP to the satisfaction of the Engineer within the time specified, the Engineer will assess the cost of having the defects corrected and contractor will pay this amount on correction of defects.

1. The tender/ bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirement as laid down in NIT.

2. All other terms, conditions are as per PWD Form-25 (Double agreement Form).

No:- EE/R&B/Bandi/142-152
Date:- 27-04-2021

DIPK-1061/21

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
(R&B) Division Bandipora

Covid Disruption Unlikely To Impact April GST Collections: SBI Ecwrap



MUMBAI: Even with the new wave of Covid-19 resulting in 'lockdowns' in 15 parts of the country and impacting business all across, the country's GST collections, the barometer of economic activity in India, is likely to cross the Rs 1 lakh crore mark for the sixth time in as many months in April, a SBI Ecwrap report said on Friday.

According to the internal simulation model adopted by SBI Ecwrap, the April GST collection is expected to be in the range of Rs 1.15-1.20 lakh crore. This is marginally short of the record high GST collection in March of Rs 1.24 lakh crore.

The optimism about possible GST collection in April, the report says, is from a healthy growth in E-way bill generation.

"This will be quite impressive given the fact that during April, most of the states imposed partial lockdowns. Also, it is heartening to note that despite the curbs due to the second wave, the All India GST E-way bills till 25 April have reached 4.89 crore and we estimate it to cross 5.5 crore comfortably, given the past trends," the report said.

"We believe that any disruption in GST collections will be transient and the states will have comfortable SGST collections." The present optimism is also on account of trend shown last year, given the SGST collection, allocation of IGST to states and Cess amount, it is around 89 per cent of the budgeted numbers of Rs 6.5 lakh crore. There is a substantial portion of IGST which is unallocated.

"If the 50:50 distribution takes place, then states will be only short by around Rs 6,000 crore, which is quite impressive given the fact that we were amidst a pandemic and stricter lockdown measures were imposed last year," it said.

Meanwhile, the demand for work by households under MGNREGA increased by 92 per cent to 2.57 crore households in April '21 (highest in any April since compilation of the data started in 2013) so far, against 1.34 crore in April '20.

"This indicates the extent of reverse migration from the lockdown states to their native states," the report said. (IANS)

Armed Forces Given Emergency Financial Powers To Tackle Covid Situation



Agencies

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday invoked special provisions and granted emergency financial powers to the armed forces to empower them and speed up their efforts to tide over the prevailing Covid situation in the country.

"These powers will help Formation Commanders to establish and operate quarantine facilities/hospitals and undertake procurement/repair of equipment/items/material/stores, besides provisioning of various services and works required to support the ongoing effort against the pandemic," said Ministry of Defence in a statement.

Under these powers, vice chiefs of armed forces, including Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs Of Staff Committee (CISC) and General Officer Commanding-in-Chiefs (GOC-in-Cs) and equivalents of all three services have been given full powers, whereas Corps Commanders/Area Commanders have been delegated powers up to Rs 50 lakh per case and Division Commanders/Sub Area Commanders and equivalents have

been delegated powers up to Rs 20 lakh per case. These powers have been devolved initially for a period of three months from May 1 to July 31, 2021. These are in addition to the emergency powers delegated to the Medical Officers of the Armed Forces last week.

"The emergency powers were sanctioned to the armed forces last year too when the Covid pandemic first broke out. This had helped the Armed Forces tackle the situation faster and in an effective manner," said the ministry.

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and reviewed the preparations and operations being undertaken by the Armed Forces to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

According to an official statement by the Prime Minister's Office, the CDS briefed the Prime Minister that all medical personnel from armed forces who have retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in Covid facilities in the proximity of their present place of residence.

"Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency helplines," it added.

The Prime Minister was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at Command, Corps, Division, and similar headquarters of Navy and Air Force will be employed at hospitals.

"Pashmina Export Hampered As Nepal Secure Exclusive Rights"

Director Handicrafts Organises Webinar On Pashmina Issues And Prospects



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Director Handicrafts and Handloom Kashmir, Mahmood Ahmad Shah, on Friday chaired a webinar discussing issues with the stakeholders related to pashmina and its future prospects.

The webinar was held in collaboration with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Jammu and Kashmir chapter.

In his opening remarks, the Director informed that the webinar has been organized with a view to deliberate on the challenges faced in the Pashmina sector that is serving a very large sector of artisans, craft persons, Handicraft exporters and women artisans.

Issues and concerns from experts and stakeholders in the pashmina industry were flagged during the webinar. The participants made suggestions on the long term and short term measures that the industry and the Governmental agencies need to take to promote handspun and handmade pashmina products and to meet the challenge of machine made products that are encroaching on the livelihoods of the genuine artisans, besides robbing Kashmir of a cultural industry.

The Convener of INTACH, Saleem Beg stressed that a road map be chalked for the Pashmina industry for saving this traditional industry from the onslaught of machines and other practices that have been impacting this sector. He stressed that the GI indication secured for Pashmina has to be

followed up with promotional and regulatory measures so that the tagging restores the identity of pashmina and link it to the local industry.

The Convenor stressed that the Department should engage in a professional exercise to establish data. The CEO of the pashmina.com, Varun Kumar stated that the export of pashmina is hampered as Nepal has been able to secure exclusive rights on pashmina exports and obtain registration and the right of import in American market.

He stated that this is a trade mark linked issue and the industry has to engage in a dialogue with international trade regulating bodies so that the right of export of pashmina is restored to Kashmir. In addition, the manpower needs to be increased and the GI tagging at Pashmina Testing Quality Control Certification (PTQCC) strengthened deploying additional manpower.

Ghulam Mohi-u- Din Reshi, Member KCCI, that has substantial spread at supply and production of Pashmina, raised the concern that people associated with spinning of pashmina, mostly female folk, need to be given financial security and the Government has to take a lead in this direction. He suggested the Governmental intervention at some production stages will help in increasing the handspun yarn supply.

Mujtaba Kadri, founder and export House, Me & Kashmir, while stressing that the Craft and Craftsmen related to pashmina has to be promoted and in this direction the stages

involved in the production of pashmina products should be sustainable so that Kashmir pashmina not only survives but also competes with others like that of Nepal and China. He pointed to the disadvantage of Kashmir pashmina compared to Nepal due to the duty relief that Nepal enjoys in the export market.

During the course of the webinar, the discussion on the production stages viz a viz weaving and spinning stages were also highlighted and the participants made suggestions regarding introduction of innovative measures to enhance the quality of pashmina.

Other participants in the webinar were Amina Asad, Chief Designer School of Designs Srinagar, Omar Khan Consultant Urban Development, Suhail Arif Consultant PwC, Dr. Babar Afzal Pashmina Artist,

Meanwhile, the Director Handicrafts and Handlooms informed that the Department has already taken initiatives on brand promotion of GI tag labels and circulating the same on different social media platforms through short films and promo videos and campaigning through social media management agencies and consultants about Handicraft and Handloom sector.

He informed that tenders for various such works have been floated and are in their final stages. He also assured that the department shall follow up on the suggestions and continue the deliberations with the stakeholders and professional agencies and keenly follow on the issues that have been raised during the webinar.

Suspension Of Scheduled International Passenger Flights Extended Till May 31

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The coronavirus-induced suspension of scheduled international passenger flights has been extended till May 31, aviation regulator DGCA said on Friday. "However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation added.

Scheduled international passenger services have been suspended in India since March 23, 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. But special international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since



May and under bilateral "air bubble" arrangements with selected countries since July.

India has formed air bubble pacts with around 27 countries including Kenya, Bhutan and France. Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special

international flights can be operated by their airlines between their territories.

The DGCA circular also said that the suspension does not affect the operation of international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by it.

Govt To Provide Rs 15,000 Crore To States For Capital Expenditure



The Centre on Friday announced decision to provide an additional amount of upto Rs 15,000 crore to states as interest-free 50-year loan for spending on capital projects.

The Department of Expenditure has issued fresh guidelines in this regard for financial year 2021-22, according to an official statement released by the Ministry of Finance.

Capital expenditure creates employment, especially for the poor and unskilled, has a high multiplier effect, enhances the future productive capacity of the economy, and results in a higher rate of economic growth.

Thus despite adverse financial position of the Central government, it was decided last year to launch a scheme for special assistance to states for capital expenditure.

Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to state governments in the form of 50-year interest free loan. An amount not exceeding Rs 12,000 crore was earmarked for 2020-21 and a sum of Rs 11,830.29 crore was released.

This helped to sustain state level capital expenditure in the pandemic year. "In view of positive response to the scheme and considering requests of state governments, the government has decided to continue the scheme in 2021-22.

The first part of scheme is for North-east and hill states and an amount of Rs 2,600 crore has been earmarked. Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand will get Rs 400 crore each while remaining states in this group have been allocated Rs 200 crore each.

The second part of scheme is for all other states with an amount of Rs 7,400 crore. This amount has been allocated among states in proportion to their share of central taxes as per the award of 15th Finance Commission for 2021-22.

The third part of scheme is for providing incentives to states for monetisation or recycling of infrastructure assets and disinvestment of state public sector enterprises. An amount of Rs 5,000 crore is allocated. States will receive interest-free 50-year loans ranging from 33 to 100 per cent of the amount realised by them through assets monetisation, listing and disinvestment.

Monetisation of assets unlocks their value, eliminates their holding cost and enables scarce public funds to be deployed to new projects, thus speeding up the implementation of the National Infrastructure Pipeline.

Funds provided to the states will be used for new and ongoing capital projects. The funds can also be used for settling pending bills in ongoing capital projects. ANI

Reliance Industries Q4 Net Profit More Than Doubles To Rs 13,227 Crore

Agencies

Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) on Friday reported consolidated net profit of Rs 13,227 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2021 (Q4FY21), up 108 per cent from Rs 6,348 crore logged in the corresponding quarter last year (Q4FY20).

Sequentially, the profit rose 1 per cent. It was Rs 13,101 crore in the December quarter (Q3FY21). The company's board declared a dividend of Rs 7 per share for the financial year 2020-21.

The oil-to-telecom conglomerate's revenue from operations rose 11 per cent to Rs 1.54 trillion as compared to Rs 1.39 trillion in the year-ago period.

"We have registered robust recovery in O2C and retail segment, and resilient growth in Digital Services business. Sustained high utilization rates across sites and improvement in downstream product deltas as well as transportation fuel margins aided O2C earnings growth," said Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries.

A Bloomberg estimate pegged the company's top line at Rs 1.39 trillion in the March quarter,



while the bottom line was seen at Rs 13,704 crore.

"Our consumer businesses have proved to be a digital and physical lifeline for the nation in these challenging times. Jio's high-speed connectivity services enabled millions of Indians work from home, study from home and even receive healthcare from home. Reliance Retail ensured safe supplies of essentials goods and services to customer homes. And while Covid-19 has disrupted livelihoods, we have added nearly 75,000 jobs to the economy, while ensuring the health and safety of our employees and their families," Ambani said.

Segment wise, the revenues in the dominant oil-to-chemicals (O2C) business rose 4.4 per cent to Rs 1.01 trillion in Q4FY21 from Rs 96,732 crore in the same period last year (Q4FY20).

SHORT TAKES

Rahul Bajaj Steps Down As Group Chairman, Niraj To Take Over

After 49 years of helming Bajaj Auto, Rahul Bajaj announced his resignation as chairman of the company on Thursday, announcing that he would take up the role of chairman emeritus from May 1.

Niraj Bajaj, a director on the company's board, will take over as non-executive chairman.

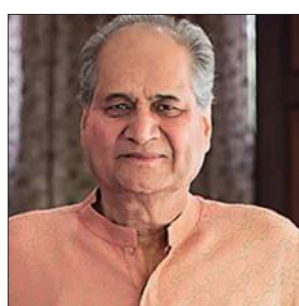
"Shri Rahul Bajaj NSE 3.86 % has made a huge contribution to the success of the company and the group over the last five decades," read a stock exchange notice from Bajaj Auto.

"Considering his tremendous experience and in the interest of the company and to continue to benefit from

his experience, knowledge and wisdom from time to time in an advisory role and as a mentor, the board of directors at its meeting held today...approved the appointment of Shri Rahul Bajaj as Chairman Emeritus of the Company for a term of five years with effect from May 1, 2021," the note read.

The company on Thursday reported a 15 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,551 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021 on the back of robust sales across domestic and international markets.

The Pune-based company had posted a net profit of Rs 1,354 crore in the January-



March quarter of 2019-20.

Total revenue from operations rose 26 per cent to Rs 8,596 crore in the fourth quarter, from Rs 6,816 crore in the same period of FY20, Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing.

During the period under review, the company sold a

total of 11,69,664 two-wheelers and commercial vehicles, up 18 per cent compared to 9,91,961 units in the January-March quarter of the preceding fiscal, it added.

For the entire 2020-21, the company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 4,857 crore, down 7 per cent compared to Rs 5,212 crore in 2019-20.

The company's total revenue from operations declined to Rs 27,741.08 crore in the last fiscal as against Rs 29,918.65 crore in 2019-20.

Bajaj said it has sold a total of 39,72,914 units in FY21 as compared with 46,15,212 units in FY20, a drop of 14 per cent. The company noted that

the full-year numbers were not comparable as the first quarter of FY21 was an absolute washout due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The two-wheeler maker said its board has also approved a dividend of Rs 140 per equity share (1,400 per cent) subject to the approval of shareholders.

Total payout towards dividend would amount to Rs 4,051 crore, it added.

Bajaj noted that as of March 31, 2021, its surplus cash and cash equivalents stood at Rs 17,689 crore as against Rs 14,322 crore on March 31, 2020.

With inputs from PTI

Facebook's Monthly User Base Reaches 2.85B Amid Record Sales

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook now has 2.85 monthly active users (MAUs), an increase of 10 per cent (year-over-year) while its daily active user base has reached 1.88 billion on average, an increase of 8 per cent.

The social network beat expectations and posted a record revenue of \$26.1 billion in the first quarter, 48 per cent more than the same period last year.

It reported net income of \$9.5 billion, nearly double the income of \$4.9 billion in the first quarter of 2020.

"We had a strong quarter as we helped people stay connected and businesses grow," said Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

"We will continue to invest aggressively to deliver new and meaningful experiences for years to come, including in newer areas like augmented and vir-

tual reality, commerce, and the creator economy," he said in a statement on Wednesday.

Facebook shares jumped 7 per cent in extended trading and closed up 1.2 per cent.

The company said that its family daily active people (DAP) was 2.72 billion on average for March 2021, an increase of 15 per cent year-over-year while family monthly active people (MAP) was 3.45 billion.

The company currently employs 60,654 people, an increase of 26 per cent year-over-year.

"We are pleased with the strength of our advertising revenue growth in the first quarter of 2021, which was driven by a 30% year-over-year increase in the average price per ad and a 12% increase in the number of ads delivered," the company said. (IANS)

Jaishankar calls for full implementation of Moscow pact on Ladakh row during call with Chinese FM

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Asserting that it was necessary to complete the process of disengagement in eastern Ladakh "at the earliest", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday conveyed to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi the need for "full and sincere" implementation of an agreement on restoration of peace and tranquility in the region.

The issue figured during a phone conversation that was initiated by Wang to convey China's sympathies to India on the COVID-19 situation.

Also on Friday, Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed his "sincere sympathies" in a message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the pandemic situation in India and offered to provide support and

help to deal with the current surge of COVID-19 cases in the country.

After his conversation with Wang, Jaishankar tweeted "also discussed the issue of full and sincere implementation of the Moscow Agreement of complete disengagement at all friction points along the LAC and full restoration of peace and tranquility in Eastern Ladakh. Agreed to continue discussions in this respect."

The Ministry of External Affairs said the two ministers discussed the outstanding issues related to disengagement from all friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

"The External Affairs Minister conveyed that while the process of disengagement had commenced earlier this year, it remained unfinished. He

emphasized that it was necessary that this process be completed at the earliest," it said in a statement.

"Full restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas would enable progress in the bilateral relationship. The two Ministers agreed to continue further dialogue at the official level on this matter," the MEA said.

India and China reached a five-point agreement to resolve the eastern Ladakh border row during talks between Jaishankar and Wang at a meeting in Moscow on September 10 on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meet.

The pact included measures like quick disengagement of troops, avoiding action that could escalate tensions, adherence to all agreements and

protocols on border management and steps to restore peace along the LAC

India and China were locked in military standoff at multiple friction points in eastern Ladakh since early May last year. The two sides completed withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of Pangong lake in February following a series of military and diplomatic talks.

Both the militaries are now engaged in talks to extend the disengagement process to the remaining friction points.

There was no visible forward movement in disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points as the Chinese side did not show flexibility in their approach on it at the 11th round of military talks with the Indian Army on April 9.

There were also reports of

China further strengthening its positions in some of the friction points.

About his talks with Wang, the external affairs minister said he also highlighted the importance of supply chains and openness to air flights in these circumstances.

"Welcomed his assurances in that regard, as also more openness to Indian chartered flights. Discussed the international co-operation aspects of the public health response to this difficult situation," he said.

There were reports of difficulties being faced by some US firms in sending medical shipments to India from China.

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Thursday said there was an impact on some of the supplies following suspensions flights by Sichuan Airlines.

US delivers large shipments of medical supplies to India

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Two American military aircraft on Friday brought to India large amounts of emergency medical supplies as part of the Joe Biden administration's support to the country's fight against a devastating wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The first consignment of the supplies was brought to Delhi in a C-5M Super Galaxy, one of the largest strategic airlift aircraft of the US Air Force, while the second shipment was delivered by a C-17 Globemaster.

The medical supplies included 423 oxygen cylinders with regulators, 210 pulse oximeters, 17 large oxygen cylinders, 8,84,000 Abbott rapid diagnostic test kits and 84,000 N-95 face masks, officials said.

Hours after the shipments were delivered to India, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a telephonic conversation with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, focusing on India's requirements of medical supplies.

In a couple of tweets, Jaishankar said his discussions with Blinken focussed on Indian requirements to address the COVID-19 challenge "more effectively".

"Reviewed the flow of equipment and material from the US. Highlighted the importance of strengthening oxygen supply, expanding vaccine production and increasing Remdesivir supply. Appreciated the forthcoming response of the US in this regard," he tweeted.

On his part, Blinken said he reiterated to Jaishankar continued US support for COVID-19 relief efforts in India.

"Spoke with @DrJaishankar to share my condolences and reiterate continued US support for COVID-19 relief efforts in India. The US government has stepped up to help our

partners, just as the American private sector, NGOs, and citizens have also helped to meet this challenge," he tweeted.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said healthcare partnership between India and the US can help effectively tackle the global pandemic.

"A strategic partnership of global significance! Our healthcare partnership can help effectively tackle the global pandemic. Deeply appreciate gift of 423 oxygen cylinders with regulators and other medical supplies from the USA," he said after landing of the first US aircraft.

As India battles a devastating second wave of coronavirus pandemic, countries around the world have announced sending medical supplies to help it tide over the situation.

Several other countries also delivered to India medical supplies that included 280 oxygen concentrators and 40 ventilators from the UK and 700 oxygen concentrators and 365 ventilators from Ireland. Romania too supplied 80 oxygen concentrators, 75 oxygen cylinders and 20 high-flow humidify oxygen therapy devices, officials said.

Several other countries including France, Germany, Australia, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden, New Zealand and Kuwait are also sending assistance to India.

On Thursday, Russia delivered to India 20 tonnes of medical supplies mainly comprising oxygen concentrators, ventilators and medicines.

According to European Union officials, Italy, Finland and Austria are also sending medical supplies to India.

"We are working around the clock to channel EU assistance to India. It is in everyone's interest to support efforts at tackling the latest outbreak in the country," said EU's Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarci.

Canada To Start To Get Pfizer Vaccines From The US Next Week

Agenceis

Toronto: Canada will start getting Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines from the United States next week, a company spokesperson said Friday, in what will be the first time the U.S. has allowed that company's vaccine exported to Canada.

Despite Canada's tightly woven commercial ties with the US, it has been getting Pfizer's vaccines from Belgium until now because US authorities had kept supplies made in the U.S. for domestic use.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau repeated Friday that starting next week, Canada will be receiving 2 million doses a week from Pfizer alone.

Vaccinations have ramped up in Canada in recent months. Every adult in Quebec will be eligible to make a vaccine appointment on May 14 and in Ontario, Canada's largest

province, every adult can book an appointment starting May 24.

Trade-dependent Canada previously lagged on vaccinating its population of 38 million because it lacks the facilities to manufacture the vaccine itself.

Trudeau's government bet on seven different vaccines manufactured elsewhere and secured advance purchase agreements enough to get 10 doses for each Canadian. Regulators have approved the Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

But initial supply chain difficulties forced Canada to extend the time between the first shot and the second by up to four months so that everyone can be protected faster with the primary dose. The hope is to get all adults at least one shot by the end of June. (AP)

HC asks Delhi govt to explain why COVID-19 testing has drastically gone down

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Friday cited data to ask the AAP government to explain why COVID-19 testing has gone down drastically in the national capital.

A bench of justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli noted that while earlier the testing was around one lakh, now it has reduced to 70-80,000 per day.

"Your testing has gone down drastically....," the bench said and asked the Delhi government to explain it.

Advocate Ankur Mahindroo, representing a petitioner, said there was no headway in testing and the government can start with RAT at mohalla clinics and mobile clinics but the testing shall not be stalled.

He added that mobile vans for testing can be set up in containment zones and hospitals and such tests can be undertaken by the attendants of the patients.

The court asked the government to examine this aspect



and inform it on Monday.

Delhi government counsel Satyakam said these are suggestions where the government cannot have an adversarial view.

He said, "We are testing 70 to 80,000 per day... We were testing around one lakh before the curfew. We were going to market places...so those 30,000 were reduced."

He added that this was not the final explanation and they have also written to all the labs asking them not to stop the testings.

Meanwhile, the counsel for

one of the oxygen refillers, "Seth Air" raised the issue of running out of funds and that the allocation of oxygen made to him was much higher than its capacity and he was unable to supply it, which the court said the Delhi government has to sort out.

Advocate Abhinav Tyagi said the refiller's payment was stuck and his outstanding bills were not being paid by the hospitals, to whom he supplies oxygen, and Delhi government and now he was not in a position to lift oxygen supplies from the supplier.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Govt Sanctions

of monthly remuneration of NHM employees, which means that the base remuneration for the financial year 2020-21, would include the base salary as on March 31, 2020 plus annual increment and experience/loyalty bonus based on the services of the employee.

He further added that, in these unprecedented and challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic, "Covid Warriors" of Health and Medical Education Department including NHM employees have risen to the challenge and are effectively and selflessly providing holistic health care services to counter the spread of the Corona virus and treat the infected.

MeT Forecasts

Kashmir which also received 0.3mm of rain during the 24 hours till 0830 hours today, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of 8.3 degree Celsius against normal of 8.1 degree Celsius and last night's 8.2 degree Celsius, the official said.

Kupwara recorded a low of 8.0 degree Celsius against 8.6 degree Celsius on the previous night which was above normal by 0.2 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 6.0 degree Celsius against 6.4 degree Celsius on the previous night, the official said. It was 1.8 degree Celsius above normal in the resort which received 0.2mm of rain in the 24 hours, the official added.

Meanwhile, the official said that there was a forecast of very light rain or thunderstorm in Jammu and Kashmir till May 4 and scattered rain on May 5 and 6. (With agency inputs)

Cases Hit Record

respectively.

A senior official said that among the deaths reported in Jammu, mostly died at GMC Jammu while two others were brought dead and tested positive posthumously. "Of the two persons brought dead was a 27-year-old woman," the official said.

Among others, the victims from Valley include a 25-year-old woman from Anantnag who died at SKIMS Soura here, two days after she was admitted to the tertiary care hospital, the officials said here.

The others include a 54-year-old woman from Eidgah Srinagar, who died at SMHS hospital, a 45-year-old man from Batmaloo also died at SMHS hospital, a 65-year-old man from Shivpora, a 65-year-old man Bagh-e-Mehtab here, a 70-year-old man from Baramulla, a 95-year-old man from Rajbagh, a 65-year-old woman from Bagh-e-Mehtab Srinagar who died at CD hospital, a 60-year-old man from

Natipora and a 55-year-old man from Kulgam.

Giving district wise details of the new cases, the officials said that Srinagar reported Srinagar 932, Baramulla 316, Budgam 160, Pulwama 110, Kupwara 206, Anantnag 239, Bandipora 50, Ganderbal 77, Kulgam 165, Shopian 105, Jammu 495, Udhampur 125, Rajouri 133, Doda 37, Kathua 95, Samba 82, Kishtwar 13, Poonch 42, Ramban 74 and Reasi 76.

Moreover, they said, 1287 more patients have recovered—310 from Jammu Division and 977 from Kashmir—in the last 24 hours.

Curbs In Kashmir

Union Territory. The lockdown in 11 districts including Srinagar, Budgam, Ganderbal, Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama and Baramulla started from 1900 hours on Thursday and shall come to end on Monday 7 a.m. unless extended. The authorities also extended the lockdown to the remaining three Kashmir districts—Kupwara, Bandipora and Shopian—from Friday evening as well as six Jammu districts till Monday morning.

All shops, offices, business establishments and petrol pumps in this summer capital remained closed while public traffic was off the roads. No movement of people, except in medical emergencies and essential services, was being allowed across the Valley, witnesses said.

Since early morning, CRPF troopers and police imposed curfew like restrictions in Srinagar and other parts of the Valley in an attempt to impose lockdown and prevent people from venturing out of their houses, eyewitnesses said Friday. At many places, they said, forces had placed barricades and laid razor wire to restrict the movement of people and vehicles.

At many intersections, eyewitnesses said, forces had used armoured vehicles to block the road.

Lal Chowk, the commercial hub of this capital city, and its adjacent areas were a deserted look due to the strict lockdown. A posse of CRPF and policemen armed with sophisticated weapons and riot gear guarded the deserted streets, lanes to restrict the movement of people.

On Wednesday, Secretary of the Disaster Management Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Department Simrandeep Singh had announced imposition of curfew in 11 districts of J&K from 7 pm on Thursday till 7 am on Monday.

"Eleven districts including Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, Kulgam, Pulwama, Ganderbal, Jammu, Kathua, Reasi, Udhampur will be under 'corona curfew' from Thursday evening (7 pm) till Monday morning (7 am)", Singh had said.

Here in Srinagar, Deputy Commissioner, Mohammad Aijaz Asad also announced "complete lockdown" in this capital city from 7 pm Thursday, a day after ordering imposition of

section 144 CrPc to tackle virus spread.

"There will be Complete Lockdown in Srinagar District from 7:00 pm Thursday (29/04/2021) to 7:00 am Monday (03/05/2021). Exemptions apply to essential services. Detailed order shall follow." Asad had posted on his Twitter handle.

Earlier, the UT administration had announced a 34-hour curfew from 8 pm on Saturday.

On April 8, a night curfew from 10 pm to 6 am was imposed in the urban areas of eight districts, which was extended to the municipal and urban local body limits of all the 20 districts in the UT on April 20.

What We Know

March, according to Sajeet Kumar Singh, the director of the National Centre for Disease Control.

The Indian variant, though, is widely present in Maharashtra, the country's hardest-hit state, Singh said.

Prominent US disease modeller Dr Chris Murray, from the University of Washington, said the sheer magnitude of infections in India in a short period of time suggests an "escape variant" may be overpowering any prior immunity from natural infections in those populations.

"That makes it most likely that it's B.1.617," he said.

But Murray cautioned that gene-sequencing data on the coronavirus in India is sparse and that many cases are also being driven by the UK and South African variants.

Dr Carlo Federico Perno, the head of microbiology and immunology diagnostics at Rome's Bambino Gesù Hospital, said the Indian variant could not alone be the reason for India's huge surge, pointing instead to large social gatherings.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticised for allowing huge political rallies and religious festivals which have been super-spreader events in recent weeks.

Do vaccines stop it?

One bright spot is that vaccines may be protective.

White House chief medical adviser Dr Anthony Fauci said earlier this week that preliminary evidence from laboratory studies suggest Covaxin, a vaccine developed in India, appears capable of neutralising the variant.

Public Health England said it was working with international partners but that there is currently no evidence that the Indian variant and two related variants cause more severe disease or render the vaccines currently deployed less effective. (Reuters)

330 Violators

efforts to sensitise the masses about controlling the deadly infection.

Slew of measures including restrictions under section 144 CrPc have been put into place to contain the spread of COVID-19, the officials said.

They said police have arrested a total of 330 persons, registered 384 FIRs and imposed fine on a total of 9,977 persons for violating COVID-19 guidelines in the past 11 days.

J&K Govt Aborts

out across the country from May 1. However, many states have said that they would be unable to do so due to the shortage of vaccine doses.

"While the registration for vaccination of eligible persons in the age group 18-45 has been opened on COWIN, the actual vaccination will not begin from 1 May 2021. It will begin from a date to be announced later once the vaccine supply is established," the Department of Information and Public Relations said on Twitter.

It said those eligible will not be allowed to walk in for vaccination and will have to pre-register for it.

"No slots have been opened for booking a session. Please wait for the announcement of the vaccination start date for the 18-45 age group," it added.

The administration, however, said that the vaccination of those over 45 years will continue normally.

It said the union territory has ordered 1.24 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccine, among the highest in the country, to cover the entire population in the 18-45 age group.

"We have placed orders for supply of vaccines to undertake free vaccination of people in the 18-45 age group. We expect to get the vaccines by May 20," Dulloo said.

He said 3,000 to 4,000 vaccination centres will be set up to ensure that there is no rush during the vaccination drive.

"We are preparing for vaccinating about 65 lakh people in the 18-45 age group from the next month," he added.

So far, 22 lakh people above the age of 45 have been vaccinated in Jammu and Kashmir, Dulloo said.

J&K Civil Services

basis under the provisions of Jammu and Kashmir Medical and Dental Education (Appointment on Academic Arrangement Basis) Rules 2020 in all the Government Medical Colleges of Jammu and Kashmir subject to the condition that such posts have been advertised at least once and remained unfilled.

The order however states that such exemption shall be valid till 31.03.2022.

Kashmiri Teacher's Blood

put that in my pocket. I looked at her and she started crying. I realized that I had given her a new hope, a new life and a new purpose. That was the most peaceful day of my life."

Once back from the hospital, young Hussain decided to become a blood donor.

With this new identity, he would eventually change many lives. He even crossed barriers for his welfare campaign and reached people from Kargil to Jammu, Shopian to Baramulla, Bandipora to Srinagar. He even donated blood to a few patients in Delhi.

"I individually donated blood till 2001 and after that I decided to create a group of donors," Hussain informs. "The group has 200 members—who have so far arranged blood for over 2000 people all over Kashmir."

A teacher by profession, Hussain is currently using his experience and expertise to mitigate the covid crisis. He's mindful how previous year's pandemic lockdown created non-covid health distress situation in Kashmir.

"Many people who needed blood couldn't get the timely help due to this pandemic fret," Hussain says. "While our frontline warriors are leading the covid fight back at the moment, all of us should play our part to sail through this stressful situation."

But while Hussain is mobilising his donors for the vital cause, he feels every healthy young person should become a donor and save lives.

"Blood donors are an important part of the society," he says. "But sadly, people often hesitate to donate blood and there are certain irrational fears in our society that restrict our youth from becoming donors. We should encourage this trend and make it a part of life."

Mild Intensity

the earthquake, they said, was 10 kilometres. No loss of life or property has been reported, the sources added.

Army Porter

way to a forward post along the LoC when Ahmad fell into the gorge.

The soldiers instantly launched a rescue operation and evacuated the injured porter from the gorge. Ahmad, who was critically injured, was airlifted to army's Badamibagh hospital in Srinagar where he breathed his last.

Meanwhile, the body of the deceased porter was handed over to his family after completion of medico-legal formalities, reports said.

Employee Dies

succumbed to his injuries before he could be taken to the hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, Police have registered a case in this regard.

Ladakh Logs

coronavirus patients were discharged after they recovered from the infection, the officials said.

They said the number of active cases in Ladakh stands at 1,597 1,482 in Leh and 115 in Kargil.

IPL 2021, CSK VS MI, PREVIEW

Fierce Rivals MI, CSK Face Off In A Battle For IPL Supremacy



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Rohit Sharma's elegance and Suryakumar Yadav's flamboyance will be pitted against the brute power of Faf du Plessis and grace of Ruturaj Gaikwad when heavyweights Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings cross swords in the IPL in Delhi on Saturday.

MI and CSK head into the match after identical seven-wicket wins over Rajasthan Royals and Sunrisers Hyderabad respectively and both teams would be keen to continue their winning streak.

The biggest positive for Mumbai has been the return to form of opener Quinton de Kock (117 runs), who made a blistering, unbeaten 70 against Rajasthan here.

The faltering Mumbai middle-order also clicked in the previous game, on a comparatively easy batting track compared to the one at the Chepauk.

Suryakumar (170 runs) would need to convert his starts while Krunal Pandya (68 runs) played a useful cameo, which would have bolstered his confidence. He would be keen to take it forward from where he left.

Kieron Pollard (81 runs) also displayed his hard-hitting skills on Thursday and would be raring to go once again, and so would fellow all-rounder Hardik Pandya (36 runs).

Pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult have been exceptional, particularly at the death, and would need to perform again to contain the in-form CSK batters.

Leggie Rahul Chahar, with 11 scalps, has been MI's leading

wicket-taker. He would, however, need support from Krunal and the seasoned off-spinner Jayant Yadav, who was a tad expensive in the last game.

It remains to be seen whether Mumbai persists with Nathan Coulter-Nile or get Ishan Kishan back in the playing XI, which could mean that Pollard would have to chip in with the ball if needed.

Meanwhile, table-toppers CSK have been a force to reckon with this season, having won five of their six games.

Openers du Plessis (270 runs) and Ruturaj (192 runs) have been in top form and would be keen to provide the team with another strong start.

Their middle-order has also been among runs. Moeen Ali (148 runs) has adjusted well to the role of pinch-hitter, while the presence of the ever-reliable Suresh Raina (121 runs) gives the team a huge cushion.

Then there are Ambati Rayadu (64 runs) and Ravindra Jadeja (109 runs), who has improved as a batsman and can plunder sixes at will, apart from skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (37 runs), who appears content to playing second fiddle these days. Add Englishman Sam Curran and CSK can take any attack apart when in form.

CSK bowlers led by Deepak Chahar (8 wickets) and Curran (6 wickets) have done a splendid job, while Shardul Thakur, with four scalps, could be decisive in breaking partnerships.

Jadeja has also shone with the ball, taking five wickets while Moeen has four and all of them would be hoping to be at their best against Mumbai.

BCCI Confident Of Hosting T20 World Cup In India



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The BCCI is confident that India will host the World T20 in October as per schedule despite a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country but the marquee ICC event could be held in five cities instead of originally nine short-listed venues.

As per convention, ICC keeps a back-up country ready and it's been the UAE for the past one year.

The IPL is currently on in separate bio-secure environments but BCCI will face perhaps its biggest test of managing a big-ticket ICC tournament in adverse circumstances.

"We are still hopeful that with five months left and significant population being vaccinated, we will be in a position to host World T20. Yes, one of the options could be curtailing the nine venues to a maximum four or five," a senior BCCI office bearer told PTI on Friday.

An ICC recce team was supposed to reach Delhi on April 26 to inspect the bio-secure arrangements for the IPL, keeping in mind the World T20 but the travel bans imposed on India led to the postponement of the trip.

"Yes, the team was supposed to arrive earlier this week but with travel bans in place, they will come later once situation returns to normalcy," the office bearer said.

BCCI's GM (Game Development) Dhiraj Malhotra was on Friday quoted as saying by the BBC that "UAE is the back up venue".

However an office bearer said that UAE was always the second option as per rules.

"You always have a back up venue and UAE has been the venue after it was passed at ICC meeting last year. There's nothing new in what Dhiraj had said. Obviously, if the situation remains same after five months, you will have to have Plan B ready," the office bearer said.

Usually, when ICC World T20 has been held in other countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the event has always been confined to three or four venues but it hasn't been a case in India due to board politics and its related compulsions.

A former BCCI office bearer, who was involved in organisation of both 2011 World Cup and 2016 World T20 put it aptly.

"You have president Sourav

Ganguly's city (Kolkata), vice-president Rajiv Shukla's city (Lucknow), secretary Jay Shah's city (Ahmedabad), treasurer Arun Dhumal's city (Dharamsala).

"And there are four best stadiums in Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi and Bangalore along with Hyderabad," he said, hinting that it's difficult to ignore any of these big venues.

The distribution of matches has always been a very touchy issue in the BCCI and if the World T20 goes ahead as per plan, some tough decisions will have to be taken.

"The BCCI has shown that two distinct bubbles at one given point in time work wonderfully well but the moment it's scattered to nine cities, it would be a nightmare with 16 teams in question," the source said.

Also another factor that needs to be taken into account is how smoothly teams can depart post the tournament is over.

"For Pakistan, it's always safe to play in Delhi or Lucknow since Mumbai is out of question. Similarly for England or Australia, Mumbai is logistically very convenient. So these are certain factors," he said.

'Prithvi Shaw Can Do Wonders,' Says DC Captain Rishabh Pant

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Delhi Capitals (DC) captain Rishabh Pant said Prithvi Shaw is a talented player and he can do wonders if he is confident about himself.

"I was only telling him to play the normal game. In this kind of match we can afford to think of run rate.

Only thing we talk with youngsters is to just enjoy cricket, do your best," Pant said.

Shaw hit 41-ball 82 and added 132 runs for the opening stand with Shikhar Dhawan (46 off 47) to help last season's finalist cantered to a seven-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders (KRR) in the 25th match of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Asked how he is managing the ups and downs as a captain, Pant also said that he is enjoying the stint.

"Last match we only lost by one run, so as a team we talk about we don't have to change anything. Definitely enjoying captaincy," Pant added.

Chasing a target of 157 at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Shaw hit six fours in the very first over, bowled by Shivam Mavi.

"I wasn't thinking anything to be honest. I was just waiting for the loose balls. I knew where Shivam will bowl, we've played (in age-group) together for four-five years," Shaw said at the post-match presentation. "The first four-five balls he bowled were half-volleys, so I was prepared for the short ball but he didn't bowl."

He scored most of the runs on the off-side and asked about it, Shaw said, "On this wicket especially when the spinner is bowling it wasn't coming very nicely onto the bat. It was stopping a little.

"So, I was waiting for them to bowl at me on off stump or outside so I can free my hands.

"When I'm in there, I keep playing and don't think about the score. Don't think about myself, just want the team to win," said the 21-year-old who was named Man of the Match.

Asked about the ups and downs he has faced recently, Shaw said, "My dad has supported very well. After getting back from Australia, I wasn't happy with myself. My dad just asked me to play my natural game.

"All these words set a target on me and I worked hard. In cricket the graphs are going to go up and down, a lot of failures are going to come my way."

Asked if he has ever spoken to former India opener Virender Sehwag, with whom he has similarities in batting approach, Shaw said, "No, I haven't spoken yet but if I get a chance I'd like to because he's the one who likes to score off the first ball."

The win helped Delhi moved to second place in the IPL 2021 points table with 10 points from seven matches. Chennai Super Kings and Royal Challengers Bangalore also have ten points each, but both the teams have a game each in hand.

Delhi next play Punjab Kings in the 29th match of the season at the same venue.

Cricketer Nicholas Pooran Will Donate Part Of IPL Salary To India's COVID-19 Battle

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Punjab Kings' West Indian batsman Nicholas Pooran has decided to donate a part of his IPL salary to help India fight the deadly resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scores of people across the country are dying in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic. India has reported over 3.86 lakh fresh COVID cases since Thursday.

Pooran urged Indians to get themselves vaccinated at the earliest.

"If you can get vaccinated please do, I will also do my part which is continue to pray for India but not only that, I would also like to donate a portion of my IPL salary towards this crisis," Pooran said in the video posted on Twitter.

The 25-year-old cricketer from Trinidad is aware of the toll the unprecedented health crisis is taking on India's overburdened medical infrastructure.

"To all my fans and supporters around the world and back home, I realise I am in a safe and privileged position here in India at the IPL.

"But it's also heartbreaking to be so close to such tragedy that's unfolding around us. For a country



that has shown us so much love and support over the years, all I can do is join hands with my fellow players to help bring some awareness to this situation in India.

"The healthcare system is overwhelmed right now. The people can't get the attention they need because of the lack of oxygen supplies, I can't comprehend to start," Pooran said.

Pooran, who has played all the six matches for PBKS so far in IPL 2021, expressed his desire to play a part after his franchise too pledged support by providing oxygen concentrators.

"Although many other countries are still being affected by the pandemic, the situation in India right now is particularly severe. I will do my part to bring awareness and financial assistance to this dire situation," Pooran tweeted.

'Shooter Dadi' Chandro Tomar Dies Due To COVID-19

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Octogenarian shooter Chandro Tomar, who became the oldest woman sharp shooter in the world after taking up the sport in her 60s, died on Friday after battling COVID-19.

She was 89 and was being treated at a hospital in Meerut since April 26. "Mera saath chhoot gaya, Chandro kaha chali gayi (She has left me, Chandro where have you gone?)," her sister-in-law Prakashi Tomar, who is also one of the oldest female sharp shooters, wrote on her Twitter page.

Tomar, who was nicknamed 'Shooter Dadi', was hospitalised after complaining of difficulty in breathing. Tests revealed she had contracted the highly contagious virus that is causing over 3,000 deaths daily in the country.

Hailing from a village in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat district, Tomar was 60-plus when she picked up the gun for the first time but went on to win many national competitions for veterans, her feats ultimately inspiring the award-winning Bollywood movie 'Saand Ki Aankh'.

Well-known people from various walks of life consoled her death, including sports minister Kiren Rijiju and actor Bhumi Pednekar, who



played her in the biopic.

"I'm deeply saddened by tragic demise of our most lovable Dadi Chandro Tomar ji. She was inspiration for millions and will continue to inspire forever. May her soul rest in peace. Om Shanti," Rijiju said.

"Devastated by the news of Chandro Dadi's demise. Feels like a part of me is gone. She made her own rules & paved the path for many girl to find their dream. Her legacy will live on in them. Condolences to the family. Am lucky I got to know and be her," Pednekar tweeted.

India's aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri called her an "epitome of gender equality & champion of women's rights".

"The courage with which she

challenged patriarchy & took up shooting as a sport will inspire generations to come. Condolences to her family," he said.

Considered a feminist icon, Tomar was 15 when she got married and took to shooting after she was well over 65.

"The courage with which she fought patriarchy and popularised shooting, will inspire generations to come. May god bless her soul and give strength to her family," said Olympic-bound shooter Sanjeev Rajput in his tribute.

"Dadi Chandro Tomar was the coolest Dadi and an inspiration for many. My condolences to her family and well wishers. Om Shanti Dadi," tweeted cricket icon Virender Sehwag.



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Rajasthan Royals fast bowler Jaydev Unadkat will donate 10 percent of his IPL salary to help COVID-19 patients who need essential medical resources as India battles an unprecedented health crisis.

The 29-year-old from Gujarat, who was retained by Rajasthan this year after being bought for Rs 3 crore in 2020 IPL auction, made the announcement on his social media account.

"I am contributing 10% of my IPL salary towards providing essential medical resources for those in need. My family will make sure it reaches the right places. Jai Hind!", Unadkat tweeted.

India is facing a severe crunch of medical resources like oxygen concentrators, medicines, beds, ventilators in the face of spiralling number of COVID-19 cases, which has surged by 3.86 lakh since Thursday.

"Our country is going through a lot of distress and for that matter I know how privileged we are to be in this position to play cricket," Unadkat wrote.

"I also know how painful a per-

sonal loss can be and how worrying it can be to witness your close friends fighting for their lives. I have been through both."

Staging the IPL amid the unprecedented health crisis has led to global criticism.

Unadkat said: "I am not saying it is right or wrong to play cricket at the moment but honestly it is difficult to stay away from family and friends in this situation.

"All I feel is that this game brings a much needed distraction and brings joy for many. My heart goes to all those affected in this time. Please be strong."

Unadkat urged people to get vaccinated and contribute in this fight against the pandemic.

"Let us all come together and fight as a team against this pandemic, contribute and help each in whatever way we can," he said.

"I am contributing my part as well. Please get vaccinated whenever you can, take care and stay safe. We shall overcome this together."

His team Rajasthan Royals has raised 75 crores to help India fight the pandemic, while Delhi Capitals also contributed 1.5 crores for the cause.

Man United Defeat Roma 6-2, On Course For Europa League Final

Agencies

MANCHESTER: Manchester United handed Roma another heavy beating at Old Trafford, winning 6-2 thanks to doubles from Edinson Cavani and Bruno Fernandes to move in sight of the Europa League final.

Fourteen years after getting thrashed 7-1 in the Champions League quarterfinals, Roma imploded again at the home of the English team after leading 2-1 at halftime in the first leg of the semifinals.

Cavani scored two of United's five second-half goals, with Fernandes adding a penalty to his brilliantly taken first-half opener before Paul Pogba and substitute Mason Greenwood also netted.

United now looks set to end their struggles in the semifinals



of major competitions under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, having lost at this stage on four occasions in the past 16 months alone — including to Sevilla in last season's Europa League.

The other semifinal is more

finely poised, with Villarreal leading Arsenal 2-1 heading into next week's second legs. Both teams finished the game with 10 men.

Roma will bemoan its misfortune with injuries, with midfielder Jordan Veretout, goalkeeper Pau Lopez and wing back Leonardo Spinazzola forced off inside the opening 37 minutes. That meant under-pressure manager Paulo Fonseca was unable to make a substitution after halftime.

Solskjaer was a member of the United side that routed Roma in 2007 and is now the manager of the first United team to score at least five goals in a semifinal match in European competition.

"I don't feel the job is done," he said, "but it was a good job done."

As a former striker, he can't fail to have been impressed with

the performance of Cavani, the 34-year-old Uruguayan who gave a clinical lesson in how to lead the line — albeit against an obliging defense featuring former United player Chris Smalling.

It was Cavani who slipped in Fernandes to lift a finish over Lopez for United's first goal in the ninth minute. And the striker produced an even better pass — with the outside of his right foot — to set free Greenwood for the sixth goal in the 86th.

In between, Cavani steered a shot into the top corner for the equalizer at 2-2 soon after halftime and tapped in from close range in the 64th to give United the lead after Lopez's replacement, 37-year-old Antonio Mirante, fumbled a shot from Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

It was Cavani, too, who was fouled from behind by Smalling,

after the striker had attempted a shot from Marcus Rashford's cross, to allow Fernandes an opportunity from the spot for 4-2. The Portugal playmaker made no mistake, and now has scored 20 of 21 penalties he has taken for United since joining in January 2020.

"The goals we conceded were sloppy," Smalling said, "and really ruined what we did in the first half."

Indeed, Roma did well to fight back from conceding early, with Lorenzo Pellegrini converting a penalty of his own after a handball from Pogba before assisting Edin Dzeko for his customary goal at Old Trafford.

That's six in five appearances at United's stadium, having also scored there for Wolfsburg and Manchester City.

FC Goa Lose To Al Wahda, End AFC CL Campaign

Press Trust of India

MARGAO: Indian club FC Goa suffered a 0-2 defeat at the hands of UAE's Al Wahda in the final group stage match to end their maiden campaign in the AFC Champions League on a disappointing note in Margao on Thursday.

Already out of reckoning for a place in the knockout, FC Goa played the match without their foreign players and also missed the services of Spanish head coach Juan Ferrando, as they had been allowed to leave the country in view of the restrictions being imposed on flights from India globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

An unmarked Omar Khribin struck in the 61st minute, taking ad-

vantage of a brilliant ball from Tim Matvaz, sending his shot on to the left side of the FC Goa goalkeeper.

Al Wahda almost doubled the lead but goalkeeper Naveen Kumar, who replaced first-choice custodian Dheeraj Singh Moirangthem after an injury he picked following a collision with his own defender, managed to save the attempt by the visiting side in the 72nd minute. However, the visitors made it 2-0 when Mohammed Ali Menhali found the back of the net in the 90th minute.

The Indian Super League club didn't have any clear cut chances in the first half but managed to defend well, even as Al Wahda looked to attack on a regular basis at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

Treat Available Oxygen As Critical Commodity: Centre To States

Press Trus of India

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Friday said it has asked the states to treat the available oxygen as a critical commodity and undertake an oxygen-consumption audit at all hospitals, including private ones, amid a shortage of the life-saving gas in several parts of the country.

Addressing a press conference, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Lav Agrawal said from the start of the pandemic, the government had identified oxygen-supported beds as major clinical interventions.

He said the government had procured 1,02,400 oxygen cylinders at the national level in April-May 2020 and distributed those among the states.

"We have requested the states to treat the available oxygen as a critical commodity and also to ensure a rational use of oxygen," Agrawal said.

Listing out the steps taken by the Centre to augment the supply of oxygen, he said the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has issued instructions for fixing the price of liquid medical oxygen.

Agrawal said 162 pressure swing adsorption (PSA) plants of 154-MT capacity each have been sanctioned across the country. Of these, 52 plants are already installed, 87 have been delivered and work to commission these plants at the earliest is on.

The PSA plants can enable hospitals for in-situ generation of

oxygen.

Agrawal said the states have been allotted 8,593 MT of oxygen.

"An order for 1,27,000 oxygen cylinders was placed on April 21 and the deliveries are expected to start in a couple of days. These include 54,000 jumbo cylinders (D type) and 73,000 regular cylinders (B type).

"Additionally, 551 PSA plants have been sanctioned to be implemented by the Union health ministry. These plants will be installed in different public health facilities," he added.

The states have been advised to ensure a rational use of oxygen, prohibit abnormal use by monitoring non-closure of valve during no-use, stop unnecessary oxygen administration to patients who may not require it clinically and for monitoring private health facilities that indulge in pushing oxygen cylinders as part of home-based COVID care packages, Agrawal said.

In the second wave of the pandemic, the rate of rise of the infection has been rapid, which has put an immense strain on the health infrastructure. The doubling of COVID-19 cases has also been rapid, which should ease if the turnover time reduces, he added.

The pandemic is spreading to tier-2 and tier-3 cities, so it is very important to train doctors about treating this new disease, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria said while underlining that misuse of drugs like Remdesivir and Tocilizumab has to be avoided. PTI

Zero Accountability Even After Two Lakh Dead In 2nd Covid Wave: Rahul



Press trust of India

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi targeted the Central Government on Friday, saying over two lakh people have died in the country during the second wave of COVID-19 and still there is zero accountability.

Earlier in the day, Gandhi offered his condolences to all those who have lost their dear ones due to lack of treatment and said prayers and sympathies from every state of the country are with them.

"Over two lakh dead in the fourth week of the second wave of COVID. Zero accountability. The system has made us 'atmanirbhar'," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

India saw 3,86,452 new coronavirus infections in a span of 24 hours, the highest single-day rise so far, pushing the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,87,62,976, while active cases crossed the 31 lakh-mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The death toll increased to 2,08,330 with 3,498 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

"My condolences to fellow citizens losing their loved ones due to lack of treatment. You are not alone in this tragedy—prayers and sympathies are with you from every state of the country. There is hope if we are together," Gandhi said in another tweet in Hindi. PTI

No Coercive Action Against Citizens Airing Concern On Social Media, SC Tells States

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday said states could not take coercive action against people sharing distressing information on social media to seek medical help for their dear ones during Covid pandemic.

"I flag this issue at the outset... We want to make it very clear that if citizens communicate their grievance on social media and internet then it can't be said it's wrong information. We don't want any clampdown on information," a Bench led by Justice DY Chandrachud said during hearing on a suo motu PIL on Covid management.

"We will treat it as a contempt of court if such grievance is considered for action," said the Bench, which also included Justice LN Rao and Justice SR Bhat.

The UP government had reportedly ordered strict action against those creating panic by making



false appeals for help on social media for Covid patients.

However, the top court said, "Let a strong message go to all the states and their DGPs... Clampdown on information is contrary to basic precepts."

The top court last week had

taken suo motu cognisance of the Covid management and asked the Centre to present a national plan to deal with the health crisis with regard to supply of oxygen and essential drugs, method of vaccination and lockdown.

Experts Warn Indians Of Dangers Of Trying To Make Oxygen At Home



Agenceis

Doctors and scientists in India are warning of the dire hazards of trying to make medical oxygen at home as the country faces a shortage of the gas in its Covid-19 battle and various videos and tips on DIY methods do the rounds on social media.

Google Trends data showed searches for the phrase "how to make oxygen at home" peaked on April 25 as the crisis worsened, while YouTube videos detailing such processes have amassed hundreds of thousands of views. Videos showing how to make oxygen through methods like electrolysis are increasing in number.

"There is a scientifically proven method to produce medical oxygen through concentrators. Any

other means to try making the gas at home involves many risks like chances of toxic gases being inhaled and explosions," a Ravikumar, secretary of the Indian Medical Association for the southern state of Tamil Nadu, told Reuters.

Tarun Bhatnagar, a scientist at the ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology in Chennai, called the attempts to make homemade oxygen "untested and unreliable methods."

He told Reuters: "Such an approach could even be deleterious if it leads to delays in seeking appropriate healthcare."

With India scrambling to find supplies of oxygen, many hospitals are turning away patients for lack of the gas. That has led to purported coronavirus cures circulating on social media, such as videos showing men inhaling steam from

pressure cookers or kettles "to kill Covid-19 infection".

The World Health Organization says about coronavirus cures that scientists around the world are working to find and develop Covid-19 treatments and the agency does not recommend self-medication with any medicines as a prevention or cure. The Health Ministry was not immediately available for comment.

The Indian government issued a public statement on Thursday dismissing as "misleading" a post circulating on social media that touted a homeopathic medicine which it claimed could immediately balance Covid-19 patients' oxygen levels.

India reported a record 386,452 new cases in the past 24 hours, while deaths from COVID-19 jumped by 3,498, according to the Health Ministry.

'Stay In Touch With People, Take Feedback': PM To Ministers Amid Covid



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Amid the COVID-19 crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged Union ministers on Friday to stay in touch with the people of their respective regions, help them and keep getting their feedback on the situation.

Chairing a meeting of the Union Council of Ministers, PM Modi also stressed upon the "need to ensure that issues at the local level are promptly identified and addressed", according to an official statement.

The meeting was held virtually to discuss the situation arising out of the second wave of COVID-19 in the country. It noted that the pandemic has led to a "once-in-a-century" crisis and thrown a big challenge to the world, the statement said.

The council was briefed about the steps being taken to ramp up the number of hospital beds, oxygen facilities and resolve issues related to the availability of oxygen and essential medicines, it added.

The support measures for the vulnerable population in the form of free foodgrains and financial support to Jan Dhan account holders were also discussed at the meeting, the statement said.

The meeting was informed that 15 crore anti-COVID vaccine doses have so far been administered to people, while it was also pointed

out that the country could successfully produce two vaccines and there are many vaccine candidates at various stages of approval and induction.

The council of ministers also highlighted the importance of COVID-appropriate behaviour — wearing masks, maintaining a physical distance of six feet with others and washing hands frequently.

Emphasising that the participation of the society is a key aspect to accomplish the gigantic task ahead, the ministers expressed confidence that the country will rise to the occasion and defeat the virus.

This was the first meeting of the council of ministers in the aftermath of the second wave of the pandemic in the country.

NTI Aayog member VK Paul gave a presentation on COVID-19 management.

After him, Union ministers Piyush Goyal and Mansukh Mandaviya briefed their cabinet colleagues on the availability of oxygen and medicines respectively.

The prime minister has held several rounds of meetings with chief ministers and top government officials to deliberate on the COVID-19 situation.

He has also been holding meetings with pharmaceutical industry leaders, oxygen suppliers, the heads of the three-armed forces and other dignitaries to discuss how to tackle the pandemic.

India Extends Ban On Int'l Flights Till May-End



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: The coronavirus-induced suspension of scheduled international passenger flights has been extended till May 31, aviation regulator DGCA said on Friday.

"However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation added.

Scheduled international passenger services have been suspended in India since March 23, 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. But spe-

cial international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May and under bilateral "air bubble" arrangements with selected countries since July.

India has formed air bubble pacts with around 27 countries, including Kenya, Bhutan and France. Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special international flights can be operated by their airlines between their territories.

The DGCA circular said the suspension does not affect the operation of international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by it. PTI

NEWSMAKERS

Lawyers Remember Sorabjee As "Leader Of Legal Fraternity"

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Lawyers condoled the demise of former Attorney General and jurist Soli Sorabjee and remembered him as a legal luminary, with a fervour for jazz and someone who never uttered an unkind word for anyone.

Sorabjee, 91, passed away due to COVID-19 at a Delhi hospital on Friday. He is survived by wife, a daughter and two sons.

In a series of tweets, senior advocate A M Singhvi, who is a next-door neighbour of late Sorabjee, described how his health deteriorated in a weeks' time.

Singhvi said that COVID-19 positive Sorabjee was taken to the Max hospital a week ago, where he was stable, as per his wife Zena.

"Suddenly, heart stopped last night and could not be revived. Long association," Singhvi wrote on micro blogging site Twitter.

He said, "Briefed Soli as a youngster, worked with him and opposed him in innumerable cases. Remember our private mimicry sessions. Soli's success in law was a loss of both jazz and mimicry."

The senior advocate said that even though Sorabjee was frail, he was mentally alert till the end and fully cognisant at his warm and cosy 91st birthday a few weeks ago.

"[He] had a zest for information and a view on everything. Speech slurred, frail in body but mind fully alert and memory largely intact," Singhvi said, recollecting how he sat with Sorabjee in his lawn about a month ago and discussed law, life and politics.

Recalling him as a leader of the legal fraternity, former Attorney General and senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi said, "Immensely successful and twice held the coveted post of

Attorney General of India. Never had an unkind word for anyone. He had passion for jazz and books."

He added, "A legal luminary who strode the canvas of Indian litigation for over six decades is no more. He leaves behind his wife and three immensely successful children. May his soul rest in peace."

Senior Advocate H S Phoolka called Sorabjee his "mentor" and said that "he will be sorely missed".

"Soli Sorabjee played a pivotal role in fight for justice for 1984 Sikh genocide, formed CJC (Citizen's Justice Committee) in 1985, an umbrella organization of Human Rights groups and led team of lawyers before Ranganath Misra Commission.

"Throughout he kept encouraging me not to give up fight for Justice. He was very happy on conviction of Sajjan Kumar. His contribution towards fight for getting justice for victims will always be remembered," Phoolka said.

He added that Sorabjee always said that "we have to prove that our country is governed by rule of law and no one here is above the law."

Vikas Singh, senior advocate and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president, alluded to him as a legend in the legal profession and a national asset.

Singh added, "It is a great loss to the nation. In spite of his age and failing health, his mental alertness remained completely normal till the end."

He recalled how Sorabjee would come to the court with the assistance of somebody just to keep himself occupied and appear in court in spite of his age. "It is something very

heartening to see."

Remembering his "immense contributions to the justice delivery system", senior advocate Vikas Pahlwa said Sorabjee was an institution in himself.

"I am deeply saddened to hear about the passing of Shri Soli Sorabjee. He was one of the finest legal minds this country has ever seen. He was an institution in himself. He was a mentor to a generation of lawyers who are leading practitioners in the Supreme Court today.

"His immense contributions to the justice delivery system shall always be remembered. He shall also be remembered for his unfaltering dedication to the defence of "Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression and Human Rights", he said.

Senior Advocate Aman Sinha also called him a towering legal luminary and affectionate senior, adding that the void his absence has created in personal and professional lives will be impossible to fill.

"My deepest condolences and tributes to my senior and guru Soli J Sorabjee who left us today morning. It was my honour to have close association with him for 25 years," Sinha remarked.

Sorabjee appeared in many important cases including the Kesavananda Bharati matter on basic structure doctrine and the S R Bommai matter relating to invocation of President's rule in the states among others.

A recipient of the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award of the country, the renowned human rights lawyer served as the Attorney General for India from 1989-90 and then from 1998-2004 during the tenure of V P Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, respectively.

Senior AajTak TV anchor Rohit Sardana passes away



Journalist Rohit Sardana, who was one of the top anchors of Hindi TV news channel AajTak, passed away on Friday. According to reports, Rohit had contracted COVID-19 and is unclear whether he had fully recovered. He is said to have succumbed to a heart attack.

The journalist was with Zee news for several years, before he joined AajTak in 2017. His most popular show 'Dangal', featured debate panels but had also been controversial for its rhetoric. He was awarded the Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Puraskar by the Indian government in 2018.

Several people took to Twitter to express their condolences.

Earlier on Friday, former Attorney General of India Soli Sorabjee had succumbed to COVID-19 when he was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Delhi. The 91-year-old had served as the Attorney General of India from 1989-90 and then from 1998-2004.

Meanwhile, India registered 3.86 lakh new coronavirus infections in a span of 24 hours ending on Thursday, the highest single-day rise so far, pushing the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1.87 crore. More than 19 lakh (19,20,107) tests were conducted in the span of 24 hours, making it the highest single-day tests done in India.

India's total active caseload has reached 31.70 lakh and now comprises 16.90% of the country's total infections. A net increase of 85,414 cases have been recorded in the total active caseload in a day.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is chairing a meeting of the Union Council of Ministers on Friday amid the rising cases. The meeting of the council of ministers is the first in the aftermath of the second wave of COVID-19 in the country. Sources said the pandemic and the response of the government is likely to be discussed in the virtual meet.

Bihar Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Singh dies of Covid



PATNA: Bihar Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Singh on Friday died of Covid-19, health officials said.

Singh was admitted to a private hospital here on Thursday after he had tested positive for coronavirus. The doctors said that he had developed complications in breathing a few days back.

The 1985-batch IAS officer of Bihar cadre was recently appointed as the Chief Secretary on February 27. He was scheduled to retire this year on August 31.

Besides him, Piyush Srivastava, Additional Session Judge of Sasaram district court also died of Covid.

Another, Jagdish Acharya Goswami, the in-charge of primary health centre in Saran district also died due to Covid on Friday.