



P3 CITY

DESPITE LOCKDOWN CITY MARKETS WITNESS RUSH AHEAD OF EID

Even as the government claimed that no partial relaxation in the lockdown, the markets across Srinagar witnessed a huge rush of shoppers who were seen buying the essentials ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

P6 THE FATAL FLAW

THINK

India is in the midst of a deadly covid storm, which is consuming thousands of lives each day. This unprecedented health crisis is a result of multiple institutional failures. Now let's take a cue from Economics of Information to understand how the industry



P5 STATE

IN 11 DAYS OF MAY CORONAVIRUS CLAIMS 564 LIVES IN J&K

The second wave of coronavirus has wreaked havoc not only in mainland India but also across Jammu and Kashmir as the virus has claimed 564 lives in the first 11 days of May.



Quote!
What you hide in your heart, appears in your eyes!
—Imam Ali

LG Announces Relief Package For Kin Of Corona Victims

Scholarship For Orphans, Lifelong Pension For Senior Citizens, Rs 1000 Monthly Relief For Labour Class



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As the people of Jammu and Kashmir continued to face wrath of coronavirus pandemic, the Union Territory administration on Tuesday announced special packages for the families of coronavirus victims, including special scholarship

for the children who lost their parents to Covid-19, lifelong pension for senior citizens who lost their only earning member of the family to virus besides monthly relief of Rs 1000 every month to the members of the registered labour class.

The Government has decided to reach out to each and every such family and they will be provided with financial assistance for self-employment by the Jammu & Kashmir Bank," the LG said as per an official spokesperson on Tuesday.

65 More Die Of Covid-19 In A Day

4352 New Cases Push Active Positive Cases Past 50K Mark

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: As many as 65 people succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, the highest ever single-day death toll since the outbreak of pandemic last year, while 4352 fresh cases of infection were reported from the Union Territory during the last 24 hours.

According to the officials, 41 people died of coronavirus in Jammu division and 24 others succumbed to the infection at the various healthcare facilities in the Valley, raising the total fatality count in J&K to 2847.

The officials said that the UT also detected 4352 new cases of Covid-19—1708 in Jammu division and 2644 in the Valley thus taking the total number of people infected by the virus to 224898.

Giving district wise details, ● [More On P10](#)

23 Prisoners Covid Positive In J&K Jails

At least 23 prisoners have been tested positive for novel coronavirus in three jails of Jammu and Kashmir while no case of Covid-19 has been ● [More On P10](#)

Cong Terms Relief Package Inadequate

Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) termed as inadequate the relief measures announced by Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday and demanded inclusion of other deserving sections in the package. The party also demanded upgradation of healthcare facilities in hospitals, especially in Government Medical College (GMC) and associated ● [More On P10](#)

More Children Contracting Covid-19: Expert

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Claiming that the second wave of coronavirus has infected more children compared to the first one, a prominent Paediatrician said Tuesday that the Covid-19 infected children experience vomiting and diarrhoea and are prone to convulsions and shock.



during the first wave of Covid pandemic that children were least affected and were asymptomatic or having mild symptoms, but in ● [More On P10](#)

COUGH, COLD, FEVER, BODY ACHE and diarrhoea are the symptoms of Covid infection among children. Oxygen saturation of children should be above 94."

'We Heard Cries For Help': Oxygen Crisis Averted In City Hospital

Umer Ahmad

SRINAGAR: Scores of attendants in Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial (JLNM) hospital Rainawari Tuesday shared their harrowing night-time experience, when the "oxygen plant suddenly went off", creating breathless situation for around 100 Covid patients in the hospital.



The incident took place on the night of May 9 when a snag in oxygen plant created panic among attendants.

But timely intervention from the technical staff of the government-run hospital averted a major health crisis in the hospital.

"We were sleeping when suddenly at around 1:30 am cries for help came from the isolation ward," an attendant told Kashmir Observer.

"Out of curiosity I also ran in the direction to see what was happening. As I stepped inside the critical ward, a snapped oxygen supply terrified me."

People who had concentrators or oxygen cylinders immediately put their patients on them, he said, while others put their patients ● [More On P10](#)

3 Militants Killed In Kokernag Encounter: Police

Ajaz Ali

SRINAGAR: Police on Tuesday claimed to have killed three local Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants, including a Srinagar resident in a pre-dawn encounter in Kokernag area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district.



Around 4:00 am Tuesday, a joint team of police, army's 19 RR and the personnel of CRPF laid a siege around Sheikhpora, Vailoo area of Kokernag on the basis of an input suggesting presence of three militants in

a residential house, a police spokesperson said. He said the presence of militants got

ascertained once the search operation was launched. The holed-up ● [More On P10](#)

Talks Only After India Reverses Aug 5 Move: Pak

Press Trust Of India

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday that Pakistan would not hold talks with India until New Delhi reverses its decision of scrapping the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

India abrogated the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 on August 5, 2019 and bifurcated it into two Union territories.

"Unless India retreats from the steps taken on August 5, the Pakistani government will not talk to India at all," Khan said while responding to questions from the public during a live broadcast session.

Earlier in the day, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that no talks presently were taking place with India but parleys could be held if New Delhi revisited its policy regarding ● [More On P10](#)



Faheem Younus, MD
VP/CQO/Chief of Infectious Diseases, University of MD UCH.
Multiple Family Members With COVID Simultaneously?
- NO NEED to isolate from each other
- Don't use same therapy for everyone. Get individualized care based on risk factors
- After recovery, tell others why and how to protect their families
Become ambassadors

Dr. Muzaffar Maqbool
Researcher and Associate Professor, Internal Medicine, GMC

THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY HAD COVID-19 CAN DEFER VACCINATION BY 6 MONTHS, IF VACCINATION SHORTAGE IS A CONCERN, SO AS TO ENSURE SUPPLIES FOR THOSE WHO ARE AT HIGHER RISK. Previous Covid infection definitely makes you less vulnerable to re-infection especially for 6 months.

Dr Ambrish Mithal
Chairman, Endocrinology and Diabetes, Max Healthcare

I have heard the #coronavirus is #Airbornels it safe to go for a walk in the park? YES, if it's not crowded#outdoor / open-air transmission is NOT common.The virus particles dissipate quickly in open air To be very safe- #WearAMask Don't talk face to face with anybody.

Weather In Kashmir To Remain Dry For 3 Days

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The meteorological department on Tuesday predicted rain and thunderstorm at scattered places of Jammu and Kashmir till May 12 and "mainly dry weather" for next three days.

"Rain and thunderstorm is most likely to occur at scattered places of Jammu and Kashmir today and tomorrow (May 12). Thereafter, expect mainly dry weather for subsequent 3 days," an official of the local meteorological department said.

"There's no ● [More On P10](#)

Meet Kapil Raina, The Kashmiri Pilot Who Enabled Flights To Medina

Sanika Athavale

Before his daughter, Tanvi Raina, became the first Kashmiri woman to earn the prized commercial pilot license, Kapil Raina's skill to navigate through sketchy skies and roaring clouds earned him the title of 'King of Clouds' awarded by Dr Farooq Abdullah, former chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

"I'M PROUD OF BEING KASHMIRI. The conflicts and wars ravaging us have never affected my relationship with locals."

weather conditions," the seasoned pilot recalled while speaking to Kashmir Observer.

Born and raised in Srinagar, Kapil Raina (57) came from a family of fair reputation. His father, Jawahar Lal Raina, owned and operated a transport company out of the city which he was meant to join but enterprising with a



penchant for adventure, young Kapil wanted to spread his wings further



than the limits of road-based transport. He had his dadi as his rock,

who supported him to chase his ambitions.

At 23, he applied for the commercial pilot license (CPL) and cleared all tests to claim his shot in the skies.

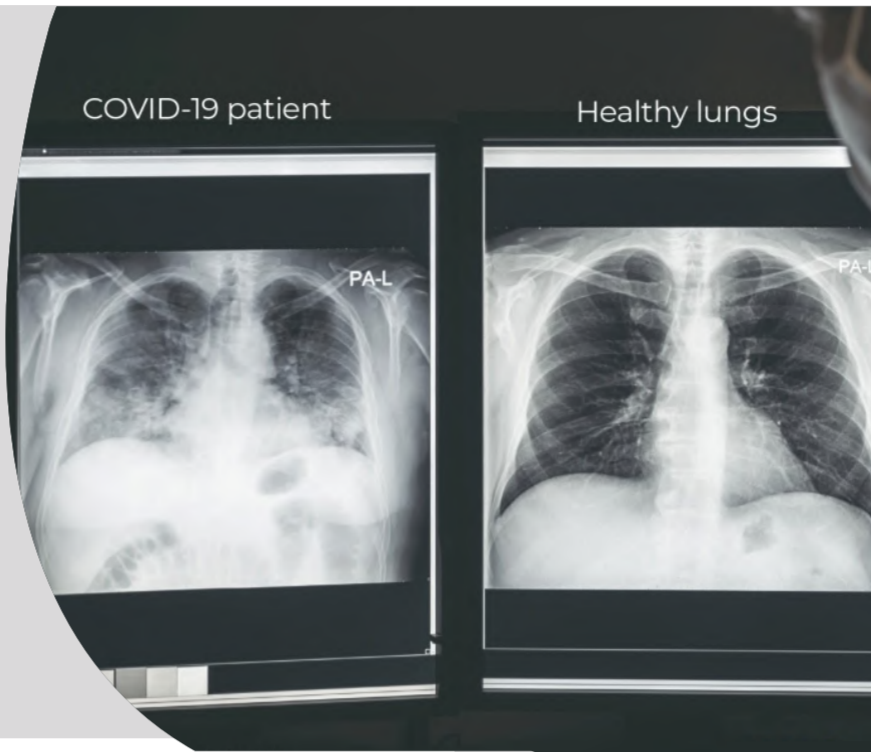
In 1998, he was inducted into Indian Airlines, now known as Air India.

Since then, Kapil Raina has led an illustrious career spanning 30 years as a commercial pilot. He has travelled across the globe and has over 22,500 flying hours to his credit. His approach towards his job has always made him a stand-out, as the former chief minister also called him the 'Pride of Kashmir' paying tribute to his services to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. In his early years, ● [More On P10](#)



How is MEDICAL OXYGEN, vital for COVID-19 patients, produced?

Mohammed Hussein and Alia Chughtai
 Al Jazeera



Medical oxygen has become one of the most important life-saving commodities in the fight against COVID-19 during which patients develop pneumonia and hypoxaemia – a low blood oxygen level. Dozens of COVID-19 patients in India have died due to the acute shortage of oxygen, bringing the production and supply of this critical medical item into the global spotlight.

When is medical oxygen used? How is it administered? Which countries produce the most of it? And how is it produced? We answer these questions in four graphics.

The impact of COVID-19 on the lungs

The Sars CoV-2 virus in many cases targets the respiratory system, leading to an inflammation of the lungs. In severe cases, this may lead to hypoxaemia, which is the leading cause of death among COVID-19 patients.

A blood oxygen saturation level (SpO2) above 95 percent is a healthy range for children and adults. Oxygen saturation levels below 90 percent are considered dangerous. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about 20 percent of COVID patients will require oxygen therapy to prevent respiratory failure.

Types of oxygen therapy

Oxygen can be administered in a variety

of ways. For low to moderate oxygen deficiencies, patients can be put on either a nasal cannula – a medical tube that goes through both nostrils – or on a simple or reservoir face mask. In these cases, one to 15 litres (3.3 gallons) of oxygen per minute is delivered to supplement a patient's regular breathing.

If higher volumes of oxygen are required, patients may then be placed on a high-flow nasal cannula, a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine, or a ventilator. In these cases, up to 100 percent of the oxygen a person inhales comes from the oxygen cylinder. In the case of a ventilator, a continuous supply of oxygen may be required to keep a patient alive.

Where does medical oxygen come from?

Several countries, particularly those with low to middle incomes, are facing oxygen shortages. In India, which has seen a record number of cases in the past several weeks, an estimated 17 million cubic metres (600 million cubic feet) of oxygen is required daily.

According to the Indian Ministry of Health, only about seven million cubic metres of oxygen is being produced. This shortfall has meant that thousands of people in critical need of oxygen have been turned away and have died as a result.

In 2019, according to the World Bank, out of 102 countries that are part of the medi-

cal oxygen export-import trading chain, 10 countries exported up to 80 percent. Belgium was the leading net exporter at \$23.6m, followed by France with 14 percent, then Portugal with 8 percent.

How is medical oxygen produced?

The air we breathe is about 78 percent nitrogen, 21 percent oxygen and 1 percent other gases, including carbon dioxide. Medical oxygen is at least 82-percent pure oxygen and is produced at industrial facilities before being delivered to hospitals in pressurised gas cylinders or in liquid form in large tanks. Over the past 30 years, most medical oxygen has been produced using the economical Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) process which consists of three main phases:

Pressurisation: Air from the atmosphere is compressed and stored in a high-pressure vessel.

Adsorption: Air passes through molecular sieves where the nitrogen is absorbed by aluminium and silicon compounds known as zeolite. The remaining air is sent through an air buffer tank.

Depressurisation: Air passes through alternating tanks in a series of cycles to remove unwanted gases. The resulting gas is up to 96-percent pure oxygen. This oxygen is stored in a tank and can then be delivered in oxygen cylinders.

“For low to moderate oxygen deficiencies, patients can be put on either a nasal cannula – a medical tube that goes through both nostrils – or on a simple or reservoir face mask. In these cases, one to 15 litres (3.3 gallons) of oxygen per minute is delivered to supplement a patient's regular breathing.”

Scientists improve method to stop viruses causing respiratory infections in children

Agencies

Researchers have improved a method in rodent models intended to help keep children healthy by engineering a short chunk of protein, or peptide, that can prevent the attachment of human parainfluenza viruses to cells.

Human parainfluenza viruses, or HPIVs, are the leading cause of childhood respiratory infections, responsible for 30% to 40% of illnesses like croup and pneumonia. The viruses also affect the elderly and people with compromised immune systems. The researchers published their findings in the Journal of the American Chemical Society.

To sicken people, HPIVs must latch onto cells and inject their genetic material to start making new viruses. HPIV3 is the most prevalent among these viruses. There are currently no approved vaccines or antivirals for HPIV3 infection in people. In a study led by the Sam Gellman lab in the chemistry department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the lab of Anne Moscona and Matteo Porotto at Columbia University, researchers built up years of work on peptide treatments to generate one capable of blocking the HPIV3 attachment process.

To enter host cells, HPIVs use specialized fusion proteins that resemble three corkscrews laid side-by-side. Earlier work by the Moscona-Porotto lab showed that scientists could a partial chunk of this corkscrew protein from HPIV3, introduce this peptide to the virus, and prevent the corkscrew from driving the infection process. The peptide, itself a corkscrew, essentially zippers up with the virus's corkscrews, creating a tight bundle of six corkscrew shapes.

The new peptide persists longer in the body, making it about three times more effective at blocking infection in rodent models of disease than the original form.

The research team started by trying to engineer the original peptide to be more resistant to protein-digesting enzymes in the body, which can easily shred proteins and make them useless. So, the Gellman lab turned to unusual building blocks to create a harder peptide.

Cells build proteins out of alpha-amino acids. But chemists can create beta-amino acids, which are similar but have an extra carbon atom. When peptides use these beta-amino acid building blocks, they often take a different shape because of the extra atom. This can help a peptide hide from protein-digesting enzymes and survive longer.

However, the researchers also knew that if the peptide's shape changed too much as a result of these unusual building blocks, they might not lock together with HPIV's corkscrew fusion protein.

That's where the Gellman lab's decades of experience testing and modifying beta-amino acid-containing peptides became critical. "We know which side of the peptide is binding to its protein target. So, we (knew that we) can modify only residues that are not directly involved in binding the viral protein," says Victor Outlaw, a postdoctoral researcher in the lab and one of the co-first authors of the report. In lab tests, they saw that the carefully modified peptide still bound strongly to the virus's protein.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER
JKPCC UNIT PULWAMA-SHOPIAN
 [NOTICE INVITING TENDERS]

For and on behalf of the Managing Director, J&KPCC Ltd. e-tenders (in Double Cover System) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/UT/ Central Governments/ for the following work:-

S. No	Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (Rs.)	Time of completion	Class of Contract	Call
1	Providing and Fixing of Puff panels for Construction of Indoor Stadium at Arhama Shopian	22.96	1000	45-days	"B-C/SSI/MSME"	2nd

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

Sd/-
 Dy General Manager,
 JKPCC Ltd Unit-
 Pulwama-Shopian

No: DGM/PUS/182-87
 Dated: 11-05-2021

DIPK-NB-694/21

Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL ENGINEERING WING BARAMULLA.
 NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT NO: - 01/XEN/REW/BLA/2021-2022 DATED: 08/05/2021

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF LT. GOVERNOR, J&K UT E-TENDERS (IN SINGLE COVER SYSTEM) ARE INVITED ON ITEM RATE BASIS FROM APPROVED AND ELIGIBLE CONTRACTORS REGD. WITH J&K STATE GOVT. CPWD, RAILWAYS AND OTHER STATE/CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING WORK:-

S. No	Name of Work	Est. Cost (In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rs.)	Time of completion	Class of Contractor	Major Head of Account	Position of AA/TS	Position of Funds
1	Fencing /Bund of Govt. Middle School Tangmulla P/H Chatoosa Block Kandi.	3.86	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
2	C/O Fencing around MS Kitterdaji P/H Puzalpora B Block Kandi.	2.91	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
3	Renovation of High School Building P/H Panzipora Block Sangrama.	4.65	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
4	Development of Ground Primary School Teli Mohalla bwo earth cutting filling Chain Link Fencing and Protection walls at Soin sadnar P/H Soin Sadnar Block Rafiabad.	4.90	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
5	C/O Bridge of Kasana Mohalla Connecting Ringawali to Gogaldara at Ringawali P/H Buderkote Block ChandilWanigam.	5.63	300	45 days	CEE, DEE	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
6	Construction of Land Sliding P Bunds at Halqa Gogaldara P/H Gogaldara Block ChandilWanigam.	4.80	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
7	Establishment of Drainage Network in G.P (as the area is low lying and highly flood prone area) at K.P Seri P/H K.P Seri Block Singhpora.	4.41	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
8	Construction of Link Road Darun Road P/H Salamabad Dachina A Block Bijhama.	4.00	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted
9	Up-gradation of Link Road at Bijhama P/H Bijhama A Block Bijhama	4.95	200	45 days	DEE.	B2V	AAA Accorded	Allotted

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 the scheduled date given below.

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	08-05-2021
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 08-05-2021 to 24-05-2021 up to 4:00 PM
3	Bid submission Start date	08-05-2021
4	Bid Submission End Date	24-05-2021 up to 4:00 PM
5	Deadline for receiving the hard copy (original DD & EMD) including all the soft copy documents uploaded on the site.	Hard copy will be received in the office of the Executive Engineer Baramulla either by hand or by courier/Regd. Post up to 25-05-2021
6	Date and time of Opening of Bids (Online)	Technical Bids will be opened on 26-05-2021 at 11:00 AM in the office of the Executive Engineer REW Baramulla and Financial Bid opening will be declared online.

- The contractor could take part in the tendering process of only those works which are to be executed in Gram Panchayat (G.P) to which he/she belongs, Bids from bidder other than the concerned Gram Panchayat (G.P) will be rejected.
- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of treasury challan/receipt mentioning therein name of work and NIT No. (copy enclosed) in favour of the Executive Engineer, REW Division Baramulla (Tender Inviting Authority).
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site 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 online on same Web Site at the office of the Executive Engineer, REW Division Baramulla.
- All The Bidders has to submit Bid Security Form instead of Earnest Money as per the Circular of Finance Department (Bid Security Declaration form is as per Annexure "A" below)
- The 1ST Lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of Contract as performance security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG within 02 Days after opening of financial bid and shall be released after successful completion of DLP as per norms.
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of technical bids.
- The earnest money shall be forfeited, if-
 a) Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications 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.
- Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.
- 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 into account 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 vendors.
- The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No financial bid will be accepted in physical form.
- Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with bid. Besides, original documents related to bid be submitted physically by the bidder who is declared as LI immediately after opening of financial bid.
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of necessary documents in terms of soft copies with the technical bid & no documents in terms of hard copies shall be entertained. However, in case of any clarification, the bidders shall have to produce original documents in support of soft copies if need arises.
- The earnest money in favour of un-successful/ non-responsive bidders shall be released only after ensuring submission of tender document fee in original, irrespective of Hard copies, failure of submission of tender document fee by the bidder using site shall entail him for blacklisting.

Note:
 9. The tender/ bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill requirements as laid down in NIT.
 10. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form).
 No 1389-1409
 Dated 08.05.2021

Executive Engineer,
 REW Baramulla

DIPK-1505/21

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla
 CORRIGENDUM

In respect of this Office e-NIT No. 05 of 2021-22 work no. 03 dated: 28/04/2021, issued under No. MIDB/CC-02/216-25 Dated: 28-04-2021, the said eNIT retendered due to poor response.

1.	Tender Submission date Start	=	10/05/2021 up to 04.00 pm
2.	Tender Submission date Ends	=	17/05/2021 up to 6.55 pm
3.	Date of Opening	=	18/05/2021 at 03:00 pm, in the Office of the Executive Engineer Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla
4.	Pre-bid meeting	=	15/05/2021 at 11:00 am, in the Office of the Executive Engineer Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla

All other terms/conditions and stipulations as contained in the eNIT shall remain unaltered/unmodified.

No. MIDB/CC/305-314

Sd/-
 Executive Engineer
 Mechanical Irrigation Division
 Baramulla

DIPK-1517/21



Despite Lockdown City Markets Witness Rush Ahead Of Eid

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Even as the government claimed that no partial relaxation in the lockdown, the markets across Srinagar witnessed a huge rush of shoppers who were seen buying the essentials ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Some of the roads continued to wear a deserted look as the lockdown remained in place for the 12th straight day in Jammu and Kashmir in order to prevent the coronavirus from spreading. According to eye-witnesses, bakery, mutton, chicken and readymade garment shops witnessed the rush of the shoppers.

The roads witnessed brisk vehicular movement coupled with traffic snarls at several places, they said.

They said the areas where the police and paramilitary troops were deployed and had erected concertina wires on the roads remained shut.

Notably, the government has imposed lockdown across Jammu and Kashmir since April 29 evening in order to prevent the virus from spreading. The administration extended the Corona Curfew across J&K till May 17.

A police spokesman in a statement said 156 persons were arrested during the last 24 hours.

During the last 24 hours, Police has arrested 156 persons, lodged 86 FIRs and also realized fine to the tune of Rs 104,350 from 672 people for violating the guidelines and rules throughout Kashmir valley, spokesman said.



THE MARKETS IN CAPITAL CITY SRINAGAR on Tuesday witnessed a huge rush even as the coronavirus lockdown remains imposed across Kashmir valley. KO Photo/Abid Bhat

"Besides, 44 vehicles were also seized in Budgam, Ganderbal and Shopian for violating guidelines and restrictions," police said, adding that the

special drive against the violators of Covid-19 guidelines and rules continued throughout all the districts of Kashmir Valley to ensure that people adhere to SOPs and guidelines envis-

aged by government to curb COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, police urged people to cooperate in containing the spread of Coronavirus by following the SOPs, guidelines

and protocols for the safety of the people. "The special drive shall remain continue throughout the districts of Kashmir Valley to strengthen the safety measures," police said.

ACCORDING TO EYE-WITNESSES, BAKERY, MUTTON, CHICKEN AND READYMADE GARMENT shops witnessed the rush of the shoppers. The roads witnessed brisk vehicular movement coupled with traffic snarls at several places, they said.

Civil Secretariat Reopens In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir civil secretariat and other Darbar Move offices reopened in the summer capital Srinagar on Tuesday after a gap of six months.

The civil secretariat, which houses offices of J&K's top bureaucrats, reopened here, even as it will also be functioning from Jammu for the duration of the deferment of Darbar Move.

According to the arrangement worked out by the administration, the civil secretariat will remain functional from both the capitals while as administrative secretaries will rotate between the two places as per the roster notified by the General Adminis-

tration Department. As many as 62 offices of head of departments, which move in full/in camp, will primarily function from Srinagar while 73 will work from Jammu.

Apart from this, 13 offices will also have civil secretariat-like arrangement for the period of deferment of Darbar Move.

In 2020, the administration had also deferred the practice of Darbar Move in view of the extraordinary circumstances arising due to COVID-19.

The biannual practice of Darbar Move was started by Dogra ruler Ranbir Singh in 1872 to "escape the extreme weather of Kashmir in winters and to give a fillip to economy of Jammu"

Srinagar Admin Withdraws 'Partial Relaxation' Order

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Srinagar administration on Monday evening said that the provision of exemption for partially permissible activities from 8:00AM to 12:00PM has been withdrawn till further orders.

Earlier, in an order, the administration had announced relaxations from 8 am to 12 noon for the sale of "some permissible items" during the ongoing Corona Curfew. The partially permissible activities as per the order include retail and wholesale grocery shops (excluding multi item departmental stores), milk and dairy products, mandis, shops and street vendors' dealing with fruit and vegetables only, bakery, meat and chicken shops.

However, in a separate order, District Magistrate Muhammad Aijaz Asad said, "In consonance with the State Executive Committee guidelines vide order No. 29-JK(DMRRR) of 2021 dated 09.05.2021 and in continuation to this office order No: DSC/DDMA/THQ/21/332-44 Dated: 09.05.2021, I Mohammad Aijaz (IAS) District Magistrate Srinagar, in the capacity of Chairman DDMA, in the virtue of powers vested in me under Section 34 of the National Disaster Management Act, 2005 read with section 144 of CrPC, hereby order that the provision of exemption for partially permissible activities from 8:00AM to 12:00PM (Para-B, items: I-IV) is hereby withdrawn till further orders."

Admin To Provide Employees With Movement Pass

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The district administration Srinagar on Tuesday said that the movement of government employees shall be facilitated through district administration Srinagar from Wednesday.

Meanwhile district administration in a tweet requested the HODs to place requisition for passes immediately.

Srinagar district administration tweeted, "Movement of Government officials shall be facilitated through a Pass system from tomorrow. All HODs are requested to kindly place requisition for passes immediately."

PHQ, Other Police Offices Resume Functioning At Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In connection with the annual Darbar Move from Jammu to the summer capital, Police Headquarters and other police offices resumed their functioning here on Tuesday.

Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh reached PHQ where he was received by senior police officers of the PHQ. He was given a ceremonial guard of honour on his arrival.

Soon after the PHQ resumed its functioning at Srinagar, the DGP chaired a meeting of senior police officers in the conference hall which was attended ADGsP S.J.M. Gillani, A.G Mir, IGS, Garib Dass, Vijay Kumar, Alok Kumar, DIG CKR, Amit Kumar, AISG of PHQ, SSP Budgam and other senior officers.

At the very outset, the DGP extended his good wishes to the outgoing ADGsP, S.J.M. Gillani, A.G Mir on their transfer from Police headquarters and appre-

ciated the role and contribution of outgoing officers during their tenure in PHQ. DGP wished good luck and success to the outgoing officers for the future assignments.

During his address to the officers, the DGP directed for restoration of all the quarantine centres which were created last year with additional facilities. The DGP said that COVID care centre for mild and moderate sick COVID positive personnel has been created in Jammu with the facility like oxygen, concentrators, oxygen cylinders, ambulance etc. He said that a Centre with the same kind of facilities will be created at Srinagar to meet any exigency in view of the second wave of COVID 19.

Singh said that we have a huge responsibility on our shoulders and it is our professional and moral obligation that we continue to stand by our people in these difficult times

and continue all possible help and assistance to civil administration in the fight against the corona virus. He directed the officers to follow all the good practices as per the advisories issued by the government to contain the spread of the virus.

The DGP said that our personnel are getting infected as the force is on ground working tirelessly to protect the lives of people and added that it is encouraging the severity of disease is less and immunity to fight the virus has increased after the vaccination and by following the COVID appropriate behaviour.

He expressed his deep sorrow for the loss of Deputy Director Prosecution, PHQ who died due to COVID-19. He expressed his sympathies with the bereaved family and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

He directed the AISG of PHQ to monitor and ensure the implementation of e-office within the specified time frame.

PG Scholars Of Govt Dental College Rue Delay In Release Of Stipends

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Postgraduate (PG) Scholars and House Surgeons working in Government Dental College Srinagar here have raved the 'callous approach' of the concerned authorities for undue delay in releasing their stipends and not including them in the recently announced incentives for doctors and other medical staff.

The aggrieved PG Scholars and House Surgeons said that the authorities have been making undue delay in releasing their stipends even though the majority of hospital services are being run by them.

They said that they literally have to beg before the concerned authorities for the release of their stipends. "It is unfortunate that the government has also not included them in the recently announced incentives for doctors and other medical staff, working to fight the ongoing Covid-19 crisis," they said.

They said that they should have included in the recently announced incentives scheme as they have been working at par with their fellow medicos if not more than them.

Eight Bakery Workers Test Positive For Covid-19 In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The district disaster management authority Srinagar on Tuesday asked for the testing of all bakery workers operating in the district after 8 bakery workers tested positive for Covid-19.

District magistrate Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz, who is also the chairman of DDMA in a Tweet asked for the testing of all bakery workers in Srinagar.

"DDMA Srinagar asked for Testing of all Bakery workers. Out of 99 lifted samples, 8 have tested positive on RTPCR. Mostly from renowned Bakery shops. Let's stay indoors. #coronavirus has unique art of locating the right person," he Tweeted.

Despite restrictions in place in view of Covid-19 situation, several areas in Srinagar on Tuesday wit-

nessed huge rush of shoppers, thronging the market places in view of the approaching Eid-ul-Fitr.

Even as the government claimed that no partial relaxation in the lockdown, the markets across Srinagar witnessed a huge rush of shoppers who were seen buying the essentials ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to eye-witnesses, bakery, mutton, chicken and readymade garment shops witnessed the rush of the shoppers.

The roads witnessed brisk vehicular movement coupled with traffic snarls at several places, they said.

They said the areas remained where the police and paramilitary troops were deployed and had erected concertina wires on the roads remained shut.

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 - (Closed)
- Mughal Road - (Closed)
- Srinagar-Leh - (open)

This Day in History

- 1328 - Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV and assembly of priests select Pietro Rainalducc as anti-Pope Nicolaas V
- 1328 - Antipope Nicholas V, a claimant to the papacy, is consecrated in Rome by the Bishop of Venice
- 1459 - Sun City in India founded by Rao Jodhpur
- 1525 - Battle at Biblingen: Zwabische Union beats rebel Wurttemberg farmers
- 1534 - German Duchy of Wurttemberg becomes Lutheran under Ulrich, Duke of Wurttemberg
- 1551 - San Marcos University in Lima, Peru, opens
- 1588 - Catholic League under duke Henri de Guise occupies Paris
- 1588 - Catholic League under duke Henri de Guise occupies Paris
- 1604 - Spanish garrison of Aardenburg surrenders to Mauritius
- 1640 - Uprising against Spanish king Philip IV
- 1689 - England & Netherlands form League of Augsburg
- 1777 - 1st ice cream advertisement (Philip Lenzi-NY Gazette)
- 1780 - British troops occupy Charleston, South Carolina (Revolutionary War)
- 1797 - First Coalition: Napoleon I of France conquers Venice.
- 1821 - The first major battle of the Greek War of Independence against the Turks occurs in Valtetsi.
- 1862 - Federal troops occupies Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- 1863 - Battle of Raymond, Mississippi
- 1864 - Battle of Drewry's Bluff, fought in Chesterfield County, Virginia (Peninsula Campaign), Confederate victory (US Civil War)
- 1864 - Battle of Spotsylvania, fought near Courthouse, Virginia (Overland Campaign), inconclusive result (US Civil War)
- 1864 - Battle of Todd's Tavern, cavalry battle fought near Todds Tavern, Virginia (Sheridan's Raid), inconclusive result (US Civil War)
- 1881 - Treaty of Bardo, Tunisia becomes a French
- 1890 - The first-ever official cricket County Championship match begins. Yorkshire beats Gloucestershire by eight wickets at Bristol.
- 1908 - Wireless Radio Broadcasting is patented by Nathan B Stubblefield
- 1925 - Uzbekistan & Kirgizistan become autonomous Soviet republics
- 1928 - Benito Mussolini ends women's rights in Italy
- 1940 - Nazi blitzkrieg conquest of France began by crossing Muese River
- 1941 - British forces march into Alexandria
- 1941 - Konrad Zuse presents the Z3, the world's first working programmable, fully automatic computer, in Berlin.
- 1942 - Russia occupies Crackow, until Aug 23, 1943
- 1943 - Axis forces in North Africa surrender
- 1943 - German troops in Tunisia North Africa surrender
- 1965 - Israel & West Germany exchange letters beginning diplomatic relations
- 1991 - A new cancer drug is announced which can only be found in bark of a rare tree in the Pacific Northwest



HIJRI CALENDAR

29

RAMAZAN -UL-MUBARAK

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR 3:57

ZUHR 12:27

ASR 5:20

MAGRIB 7:26

ISHA 8:59

From KO Archives

BLOODY START TO MAY, 52 DEAD IN FIRST WEEK

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - New spurt in militant violence has left at least 52 people dead in the first week of May. The dead include lop militant commanders and a senior Army officer. Scores of people mostly civilian pedestrians were wounded during the week in various grenade attacks across the strife-torn state.

A total of 33 militants, 11 security personnel and 8 civilians were killed in the week that saw a string of militant attacks in the Valley. A large cache of arms and ammunition was also seized. Atequallah Shah, Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's nephew, became the first victim of the week when he was fired upon by militants at Bijbehara in south Kashmir district of Anantnag on May one.

Militants killed Mohammad Ramzan Mian, the Chairman of the Pattan Municipal Committee, and another politician Jabbar Khanday at Doru in Anantnag on May 3.

Same day troops gunned down six top Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants, including four Pakistani nationals, in a six-hour-long gun battle near the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu region.

With this, about 22 infiltrators had been killed by the Army and the Border Security Force (BSF) during the past two weeks in the state. On May 4, Security forces achieved a major success when it killed 14 commanders of the Hizbul Mujahideen militants in a fierce encounter at Lawaypora in north Kashmir's Bandipora area.

The gunfight erupted after security forces cordoned off the village where a meeting of Battalion and Company commanders of the Hizb was going on. Five houses were also damaged in the fierce gun-battle.

Two minor girls were killed in a militant attack at a marriage party at Lohad Malah in Jammu's Udhampur district on May 5.

On May 6, four militants and a soldier were killed in the Jammu region.

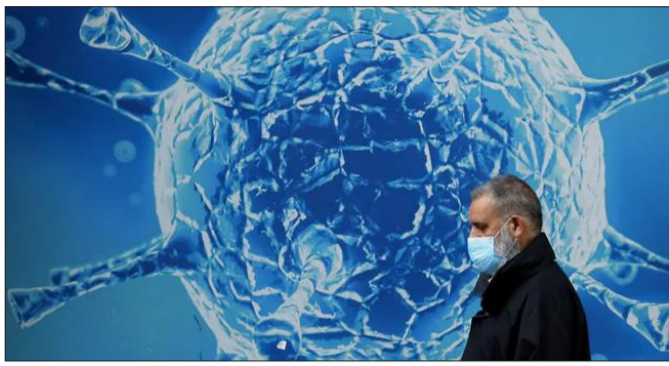
The week was capped with the killing of senior Army officer, Major Salman Khan -by militants at Pazipora in Trehgam of border district of Kupwara.

There has also been a spurt in the militant violence since the launch of the bus service between the divided Kashmir after nearly 58 years.

According to reports, more than 145 people, including 111 militants have been killed in different incidents across the Kashmir valley since the bus service was inaugurated on April 7.

(Kashmir Observer, 12 May, 2005)

Covid Antibodies Last 8 Months After Infection: Study



Agence France-Presse

ROME, ITALY: Antibodies against coronavirus remained in the blood of patients with Covid-19 for at least eight months after they were infected, Italian researchers said Tuesday.

They were present "regardless of the severity of the illness, the age of the patients or the presence of other pathologies," according to a statement from the San Raffaele hospital in Milan.

The researchers, working with Italy's ISS national health institute, studied 162 patients with symptomatic coronavirus who turned up at the emergency room during the country's first wave of infections last year.

Blood samples were taken in March and April and again at the end of November from those who survived. Some 29 patients died.

"The presence of neutralising antibodies, while reducing over time, was very persistent -- eight months after diagnosis, there were only three patients who no longer showed positivity to the test," said the statement, issued jointly with the ISS.

The study, published in the Nature Communications scientific journal, also emphasised the importance of the development of antibodies in recovering from coronavirus.

"Those who failed to produce them within the first 15 days of infection are at greater risk of developing severe forms of Covid-19," it said.

Two thirds of the patients surveyed were men, and the average age was 63. Some 57 percent of them had a pre-existing pathology, notably hypertension and diabetes.

Iran Say Warned US Navy Over "Unprofessional Behaviour"



Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN, IRAN: Iran's Republican Guards said Tuesday they warned US vessels after Washington said warning shots were fired near Iranian attack boats, the latest confrontation between the rivals in the Gulf.

The US had earlier said the warning shots were fired after more than a dozen Iranian fast attack boats buzzed close to a US Navy submarine and escort ships in the narrow Strait of Hormuz on Monday.

The Revolutionary Guards' navy confirmed it had encountered seven US vessels in the incident, but said it warned them "while maintaining the legal distance ... against their risky and unprofessional behaviour, after which they continued on their way".

It said in a statement that the US behaviour included "flying helicopters, firing flares, and aimless, unnecessary and provocative shooting".

The Guards said its navy was conducting "routine missions in the territorial waters" of Iran, but did not specify whether the American vessels had entered the Islamic republic's waters.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby had said earlier that 13 Guards' boats approached the seven US vessels at high speeds, closing within 140 metres (150 yards) before one of the US vessels fired 30 shots in two vol-

leys, until they moved away.

"Sadly harassment by the IRGC-N is not a new phenomenon," said Kirby, referring to the Guards' navy.

"It's unsafe, it's unprofessional. It's the kind of activity that can lead to somebody getting hurt, and can lead to a real miscalculation there in the region," Kirby added.

In response, the Guards called on Washington to avoid "false narratives", and accused it of being "the centre of instability, threat and insecurity in the region".

The encounter was the second such incident in two weeks, according to the US Navy.

In late April, three Iranian fast inshore attack craft provoked warning shots when they came close to two US vessels in international waters in the northern part of the Gulf, it said.

And in early April four Guard vessels, three fast attack craft and a large Harth 55 catamaran similarly came close to two US Coast Guard patrol ships, crossing their bows while ignoring warnings.

In its statement, the Guards' navy said its forces will "calmly and confidently follow their missions in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf" and are ready to respond to "any miscalculation" by the US.

The confrontations comes amid talks in Vienna between Iran and major powers on reviving a landmark 2015 nuclear deal abandoned three years later by then US president Donald Trump.

Children Among 24 Killed As Israel Bombs Gaza After Al-Aqsa Raid



Agencies

GAZA: At least 24 Palestinians, including nine children, have been killed as Israeli air strikes hit blockaded Gaza. The renewed Israeli aggression comes on top of the military raids in Jerusalem and across the occupied West Bank in which 700 unarmed Palestinians have been injured in the past 24 hours.

Israel unleashed its air power on Gaza early on Tuesday as an embattled patchwork of Palestinian resistance factions in Gaza vowed to retaliate as most of the world continues to ignore the plight of Palestinians.

The Israeli army announced the launch of Operation Guardian of the Walls late Monday against Gaza, the heavily controlled Palestinian area where food and medicines can enter only after Israeli permission.

Israel insists its air attack was in response to the many rockets that were fired from Gaza into southern Israel. Most of the rockets are homemade, manufactured in makeshift workshops using scrap metal. No one in Israel was killed from the rocket attacks.

It set off air raid sirens throughout Jerusalem, and explosions could be heard in what was believed to be the first time the city had been hit since a 2014 war.

In a statement issued early Tuesday, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said the rocket attacks would continue until Israel stops "all scenes of terrorism and aggression in Jerusalem and Al Aqsa mosque.

Two Islamic Jihad commanders killed in strikes Islamic Jihad, one of the main Palestinian groups in Gaza, said on Tuesday that two of its commanders were killed in Israeli air strikes targeting the enclave.

Sources within the group said the strikes in central Gaza City, also "wounded eight people, including a woman and her two children."

Forced expulsions In recent weeks, tension has been soaring in Jerusalem, marked by Israeli police using excessive force against Palestinian protesters in the walled Old City, located in occupied East Jerusalem which Israel captured and annexed

in the 1967 war. One of the flashpoints in the Old City has been Al Aqsa Mosque compound, the third holiest site of Islam and the holiest site of Judaism.

Another driver of Palestinian anger has been the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from homes in an East Jerusalem neighbourhood by Israeli settlers.

Last week, Israeli settlers swarmed in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem after an Israeli court ordered the eviction of Palestinian families who have been living in the area for generations.

Palestinians protesting in solidarity with the residents of Sheikh Jarrah have been targeted by Israeli forces.

Israel occupied East Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and annexed the entire city in 1980 -- a move that has never been recognised by the international community.

Gaza's main border crossings closed Israel closed the Kerem Shalom or Karem Abu Salem crossing, Gaza's main commercial trade route, early on Tuesday to all entries except humanitarian aid and fuel oil.

The decision was taken to close the crossing between Israel and Gaza immediately until a second order is issued, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) affiliated with the Israeli Defence Ministry said in a statement.

There are concerns that the closure of Gaza's main commercial trade route will cause serious humanitarian problems in Gaza, where more than 2 million people have been under blockade for 14 years.

ISRAEL INSISTS ITS AIR ATTACK WAS IN RESPONSE TO the many rockets that were fired from Gaza into southern Israel. Most of the rockets are homemade, manufactured in makeshift workshops using scrap metal. No one in Israel was killed from the rocket attacks.

US Authorises Pfizer Vaccine For 12-15 Year Olds



Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for children aged 12 to 15 years old, while the devastating outbreak in India raged on.

The US Food and Drug Administration previously had granted an emergency use authorization for the jab to individuals aged 16 and older.

"This is a promising development in our fight against the virus," said President Joe Biden.

But the World Health Organization in Geneva warned the B.1.617 variant spreading in India appears to be more contagious, classifying it as a "variant of concern at the global level."

The virus is still surging in many countries and the pandemic has killed close to 3.3 million people worldwide since late 2019, upending normal life and causing global economic chaos.

Rapid vaccination programs, however, have allowed a number of wealthy nations to start taking steps towards normality.

The head of the European Medicines Agency said Monday that BioNTech/Pfizer's jab against Covid-19 soon could be approved for 12- to 15-year-olds in the EU, as well, perhaps as early as this month.

Ireland on Monday lifted domestic travel restrictions and began a phased reopening of non-essential retailers, while Greece opened nursery, elementary and middle schools ahead of kicking off the tourist season from May 14.

Tourism might get a shot in the arm from the European

Union, which said it was "fully on track" to ensure a Covid health pass would be ready in June to boost travel.

Britain, which has the highest Covid-19 death toll in Europe, announced the reopening of indoor seating in pubs and restaurants in England from next week.

This easing came as the country reported no daily virus deaths for the first time in over a year following a successful vaccination campaign

Act 'responsibly' Spain, which at the weekend lifted a six-month state of emergency and allowed travel between regions, sounded a note of caution after joyful crowds celebrated in the streets without masks or social distancing.

"The virus threat still exists," Justice Minister Juan Carlos Campo wrote in El Pais, urging Spaniards to behave "responsibly."

Cyprus on Monday exited a third partial lockdown with a new coronavirus "safety pass" system to allow people to move freely.

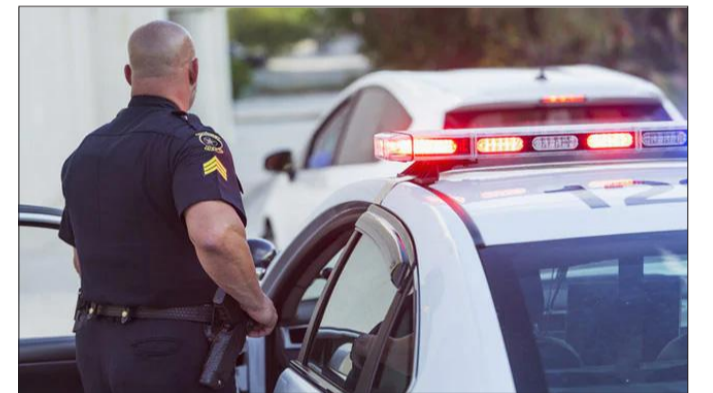
In Milan, the legendary La Scala opera house triumphantly reopened after six months of pandemic-imposed closure.

"I hope this is a new beginning and that we won't stop again after these sad months of silence," said first violinist Laura Marzadori, smiling broadly.

Ireland on Monday fully vaccinated against Covid-19 were exempt from many restrictions from Sunday after the government passed new legislation.

Berlin also opened access to the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine to all adults on Monday, lifting a priority system.

9 Dead In Russia School Shooting; Students Jump From 3rd Floor To Escape



Agence France-Presse

MOSCOW, RUSSIA: At least nine people, most of them children, were killed Tuesday when a lone teenage gunman opened fire at a school in the central Russian city of Kazan, officials said.

President Vladimir Putin ordered a review of gun control laws after the shooting -- one of the worst in recent Russian history -- which occurred on the first day back to school following annual May holidays.

The spree started around 9:30 local time (630 GMT), sparking panic among students and teachers at the School No. 175 in Kazan, the capital of the Russian predominantly Muslim republic of Tatarstan.

Amateur footage on social media, apparently filmed from a nearby building, showed people escaping from the school by jumping from second- and third-floor windows, with sounds of gunshots echoing in the schoolyard.

Police said they detained the gunman approximately one hour after initial reports of shooting.

Seven of the dead were children in the eighth grade, Tatarstan regional leader Rustam Minnikhanov told reporters. He said two adults, including a teacher, also died.

Another 20 were hospitalised, including 18 children. Six of them were in intensive care, Lazzat Khaidarov, a spokesman for the regional authorities, told AFP.

The ages of the injured people varied from between seven and 62.

In the aftermath of the killings, authorities declared a day of mourning for Wednesday while Putin expressed his "deep condolences" to the victims and called for new gun laws.

"The president gave an order to urgently work out a new provision concerning the types of weapons that can be in civilian hands, taking into account the weapon" used in the attack, his spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

- 'Neat and calm' - Images broadcast on state television showed dozens of people outside the school with fire services and police vehicles lining nearby streets and law enforcement carrying automatic weapons patrolling the area.

The number of dead reported varied, with the city's mayor saying eight people had been killed. Russian news agencies, citing official sources, said earlier in the day that 11 people had died.

The Interfax news agency, citing a nearby business college, identified the shooter as Ilnaz Galyayev, who was enrolled at the Tatarstan University of Management but was expelled one month ago for poor academic performance.

"He was always neat and calm, he was respectful of fellow students and teachers," a representative of the university was quoted as saying.

There were initial reports of two shooters, with one reportedly barricaded on the fourth floor of the building and killed, but officials later said a lone attacker was responsible.

NEWS MAKERS

China Records Slowest Population Growth In Decades

Agence France-Presse

BEIJING, CHINA: China's population has grown at its slowest pace in decades, reaching 1.41 billion, census results showed on Tuesday.

The growth of 5.4 percent since the last census in 2010 reflects fears of a looming demographic crisis amid an ageing society and slowing birthrates, with a sharp drop in the number of working-age citizens in the world's second biggest economy.

The growth rate was the slowest since the 1960s, according to official data.

Beijing changed family planning rules in 2016 to allow families to have two children amid fears grew about China's fast-ageing population and shrinking workforce -- but it is yet to produce the expected



baby boom to help offset the country's ageing population.

"The adjustment of China's fertility policy has achieved positive results," said Ning Jizhe, an official from the National Bureau of Statistics.

But he added that the "ageing of the population imposed continued pressure on the long-term balanced development of the population in the coming period."

The number of people aged between 15 and 59 population dropped nearly seven percent, while those aged over 60 was up

more than five percent. China's birthrate has been in steady decline since 2017, despite the relaxation of the decades-old "one-child policy"

This is partly due to falling marriage rates in recent years, couples struggling with the high cost of raising children in major cities, as well as women naturally delaying or avoiding childbirth due to their growing empowerment.

The average size of a family is now 2.62 people, the data showed, down from 3.10 people ten years ago.

"The family households continued to downsize because of increasing population mobility and the fact that young people after marriages lived separately from parents with improved housing conditions," said Ning.

Saudi Arabia Summons Its Most Prominent Female Activist After Release

Agencies

Saudi Arabia's most prominent female activist Loujain al-Hathloul has been summoned by security officials, three months after her release, relatives say.

According to the Associated Press, Loujain al-Hathloul was informed on Sunday of a supreme court decision that ultimately upholds her initial conviction.

In May 2018, Hathloul and more than a dozen activists were arrested as part of a sweeping crackdown on activists who pushed for greater women's rights and an end to a ban on female drivers.

Al-Hathloul was sentenced to five years and eight months with conditional release last December. She was released on February 10 af-



ter about three years in prison where she was tortured and sexually harassed. She is still under probation and is barred from leaving Saudi Arabia.

Her sister, Alia al-Hathloul, told AP on Sunday that she was asked to report to the office of the Interior Ministry's General Directorate of Investigation, or "mabaheth", in the capital Riyadh. The reason she received a summons was not immediately known.

Covid Restrictions Enhanced In Kargil To Contain Pandemic

Observer News Service

KARGIL: Ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr festival, authorities in Kargil district of Ladakh decided to further enhance restrictions on the public to prevent the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, officials said on Tuesday.

The unanimous decision was taken at a joint meeting of various stakeholders including representatives of religious and political organizations here, they said. Kargil has recorded 44 COVID-related deaths among the 2,680 positive cases since the outbreak of the pandemic.

While 2,412 patients have recovered from the infection, there are 224 active cases in the district with the majority of them having tested positive for the virus in the past two weeks. The officials said the meeting, chaired by chairman and chief executive councillor, LAHDC-Kargil Feeroz Ahmad Khan, reviewed the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the district and discussed the ways and means to further enhance the level of measures to contain the spread of the virus.

Deputy Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, LAHDC-Kargil Santosh Sukhadeve and Senior Superintendent of Police, Kargil, Anayat Ali Choudhary also attended the meeting which expressed concern over the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the country and the grim situation as a result of the second coronavirus wave, the officials said.

Underlining the need to take stringent measures to deal with the situation, Khan said the prevailing situation in the neighbouring union territory of J&K, Leh district as well as recent spike of cases in Kargil district over the past few weeks is a worrisome situation and calls for immediate response measures which if not taken timely may lead to an alarming situation.

Responding to the various suggestions put forth by the participants during the meeting, Khan assured that formal orders

for starting of online classes for school students will soon be issued through the Chief Education Officer Kargil while the District Institute of Education and Trainings Kargil will be assigned with the responsibility to ensure smooth running of these classes.

Sukhadeve said stringent measures are required to be taken to avoid COVID-19 impact on the sparsely populated district.

The district administration is in all readiness to deal with the prevailing pandemic situation and all out efforts are being made to keep the district safe from the deadly coronavirus, he said.

In addition to Section 144 CrPC and night curfew, more restrictions are being imposed to prevent any possible exigency, the deputy commissioner said.

He sought cooperation of all the concerned stakeholders and the public in proper implementation of SOPs and guidelines to break the chain of infection.

Regarding the measures being taken by the administration to speed up the process of testing, he said with installation of the new RNA extractor recently, all backlogs up to May 5 have been cleared.

The RT-PCR laboratory Kargil will now have a capacity of conducting 1,500 test per day, the reports of which will be made available within 48 hours, he said.

Chief Medical Officer, Kargil, Munawar Hussain Wazir said a total of 45,087 eligible persons including healthcare workers and frontline workers have been inoculated with the COVID-19 vaccines.

While 30,717 beneficiaries have got the first dose of the vaccine, 14,370 have received the second dose, he said, adding the vaccination is going on smoothly.

Meanwhile, the officials said the representatives of the religious and political organizations, Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) members and other stakeholders assured their full support to the administration in ensuring the strict implementation of the SOPs, guidelines and other instructions to contain the spread of COVID-19.

In 11 Days Of May COVID-19 Claims 564 Lives In J&K



Aijaz Ali

SRINAGAR: The second wave of coronavirus has wreaked havoc not only in mainland India but also across Jammu and Kashmir as the virus has claimed 564 lives in the first 11 days of May.

Jammu and Kashmir has reported 564 deaths which includes 200 in Kashmir division and 364 in Jammu division.

"On first May, J&K reported 46 deaths which includes 17 in Kashmir division and 29 in Jammu and on May 2 J&K reported 41 deaths which includes 11 in Kashmir and 28 in Jammu,"

52 deaths which includes 24 from Kashmir and 28 from Jammu division and on 06 May J&K reported 52 deaths including 18 from Kashmir and 34 from Jammu," the figures state.

"On 07 May, J&K reported 50 deaths including 21 from Kashmir and 29 from Jammu division while as on 08 May, J&K reported 60 deaths including 18 from Kashmir and 42 from Jammu."

The figures further state that on 09 May, J&K reported 54 deaths which includes 22 from Kashmir and 32 from

Jammu while as on May, 56 deaths were reported including 17 from Kashmir and 39 from Jammu.

"On 11 May, 65 deaths were reported in the UT which includes, 24 from Kashmir division and 41 from Jammu division," the figures added.

Although the Jammu and Kashmir administration has taken a slew of measures to contain the virus, including by imposing lockdown, but till now the cases have shown an upward trend.

The authorities and the experts have again reiterated to the people to adhere to the covid appropriate behaviour as the deadly virus claims lives.

Door-To-Door Covid Tracing Exercise Starts In Jammu

Observer News Service

JAMMU: A door-to-door exercise was started across Jammu on Tuesday to 'trace and isolate' probable COVID-19 positive patients as part of the ongoing efforts to contain the pandemic, officials said.

Jammu district tops the COVID fatality chart with a total of 686 deaths till Monday evening with over 300 of the patients succumbing to the infection in the past three weeks. The district has 7,630 active cases, which is also the second highest in the entire Jammu and Kashmir.

Seeking cooperation of the people to the drive, Deputy Commissioner Jammu Anshul Garg said it is an attempt to reach out to each of the 4.5 lakh households in the district in the next four days to trace and isolate probable positive patients, promote COVID-19 SOPs and lend a helping hand.

Earlier, in a video message, the deputy commissioner said that since more than 10 per cent positivity was recorded over the past few days, the door-to-door campaign is part of various measures already taken by the administration to

tackle the situation.

Various teams headed by concerned Sub-divisional Magistrates and comprising health, revenue, police and members of urban local bodies are deputed to screen the rural population through tests and identify where the cases are emerging from so that proper treatment is provided, whether in COVID-care centres or hospitals, he said.

He appealed to the people to cooperate with the teams who are there to help and check the spread of the COVID-19 infection.

Meanwhile, the deputy commissioner on Tuesday issued revised timing with additional guidelines for Narwal Mandi, the main terminal market for fresh vegetables and fruits in the city which usually remains overcrowded with early morning shoppers.

The timing of opening of Narwal Mandi shall be from 5 am to 12 noon with effect from 12-05-2021 (Wednesday) onwards to reduce overcrowding

and congestion but simultaneously ensuring essential supplies, he said in an order.

Garg, who is also Chairperson district disaster management authority, warned of action against those found violating the directions.

He said the new timing along with other guidelines was issued after it came to his notice that there is heavy rush in the market during the time when it is allowed to open (6 am to 10 am) despite the on-going coronavirus curfew.

He asked Chief Medical Officer, Jammu to deploy four teams for conducting the rapid antigen test of minimum 600 persons on daily basis, while the director horticulture (planning and marketing) was directed to deploy loud speakers in the market for making announcements for making the public aware of COVID appropriate behaviour and social distancing norms.

Assistant marketing officer Priya Sharma was appointed as the nodal officer, while Tehsildar Bahu Rohit Sharma was appointed as the duty magistrate at the venue to supervise all the arrangements on a daily basis, the order said.

NC Rues Delay In Release Of Monthly Wages To NHM, SRTC employees

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on Tuesday expressed dismay over the delay in the disbursement of salaries to National Health Mission (NHM), and SRTC employees saying the inordinate delay in the release of salaries has affected thousands of families.

While expressing concern over the apathy to which the scores of NHM and SRTC employees are subjected to by the government, the party spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar, in a statement said nearly 8500 employees working under the ambit of national health mission in hospitals across J&K are deprived of their due monthly remuneration in spite of working tirelessly. The unfortunate lot is working day in, day out during these pressing times with zeal and zest that too without risk allowances, social and security benefits.

Far from ensuring added benefits to the employees, the government, Imran said, is not releasing their due remuneration, which in case of NHM employees has been held for three months. As the employees go without salary for nearly three months now, the administration, he said, is yet to rise to the occasion to redress their grievances to ensure that they are able to celebrate Eid.

"The NHM workers have been

protesting and knocking every door to have their issues redressed but the concerned authorities continue to remain vote faced to their woes leaving the employees and their families to suffer. The quandary has pushed the entire lot to the brink of impoverishment," he said.

Imran said similarly the employees of JKSRTC have only been receiving assurances and no salaries for months altogether. The families associated with them, Imran said are at the verge of starvation. "Due to the non-payment of salaries, the employees are not able to spend on medical treatment and purchasing basic essentials. It is not just the JKSRTC, and NHM, the employees working in various PSUs have been without salary for the last 12 and six months.

The entire lot is not even able to avail their retirement benefits," he said. So far every single assurance received by the aggrieved employees of SRTC and NHM has not materialized. The assurances were not followed by any response, he added.

While impressing upon the incumbent JK administration to redress the grievances of NHM, SRTC and other employees, Imran said the government is duty-bound to fulfil their demands within the shortest possible time. Denying employees their due remuneration tantamount to abuse, he added.

20 Oxygen Plants Installed, 17 In Offing, 9 In Transit: Govt

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: After the onset of 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic, the hospitals associated with covid-care in Kashmir have witnessed a steep rise in requirement of medical oxygen as more number of patients who have tested Covid-19 positive are turning up to the hospitals after their saturation level decreases in home isolation.

To give an information about the supply position of medical oxygen in Kashmir, Chief Engineer, Mechanical Engineering Department Kashmir, Rashid Ahmad gave an in-depth details about the status of oxygen both in terms of generation capacity and in the form of bulk cylinders available to cater to the needs of Covid hospitals in Kashmir.

The C.E said that the role of MED has been very important vis-à-vis ensuring the generation of oxygen in hospitals to make it available to the patients and the department is doing its best to live up to the expectations.

He said the oxygen supply may be in the shape of liquid medical oxygen, cylinders or in the form of Captive PSA Medical Oxygen generation. "We have an issue regarding supply of liquid medical oxygen here due the logistics involved which would be cumbersome to procure from outside the state on a consistent and reliable basis" the C.E said.

For cylinders, he said in Kashmir we have four industrial units for refilling and bottling but that is insufficient.

Rashid said following the 2nd wave of Covid-19 Pandemic there has been a steep rise in the requirement of medical oxygen in hospitals and the position of oxygen has become better as the department has remained quite prepared.

Giving details about the Oxygen

generation capacity of Kashmir, the C.E said that prior to 2nd wave of Covid-19 our hospitals would generate 8000 litres of oxygen per minute, but as on date we have further installed 20 plants in different district hospitals and GMC associated hospitals in Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag districts.

He said this time the bulk oxygen that is being supplied to the hospitals is being done through these PSA based plants and the production of oxygen exceeds 23500 lpm and, "if we talk in terms of per capita, patient and population wise, this much of Oxygen generation capacity is sufficient" he added.

The C.E said that with the support of 2100-2300 bulk cylinders from Industrial units and together with Captive PSA based Oxygen generation, the situation is normal in hospitals, patients are getting good supply of Oxygen.

"The position of oxygen has become better as we were prepared to deal with it and we had fixed our contracts in time, we had made order for 37 plants in October-November, the bulk of this order has already arrived and we have so far installed 20 plants and 17 plants are in the offing" he said.

He informed that the PSA Oxygen generator of these plants come from Germany, this time also 09 plants are in transit and ready for shipment for airlifting. "Due to the Covid there is an embargo in Air Cargo, so our UT government has directly talked to the Civil Aviation ministry about the lifting of 09 plants from Frankfurt, Germany and the same shall be done on 16th of May and it may take another couple of days for it to reach here" Rashid added.

"Following the installation of these 09 more plants our position shall be improve further and there shall remain no dearth of oxygen" he assured.

CPI(M) Demands Release Of Political Prisoners Ahead Of Eid

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: CPI(M) leader Muhammad Yousef Tarigami on Tuesday demanded that Kashmiri political prisoners lodged in various jails within and outside the Valley must be released as unprecedented surge in Covid-19 cases across the country has put their lives in congested jails at risk.

In a statement, Tarigami said Supreme Court recently directed the high-powered committees to consider release of fresh prisoners by adopting the guidelines of the National Legal Services Authority on the issue to decongest jails.

"Hundreds of Kashmiri prisoners, including some teenagers are languishing in jails within and outside J&K for years now. Some of them are behind the bars for years together and their cases need to be reviewed in the light of Supreme Court directions.

"Health conditions of some Kashmiri prisoners, lodged in Tihar and other jails outside the Valley, have deteriorated in recent times and if they are

not released it could prove fatal for them due to rising Covid-19 cases. Some of them are in old age and suffer from multiple ailments," he said.

He said in the absence of proper medical assistance, these prisoners feel helpless and are in distress. It would be prudent to release all prisoners, at least on parole, keeping in view the alarming situation due to Covid-19.

There are also prisoners who have minor offences against them and whose detention order has been quashed multiple times by the courts. The Government has failed to prove charges against several people arrested under the Public Safety Act (PSA) and other such laws. They should be released.

Releasing all political prisoners in these tough times can end the miseries of their families as well. The present situation is a humanitarian crisis of the worst kind and the government needs to take a holistic view on the condition of prisoners.

Releasing prisoners before Eid could be a good gesture by the government.

Second Jab Of Covid Vaccine A Must If You Get Infected After First Dose: DAK

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Doctors Association of Kashmir Tuesday said that the people who get infected by the virus even after taking a first dose of the covid vaccine should go for the second shot soon after the recovery.

"People who contract Covid after the first dose still need to get the second jab," said DAK President in a statement. "However, you shouldn't get the vaccine while sick."

The DAK president said that people should get second dose as soon as the isolation period is over. "One should take the second shot 2 weeks after all the symptoms of Covid have been resolved," he said. "I am aware of several cases where someone tested positive for Covid-19 after getting their first dose. They should get their second dose of the vaccine



KO FILE PIC ABD BHAT

after they get over with their quarantine to gain its full protective benefits," DAK said.

The DAK President said that people are fully protected against the Covid only after the second dose. "It is vitally important to get both doses for best protection against the Covid," he said.

"First dose primes the body with an initial immune response," DAK said. "Second dose is the one that really gives the boost to the immune system. It induces a level of virus neutralizing antibodies about 10-fold greater than the first dose."

CUK To Organise Motivational Lectures, Online Quiz Competition For Students

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: Central University of Kashmir (CUK) Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir Tuesday said the university will organise motivational lectures and weeklong online extracurricular activities including online quiz and debate competitions for the students to de-stress them.

"Covid-19 pandemic has caused lot of anxiety and stress among the students who have been confined to their homes and in order to de-stress them, the university will organise series of lectures on mental health wherein the experts would provide ways and means to counter the stress," Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir said while interacting with the faculty members during series of meetings, organised after May 3, 2020, to take stock of the ongoing teaching-learning process, through the online mode. He expressed satisfaction over the teaching-learning methods adopted by the faculty members and said the varsity would make every possible ef-

fort to complete the syllabi of the students. Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir asked the faculty members to remain in constant touch with the students and asked them to act as their mentors.

Pertinent to mention that Prof. Mehraj ud Din Mir, earlier held a series of online meetings with the Class Representatives (CRs) of various departments and listened to the queries and concerns flagged by them.

Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zargar, said the university is committed to provide quality education under all circumstances including in the online mode. He asked the students to provide feedback regarding the online teaching-learning process to the Directorate of Internal Quality Assurance (DIQA) so that deficiencies, if any, would be redressed immediately. Director, DIQA, Prof. Wali Muhammad Shah asked the faculty members to utilize the services of the ITSS in order to provide uninterrupted online teaching to the students.

Deans of Schools, Heads and Coordinators of departments attended the meeting.

Govt Reinstates Former ACR Udhampur

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Government Tuesday reinstated the then Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Udhampur who was suspended in the last week of January 2019.

A Government order number 427-JK (GAD) of 2021 Dated 11-05-2021 to this effect stated that Sonu Pargal, KAS, the then Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Udhampur, placed under suspension vide Government Order No. 153-GAD of 2019 dated 30.01.2019 and attached in the office of Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, is hereby reinstated with immediate effect.

"The period of his suspension shall be decided after conclusion of the criminal proceedings pending against him in the Court of Law", it states.

"Consequent upon his reinstatement, Sonu Pargal, KAS is posted as Deputy Secretary to the Government, Planning, Development and Monitoring Department", the order concludes.

Youth Killed, Another Injured In Kunzer Road Accident

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: A 24-year-old youth was killed and one person was injured in an accident in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Tuesday.

Officials said that the accident took place between a tipper (JK03B-2973) and a Maruti 800 vehicle (JK01R-9304) near Kunzer. The tipper driver escaped from the spot while two persons injured in the accident were taken to a local hospital. However one of them Irshad Ahmad Ahanger son of Farooq Ahmad of a resident of Wahipora Tangmarg succumbed to the wounds while the condition of other person, Maqsood Ahmad Ahanger son of Ali Mohammad, is stated to be critical.

A police officer said a case has been registered and investigations taken up.

KASHMIR
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K O V I E W

Saudi push

In yet another proof that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are playing a role in easing India, Pakistan tension and helping them reach some understanding on Kashmir, the Saudi-Pakistan joint statement has explicitly called for resolution of Kashmir through dialogue. The statement issued during Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's visit to the kingdom also welcomes the decision by the two countries to observe a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC). Earlier, Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud had said his country could play a role in reducing tensions between Pakistan and India. Before him, the United Arab Emirates' envoy to Washington confirmed the Gulf state is mediating between India and Pakistan to help the nuclear-armed rivals reach a "healthy and functional" relationship.

But the fact remains that all the talk about the thawing of the relationship between the two neighbours is emanating mostly from Pakistan. New Delhi has largely been tight-lipped about it. One could attribute it to the ongoing Covid-19 catastrophe in India that has overwhelmed the government, leaving it little bandwidth to respond or talk about the relationship with its western neighbour. Things could, however change in near future as India gets a handle on the runaway surge in Covid-19 cases. As and when that happens, the two countries are expected to announce more Confidence Building Measures to improve their relationship and may be take steps to institute a formal dialogue.

But as is apparent there are some reservations as for as conducting an open dialogue. The reasons for it are both historical and the recent. The relations between the two neighbours have plunged to their lowest low since New Delhi withdrew Article 370 on August 5, 2019. Until before dramatic re-affirmation of the ceasefire agreement a month ago, it appeared unthinkable that the two countries would come anywhere near to resumption of dialogue. But they have done it, even moving a few baby steps further towards talks.

Now, both countries are putting onus on each other to take the first step towards resuming dialogue. And what that step would be is still unknown. Islamabad had earlier made any re-engagement with India conditional to New Delhi reversing the August 5 move. But Pakistan seems to have given that up, so has New Delhi its insistence on end to cross-border terrorism before talks begin. Anyways if the last year's figures for infiltration and the killings of foreign militants in Kashmir are anything to go by, Islamabad has held back from supporting the local militancy. New Delhi, it seems, is unlikely to reverse the revocation of J&K autonomy. It remains to be seen whether it restores statehood anytime soon. A sustained, meaningful dialogue between the two countries has the potential to lead to a positive outcome. So, the neighbours should restore it sooner than later.

OTHER OPINION

Vaccine skirmishes

The Biden administration's announcement that it would support a waiver on intellectual property rights (IPR) for the production of COVID-19 vaccines appeared to catch the world off-guard, on both sides of the argument. The original proposal for the relaxation of TRIPS for such vaccines in the context of the ongoing pandemic was drafted at the WTO by India and South Africa last year. Now that his administration has proclaimed its intent to fulfil that promise, it must come as a bitter realisation that what sounds like a well-intentioned, pro-developing-countries policy stance has been rebuffed by major EU nations and met with counter-suggestions that might make even the most liberal U.S. Democrats uncomfortable.

There are merits to the argument that an IPR waiver, even if it were to become a reality, may not entirely resolve the vaccine deficit issue in countries suffering the worst of the pandemic now. First, the grant of a waiver would have to be accompanied by a "tech transfer" that provides generic pharmaceutical manufacturers with the requisite trained personnel, raw materials and hi-tech equipment and production know-how. Second, there must be a scientifically convincing answer to the question of how any vaccine then produced by these generic manufacturers — in all likelihood, years from now — would pass the tests of safety, immunogenicity and protective efficacy. Third, the impact on global supply chains for vaccine production should be examined so major disruptions might be avoided. Finally, alternative options to urgently address vaccine shortfalls should be considered, including developed nations sharing a significantly greater part of their vaccine stockpiles, particularly in cases where the latter exceed projected domestic need. Indeed, there is speculation that the intention behind Mr. Biden's waiver proclamation might be in favour of the last outcome, essentially a tactic to persuade pharmaceutical companies to accept less painful measures including sharing some of their technology willingly, agreeing to joint ventures to increase global production expeditiously, and simply produce more doses at affordable prices to donate directly to where the need is most severe, especially India.

The Hindu



The Fatal Flaw

The slow descent into Covid Crisis in India

Arshid Hussain Peer and Muneeb Yousuf

India is in the midst of a deadly covid storm, which is consuming thousands of lives each day. This unprecedented health crisis is a result of multiple institutional failures.

Now let's take a cue from Economics of Information to understand how the industry of advertisements in modern times, advertising is one of the obvious methods of identifying potential buyers and sellers in a market. In the age of Information and communication Technology, from business to politics, almost everything is advertised through digital media. It is not surprising when year after year, it is found that the money spent by BJP on advertising is increasing. During 2019-20, the amount spent on advertising stands around 1.95 crore per day in a country where according to the United Nations Food Programme: levels of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, inequality and social exclusion are extremely high. The major part of the amount spent on advertisement goes to the coffers of people who are on higher steps of political and economic ladder.

The revenue model of media in India is mostly advertisement driven. This becomes more problematic when the majority of advertisements either come from the government or from companies which are close to it. This symbiotic relation between media houses, government and business houses cons the system. By doing so, an essential check to the system is eroded.

It has become lucrative for star anchors to act as propaganda agents and question the opposition leaders rather than the government itself. Similarly the business houses close to the government have found their fortunes doubled. They have also been able to flout the rules without any costs. Some corporates even promoted their business with the Prime minister as brand ambassador though they later apologised. In any other functioning democracy this would have been considered scandalous.

Raghuram Rajan in his book, "Third Pillar" notes that major business magnates largely applaud the government policy. They live in what is a give-take relationship.

The Judiciary too is sitting on some issues like the final verdict on Article 370, the CAA-NRC debate and the issues around electoral bond opaqueness.

The conferment of awards is the other mechanism by which the NDA furthered its anti-people agenda. Awards are means to provide recognition to those persons who are thought to best possess some distinguishing qualities when compared to peers. Awards play an important signal with regard to capabilities of individuals or institutions. In the present era of information explosion and social media, the awards are used in a number of ways to further a particular viewpoint. In the context of India, the information content of awards is

highly distorted, due to less digital literacy and deluge of fake news. The common mass takes every WhatsApp forward as true. Consider the case of Philip Kotler award given to the Prime minister by the world management summit. The event was co-sponsored by GAIL, Patanjali and Republic TV. The government of India reciprocated the favour by awarding Padma Bhushan to person who conferred Kotler award on behalf of Professor Kotler as reported by various media outlets. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh which has the worst track record in law and order is shown day in and out by the media as the best performing state under Yogi Adityanath—a person who is known for his communal rhetoric. Even the mood of the nation survey shows UP as the next powerhouse and Adityanath as best performing chief-minister. These surveys are then sugar coated by well-oiled IT cells and

and Kumbh mela the media has struggled to find someone new to blame. Due to pecuniary and employment benefits, they are afraid to speak truth to power.

The calm around before the storm of the rising cases was totally amiss as the visuals of populated rallies were screaming alarms. The EC was also alerted a number of times especially incase of the West Bengal elections but the plea fell on deaf ears.

The election commission of India has in fact come under the scanner over and over again in recent years. Even as it is an independent constitutional body, questions about its integrity have been very common. It is pertinent to mention here that one of the major reasons mentioned for democracy backsliding of India by V-Dem institute (Sweden based think-tank) is the decline in autonomy of ECI. Similarly, Freedom House which ranks countries around the world on political rights and civil liberties praised ECI's independent nature but mentioned, "In 2019, however, its impartiality and competence were called into question. The panel's decisions concerning the timing and phasing of national elections, and allegations of selective enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, which regulates politicians' campaign behaviour and techniques, suggested bias toward the ruling BJP". The same report also labelled India as partly free. The other major report which provides the state of democracy worldwide is The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index. In its 2020 report, it characterised India as a flawed democracy. Though on electoral process and pluralism, India maintained its score of 8.67 but the report mentions pressure on democratic norms since 2015. These reports take a diversion from indigenous reports and awards mentioned earlier.

The society is also to be blamed for much of the decline in accountability and democratic norms. Citizens remained so disorganised and divided on parochial lines that the government felt no significant backlash towards its policies. It is however naïve to argue that there was no opposition from society to anti-government policies. There were many groups which tried to put pressure on the government but those voices never metamorphosed into a majority. Infact, these voices were criminalised with new jargons like "anti-nationals" and "tukde tukde gang". However, it has been seen that the same people have been on the frontlines now. As The Economist notes, "that government may have fallen short but civil society has stepped up".

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

The authors are Researchers at JMI University, New Delhi

There were many groups which tried to put pressure on the government but those voices never metamorphosed into a majority. However, it has been seen that the same people have been on the frontlines now. As The Economist notes, "that government may have fallen short but civil society has stepped up".

forwarded on infinite whatsapp groups of party workers and common citizens.

Even the Covid-19 mess is related to excessive advertisement and awards. Though covid is an health issue, yet it has everything to do with the systematic destruction of institutions, excessive centralisation and abuse of power. The powerful media houses relied on the government feeds and shifted the blame on minorities and opposition. Infact, most channels went to the extent of praising the leadership skills of the PM in handling the covid well and taking every opportunity to put the naysayers down. Now when the virus went out of control due to policy blunders like mega-rallies



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Save Kashmir by Staying Home this Eid

The Holy month of Ramadan is going to end soon. However, the blessed month took many blessed souls with it. Covid-19 cases spiked uncontrollably in Kashmir on account of institutional decisions as well as individual callousness and we're still in the midst of a bomb that's still ticking.

In the midst of all these circumstances, the blessed Eid ul Fitr has arrived. No matter how we feel, it is still an event for celebration. However, it is one that requires us to not lower our guards. In Kashmir, especially Srinagar, we have seen a brief

dip in the cases. In a situation as grim as now, this news is still hopeful.

However, if we get careless by crowding markets, thronging mosques and visiting relatives; we're only prepping a recipe for disaster. Do not let eid become a cause of distress to your families and loved ones who may get an infection instead of greetings from you.

Please treat yourself as well as every other person outside your households as infected. This is the kind of caution one has to practice. Try to celebrate eid within your households. Donate to charities. Spend a

good time with family. But do not be a cause of distress to your families, relatives and friends.

We all spent a good time of Ramadan praying for our loved ones. Why would you lower your guards and put everyone in danger by doing something as avoidable as visiting someone on eid. Use digital means to reach loved ones. Keep your celebrations private and keep the mood upbeat within the safe space of your homes.

This eid, give your loved ones the gift of safety, health and life by not visiting them. Kashmir has suffered

too much. We lose people every year. Please, protect Kashmir. We will have no one come to our rescue if we do not stay responsible and alert.

Who doesn't love their land and their people? But by virtue of constant threats, Kashmiris love Kashmir a little more than usual. Let that reflect in the spirit of saving it by showing personal restraint and avoiding physical socialising and following all SOPs

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INTERNATIONAL NURSE DAY

COVID-19 Front Line Selfless Warriors

M Ahmad

Nurses hold a vital function, as one of the most distinguished health service teams, in delivering public awareness regarding disease prevention and in decreasing the dissemination of myths regarding the epidemic. This involves countering myths, guiding people to available health services, and supporting evidence-based patient management and infection reduction initiatives



"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

—Mahatma Gandhi

The COVID-19 pandemic turned out to be the biggest challenge. The experience of this shattering outburst is creating short-term and long-term impact on the physical, social, and psychological health of every individual globally. While on one hand people across India and around the globe are largely confined to their homes with businesses and educational institutions all shut down in an attempt to contain the virus, and on the other hand our Nurses are leading the battle against COVID-19 from the front. Putting their own lives at risk with selfless determination for the sake of saving lives, they truly are our heroes in these challenging times. While they are putting their own health, families, and most importantly their own lives at risk, the least we can do is appreciate their efforts and endorse their role in this Pandemic.

Every day, the selfless warriors are giving it their all in health-care settings

while cutting themselves off from their families and loved ones. The sacrifice that they are making for the safety and welfare of humanity is priceless and deserves life-long gratitude on our end. Nurses ensure that all patients acquire personalized, high-quality services irrespective of their infectious condition. They are at the front line of the COVID-19 outbreak response and are exposed to hazards that put them at risk of infection, it is vital that they are supported to protect themselves with specific infection prevention procedures and sufficient provision of protective gear at their practice settings, including ventilators, masks, robes, eye cover, face shields, and gloves.

Currently, there has been substantial confusion about the methods of transmission of COVID-19, who is at risk of spreading or catching the virus, and where spreads originate. But Nurses hold a vital function, as one of the most distinguished health service teams, in delivering public awareness regarding disease prevention and in decreasing the dissemination of myths regarding the epidemic. This involves countering myths, guiding people to available health services, and supporting evidence-based patient management and infection reduction initiatives.

Nurses are now actively involved in COVID-19 interventions, and they will remain key players in stopping the pandemic with adequate assistance. Thus, they must be provided with a healthy work environment to empower their efforts to control and manage the outbreak. First and foremost, occupational safety is key to nurses' work during COVID-19, as they are face-to-face with danger on a daily basis. The overarching duty of nurse leadership will be to ensure that the appropriate prevention and security steps are taken to reduce the dangers of the workplace. In this respect, it is important that hospitals have appropriate infection control procedures and personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, goggles, gowns, hand antiseptics, soap and water, and cleaning materials) in ample amounts for personnel who care for suspect or verified COVID-19 patients and the most important is we should cooperate, respect and endorse their unlimited services just to encourage them.

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Vaccines Reduce Transmission

Jennifer Juno | Adam Wheatley

Since COVID-19 vaccines began rolling out across the world, many scientists have been hesitant to say they can reduce transmission of the virus.

Their primary purpose is to prevent you from getting really sick with the virus, and it quickly became clear the vaccines are highly efficient at doing this. Efficacy against symptoms of the disease in clinical trials has ranged from 50% (Sinovac) to 95% (Pfizer/BioNTech), and similar effectiveness has been reported in the real world.

However, even the best vaccines we have are not perfect, which means some vaccinated people still end up catching the virus. We call these cases "breakthrough" infections. Indeed, between April 10 and May 1, six people in hotel quarantine in New South Wales tested positive for COVID-19, despite being fully vaccinated.

But how likely are vaccinated people to actually pass the virus on, if they do get infected? Evidence is increasing that, not only do COVID-19 vaccines either stop you getting sick or substantially reduce the severity of your symptoms, they're also likely to substantially reduce the chance of transmitting the virus to others.

But how does this work, and what does it mean for the pandemic?

Vaccinated people are much less likely to pass on the virus

Early evidence from testing in animals, where researchers can directly study transmission, suggested immunisation with COVID-19 vaccines could prevent animals passing on the virus.

But animals are not people, and the scientific community has been waiting for more conclusive studies in humans.

In April, Public Health England reported the results of a large study of COVID-19 transmission involving more than 365,000 households with a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated members.

It found immunisation with either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine re-



duced the chance of onward virus transmission by 40-60%. This means that if someone became infected after being vaccinated, they were only around half as likely to pass their infection on to others compared to infected people who weren't vaccinated.

One study from Israel, which leads the world in coronavirus vaccinations, gives some clues about what's behind this reduced transmission. Researchers identified nearly 5,000 cases of breakthrough infection in previously vaccinated people, and determined how much virus was present in their nose swabs. Compared to unvaccinated people, the amount of virus detected was significantly lower in those who got vaccinated.

More virus in the nose has been linked to greater infectiousness and increased risks of onward transmission.

These studies show vaccination is likely to substantially reduce virus transmission by reducing the pool of

Although variants have spread widely throughout the world, there are several pieces of good news on this front. Countries with advanced vaccine rollouts are maintaining good control over the virus.

people who become infected, and reducing virus levels in the nose in people with breakthrough infections.

Why does this matter?

If COVID-19 vaccines reduce the chances of transmitting the virus, then each person who is vaccinated protects not only themselves, but also people around them. Breaking chains of transmission within the community and limiting onward spread is critical to help protect people who may respond poorly to immunisation or may not be able to get vaccinated themselves, such as children, some older people, and some people who are immunocompromised.

This also greatly increases the opportunity to achieve some degree of population (or "herd") immunity, and a faster easing of social restrictions.

But what about the limits of vaccines?
Reducing the risk of transmitting the

coronavirus relies on developing strong immunity against the virus. But immunity, even from the vaccines, fades over time. Scientists are actively monitoring people who've had COVID-19 vaccines to understand how long vaccine immunity is likely to last, and if and when booster shots will be required.

Variants of the coronavirus are also concerning. These are strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that carry changes which make them harder to control by immunisation. Such variants present two major challenges: they can evade vaccine immunity and, in some cases, are also more transmissible.

Although variants have spread widely throughout the world, there are several pieces of good news on this front. Countries with advanced vaccine rollouts are maintaining good control over the virus. For example, Israel began its mass vaccination campaign during their third wave, and quickly saw a decline in new cases.

What's more, companies like Moderna are developing updated vaccines to specifically target these variants, with positive early results.

Vaccines don't mean we should stop preventative behaviours

Right now, the global pandemic is complex. Many countries are quickly rolling out available vaccines, and there are a wide variety of lockdowns and social measures in place. Yet, the number of new infections each day across the world is at an all-time high and concerning variants are circulating.

As people are vaccinated, there's a temptation to stop or reduce some important social behaviours such as mask wearing or physical distancing. But, importantly, less transmission is not no transmission.

While vaccinated individuals most likely have a smaller chance of passing on the virus, it's still important to keep up responsible behaviours into the immediate future to protect those who have not, will not, or cannot be immunised.

*By Arrangements with
The Conversation*

Here's How City People Get Health Boost From Nature

Agencies

The findings of a recent study by researchers from Stanford University suggest that even your local city park may be improving your health.

The research, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, lays out how access to nature increases people's physical activity - and therefore overall health - in cities. Lack of physical activity in the U.S. results in USD 117 billion a year in related health care costs and leads to 3.2 million deaths globally every year.

It may seem like an intuitive connection, but the new research closes an important gap in understanding how building nature into cities can support overall human wellbeing.

"Over the past year of shelter-in-place restrictions, we've learned how valuable and fulfilling it can be to spend time outdoors in nature, especially for city-dwellers," said study lead author Roy Remme, a postdoctoral researcher at the Stanford Natural Capital Project at the time of research. "We want to help city planners understand where green spaces might best support people's health, so everyone can receive nature's benefits."

In cities, nature provides cooling shade to neighborhood streets, a safe harbor for pollinators, and rainwater absorption to reduce flooding. It's widely understood that physical activity improves human health, but how parks, lakes, trees and other urban green spaces boost physical activity and overall wellbeing is an unsolved piece of the puzzle.

The team combined decades of public health research with information on nature's benefits to people in cities. They considered how activities like dog walking, jogging, cycling and community gardening are supported by cities' natural spaces. They also factored in things like distance to urban greenery, feelings of safety and accessibility to understand how those elements can alter the benefits of nature for different people. From tree-lined sidewalks to city parks and waterfronts, the team created a model framework to map out urban nature's physical health benefits.

The researchers' framework explores how people might choose to walk an extra few blocks to enjoy a blooming garden or bike to work along a river path, reaping the health benefits of physical activity they may have missed if not motivated by natural spaces.

In Amsterdam, city planners are currently implementing a new green infrastructure plan. Using the city as a hypothetical case study, the researchers applied their framework to understand how Amsterdam's plans to build or improve new parks might affect physical activity for everyone in the city. They also looked at the effects on different sub-populations, like youth, elderly and low-income groups. This example illustrates how the city could invest in urban nature to have the greatest physical activity benefits for human health.

The research will ultimately serve as the basis for a new health model in Natural Capital Project software - free, open-source tools that map the many benefits nature provides people. The software was recently used to inform an assessment of 775 European cities to understand the potential of nature-based solutions for addressing climate change. Eventually, the new health model software will be available to city planners, investors and anyone else interested in new arguments and tools for targeting investments in nature in cities.



Nature's contributions are multidimensional - they can support cognitive, emotional and spiritual well-being, as well as physical health. Previous work from the Natural Capital Project has shown many of these connections, but the new research

adds an important link to physical health that had been missing from the equation.

"Nature experience boosts memory, attention and creativity as well as happiness, social engagement and a sense of meaning in life," said Gretchen Daily, senior author on the paper and faculty director of the Stanford Natural Capital Project. "It might not surprise us that nature stimulates physical activity, but the associated health benefits - from reducing cancer risks to promoting metabolic and other functioning - are really

Over the past year of shelter-in-place restrictions, we've learned how valuable and fulfilling it can be to spend time outdoors in nature, especially for city-dwellers

quite astonishing."

As our world becomes more urbanized and city-centric, the ability to easily access outdoor natural spaces becomes increasingly challenging, especially for overburdened communities. Identifying where urban nature is missing in vulnerable or overburdened communities - then working to fill those gaps - could provide people with valuable new opportunities to improve their health. The researchers hope the new study will equip urban planners with a more complete understanding of the benefits nature can provide their communities.

"Our ultimate goal is to create more healthy, equitable and sustainable cities," said Anne Guerry, co-author and Chief Strategy Officer at the Natural Capital Project. "This research is actionable - and gets us one big step closer."

Study unveils how proteins control information processing in brain

Agencies

A complicated interaction between different proteins is needed for information to pass from one nerve cell to the next. A team of researchers now managed to study this process in the synaptic vesicles, which play an important role in this process.

The study led by a team at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU) appeared in the journal Nature Communications.

Several billion nerve cells communicate with each other in the body so that humans and other living beings can perceive and react to their environment. A host of complex chemical and electrical processes occur within a few milliseconds. "Special messenger substances - known as neurotransmitters - are released at the synapses of the nerve cells. They transmit information between the individual nerve cells," explains Dr Carla Schmidt, an assistant professor at the Centre for Innovation Competence HALOmem at MLU.

The messenger substances are packed into small vesicles called synaptic vesicles, which fuse with the cell membrane in response to an electrical impulse and release the



messenger substances. The messenger substances are then recognised by special receptor proteins in the next nerve cell. For this to succeed, numerous proteins have to work together, meshing like cogs in a clockwork mechanism. However, too little is currently known about how this process precisely works, says Schmidt.

The researchers have used a special form of mass spectrometry to investigate the process. Cross-linking mass spectrometry helps identify the interaction sites of the proteins. These are mixed with a substance that binds together nearby proteins. This substance

reacts at different places depending on how the proteins interact with one another. The mass spectrometer analyses the binding patterns, which can be used to draw conclusions about the arrangement of the proteins. This enables researchers to examine different stages of the vesicles and to detect which protein networks have formed.

The study from Halle enables a more thorough understanding of the process of signal transmission in nerve cells. Knowledge about normal processes helps scientists recognize and understand malfunctions that could trigger diseases such as Alzheimer's.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BARAMULLA KASHMIR

NOTICE

Where a application for transfer of ownership has been received from one.
Shri : Zubair Davood S/o Davood Ahmad Lone R/O Qazipora Tangmarg (Transferor) of I-20 . Vehicle bearing registration number ---- . Chasis number MALB51R1EM035840 Engine no. D4FCM22577 Model 2014 in favour of Shri . Zubair Davood (Transferee).
Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed transfer of ownership shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Baramulla within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper.

No. ARTO/ Bla/370
Dated: 11-5-2021

Sd/ Assistant Regional Transport officer
Baramulla

Jammu & Kashmir Road Transport Corporation.

M.A.ROAD ,Srinagar

No: JKRTC/GM/P&S/RC-101/615
Dated: 11-05-2021

CORRIGENDUM 2

Subject: Extension of Critical dates of E-Tender Notice No: ENIT-01 OF 2021-22 dated 06-04-2021 INVITED FOR RETREADING OF TYRES
In view of poor response of ENIT-01 OF 2021-22 dated 06-04-2021 INVITED FOR RETREADING OF TYRES was extended upto 10-05-2021 but due to poor response the last date is once again extended upto 24-05-2021. The critical dates of the said E-NIT are rescheduled as under:-

Critical Dates	Activity	Date	Re-Scheduled Date
1.	Date of issue of tender notice	06-04-2021	---
2.	Period of downloading of tender	From 07-04-2021 at 10:00 AM to 28-04-2021 (up to 04:00 PM)	24-05-2021 (upto 4.00 P.M)
3.	Period of uploading of tender/bid	From 07-04-2021 at 10:00 AM to 28-04-2021 (up to 04:00 PM)	24-05-2021 (upto 4.00 P.M)
4.	Date of deposition of Hard copy of technical bid	29-04-2021 up to 04:00 PM	24-05-2021 (upto 4.00 P.M)
5.	Date and time of opening of technical bid	04-05-2021 at 02:00PM	27-05-2021 (2.00 P.M)

For any further clarification may please contact office of General Manager (P&S) JKRTC, Srinagar on phone no; 9419008181

Sd/
Dy.General Manager (P&S),
JKRTC, Srinagar

DIPK-NB-698/21

**Convener, District Health Society/
Chief Medical Officer Kupwara**

Sub: Preponement of WALK IN INTERVIEW for Hiring of Medical Officer, (MMBS) under Emergency Response Health Preparedness Package (ERHPP) for CoVID Management for District Kupwara on 15th of May of 2021 (Saturday).

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In continuation to the Advertisement Notification No. 03 of 2019 Dated. 8.05.2021 regarding hiring of Hiring of Medical Officers, (MMBS) unde Emergency Response Health Preparedness Package (ERHPP) for CoVID Management for District Kupwara. The WALK IN INTERVIEW earlier scheduled 18th of May 2021 is hereby preponed and now will be held on 15th of May (Saturday) from 11 AM onwards in the Office Chamber of Chief Medical Officer, Kupwara . The terms and conditions in the advertisement notification shall remain unaltered.

No: DPMU/NHM/Kup/CoVID-HR/240-243
Dated. 10.05.2021

Sd/
Convener,
District Health Society/
Chief Medical Officer
Kupwara

DIPK-1523/21

**OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER OF EXAMINATIONS
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR**

(NAAC ACCREDITED Grade-A+)

NOTICE

It is notified for the information of all Backlog Candidates of BG 2nd Semester Batches 2016-2019 that the link for downloading of Online Examinations Forms shall remain available/ Open on University Website www.kashmiruniversity.net, www.uok.edu.in with the following timelines.

1.	Date of Downloading of Examination forms:-	11May, 2021
2.	Last Date for Submission of Examination Forms:-	21May, 2021

The fee details are as under:-

BG 2nd Semester Batch 2016-2019	Rs. 250/- Per Paper/Subject (in the name of Registrar, University of Kashmir)
Hot & Cold Charges	Rs. 50/- (In the name of Controller of Examinations, University of Kashmir).

Note:-
1. The fee is to be paid in online mode via Debit/ Credit Card/ Rupay Card (free of Charges) UPI (free of Charges).
2. The candidates need not to submit hard copy of the application form in the University or elsewhere. However, they must retain the hard copy with them for record purposes as and when required.
3. In case of any query/ clarification the students can email on eExaminationug@uok.edu.in.

Sd/-
Assistant Controller of Examination
(UG Conduct)

No. F.(Online forms)Exam/KU
Dated: 11.05.2021

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION BIJBEHARA**

www.jkpcdd.co.in Tel No:- 01932-233002 Fax No:- 01932-234397
xenstdbijbehara@yahoo.com / xenstdbijbehara@gmail.com

EXTENSION

Subject: Construction of 11KV feeder I (Shamsipora) and feeder II (Hassanpora/wanpora) by way of double circuit on 11Mtr long S.T Poles for evacuation of power supply from Receiving station Shamsipora.
Reference:1. This office e-NIT No: 01/STB of 2021-22 dated:03-04-2021.

Due to poor response the last date of submission of tenders is hereby extended as under.

A	Last date for downloading of e-Bid (extended) :	21/05/2021 1:00PM
B	Last date for submission of e-Bid (extended)	21/05/2021 2:00PM
C	Online Commercial, technical & Financial e-Bid opening date & time	22/05/2021 2:00PM

Other terms and conditions shall remain same.

Sd/
Executive Engineer
Sub Transmission Division
Bijbehara

No:STB: 385-89
Dated: 10-05-2021

DIPK-NB-685/21

Overall Disruption Caused By Lockdowns May Be Lesser This Time Around: India Ratings



Express News Service

NEW DELHI: Partial or full lockdowns have begun blooming all across India as states scramble to contain the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, but India Ratings and Research said in a note on Monday that this is likely to only have a muted impact on the overall business environment—the past six months have seen export demand and improved balance sheets.

The severity of the impact will not be uniform however. The agency says that though supply chain disruptions could play out, the overall impact on

corporates is expected to be moderate to minimal. But small businesses and retail borrowers are likely to see increased stress. The latter could lead to a build-up of potential asset quality issues in the unsecured lending books of lenders and an increase in softer delinquencies in the MFI segment, it noted.

According to the agency, this assessment will change for the worse if there was to be a stringent national lockdown or a protracted normalisation of activities due to the pandemic. The economy in general, it noted, will have a bumpy road to recovery.

India Ratings observed that the second wave is expected to be less disruptive than the first wave for overall businesses, despite the daily caseload reaching more than four times of the peak level seen during the first wave, because the administrative response is likely to be confined to regions. The agency believes companies are also better prepared to operate under localised lockdown conditions while adhering to various guidelines.

Tens Of Millions On The Fringes Sink Into Poverty As Covid Wrecks India



Agencies

After dipping into his savings to weather India's snap pandemic lockdown last March, Manoj Kumar was just getting his head above water again earning 600 rupees (\$8) a day as a construction worker in the tourist hotspot of Goa.

He'd squirreled away enough for a trip last month to his native village in Bihar some 1,490 miles away for a wedding. He's still there, stuck in one of the nation's least developed states, as a fierce second Covid-19 wave triggers the world's worst health crisis and prevents his return. On a lucky day, he'll land some odd jobs that fetch him as much as 300 rupees. But there aren't too many of those chores left. So he's taking loans to feed and clothe his wife and three kids.

"It is all in God's hands now," said Kumar, who's told his wife to curtail spending on items such as lentils, cooking oil and clothes. "I don't know when I will return. My family is worried and doesn't want me to go back as the cases are also rising in Goa."

Kumar, 40, is one of the millions of migrant workers who form part of India's vast unreported informal sector, which ac-

counts for half of its \$2.9 trillion, domestic demand-driven economy. A protracted Covid wave is shrinking incomes and wiping out savings of people like Kumar, posing the risk of a double whammy for Asia's third-largest economy that's still struggling to recover from last year's pandemic-induced recession.

The government estimates India's gross domestic product shrank 8 per cent in the year ended March, its biggest contraction since 1952. Many economists are cutting their forecasts for the current fiscal year as rising unemployment and dwindling savings dim the chances of a double-digit growth. Shaun Roache, chief economist for Asia Pacific at S&P Global Ratings, slashed his prediction to 9.8 per cent from 11 per cent earlier. Fitch Solutions sees the economy expanding by 9.5 per cent, a projection that's below the Bloomberg consensus of around 11 per cent.

"A drawn-out Covid-19 outbreak will impede India's economic recovery," Singapore-based Roache said. "The country already faces a permanent loss of output versus its pre-pandemic path, suggesting a long-term production deficit equivalent to about 10 per cent of GDP."

Ambitious Target Of \$400 Bn Exports Can Be Achieved This Year: Goyal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A sharp rise in exports in April is giving a hope that the ambitious target of USD 400 billion merchandise shipments can be achieved this year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

He also said that the Department of Commerce has taken up several issues of exporters with the Ministry of Finance for their early resolution, like RoDTEP (remission of duties and taxes on export products), MEIS (merchandise export from India scheme), and inverted duty structure.

The minister added that there is a large potential for enhancing exports in several sectors like

pharmaceuticals, engineering, auto-component, fisheries and agro-products.

The minister was addressing a meeting of export promotion councils.

India's merchandise exports in April jumped by 197 per cent to USD 30.21 billion as against USD 10.17 billion in April 2020 and USD 26.04 billion in April 2019.

"Performance of exports in April 2021 and 2020-21 gives a hope that an ambitious target of USD 400 billion merchandise exports can be achieved this year," the minister said.

Regarding certain issues being raised by exporters, Goyal said that they should approach the Covid helpdesk of the department for resolving the problems

emanating due to Covid-related measures.

Rates for RoDTEP have not yet been announced by the finance ministry even as the scheme would have to be implemented from January. Exporting community has time and again urged the government regarding the rates as it would help them in factoring in those rates while negotiating prices of goods with international buyers.

The reimbursement of taxes such as duty on power charges, VAT on fuel in transportation, farm sector, captive power generation, mandi tax, stamp duty and central excise duty on fuel used in transportation would make Indian products competitive in the global markets.

COVID Crisis: HUL To Provide 4,000 Oxygen Concentrators To India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) on Tuesday said it will provide 4,000 oxygen concentrators to India to address the acute shortage of medical oxygen as the country grapples with a deadly second wave of the pandemic.

Under its 'Mission HO2PE', HUL will send 4,000 concentrators to the worst affected cities which includes Delhi, Lucknow, Bangalore etc, the FMCG major said in a statement.

"HUL is partnering with KVN Foundation and Portea, India's largest home healthcare company, to make the O2 concentrators available to needy patients promptly and efficiently," it said.

Portea will have access to 3,000 concentrators, which will be provided free of charge to patients, while the remaining will be donated by HUL to hospitals in nearly 20 locations across India.

HUL's partnership with KVN Foundation and Portea will pro-



vide oxygen for COVID-19 patients directly in their homes, reducing the pressure on healthcare infrastructure which is already under duress.

"Patients can avail of this service by calling the 'Mission HO2PE' helpline number and request for oxygen concentrators," it added.

Apart from O2 concentrators, HUL will also be providing ventilators and other medical equipment for hospitals, including in rural areas.

Besides this partnership, HUL is also facilitating and covering the cost for vaccination of its out-

er core of around 300,000 people including those who work for suppliers, distributors as well as Shakti Ammas in rural areas.

According to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday, the single day rise in new coronavirus infections in India fell to 3.29 lakh taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 2,29,92,517.

A total of 3,29,942 infections were reported in a span of 24 hours, while the death toll climbed to 2,49,992 with 3,876 fresh fatalities, the latest data said.

COVID-19 | India's Smartphone Market To Slowdown In 2021



Agencies

The smartphone industry in the country is expected to witness growth challenges in April-June quarter due to the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic even as the sector saw a healthy year-on-year growth of 18% to 38 million units shipments in the first quarter (January-March) of 2021, according to International Data Corporation (IDC).

However, when compared to strong October-December 2020, the Indian smartphone market declined by 14% in the first quarter.

"The April-June quarter is expected to face growth challenges under the weight of the second wave of infections. However, the high shipments from the first quarter should be able to suffice for the immediate demand," Navkendar Singh, Research Director, Client Devices & IPDS, IDC India, said.

While he added that the impact is estimated to be less pronounced compared with last year, with factories being operational today, only limited restrictions on logistics/transportation and State-level lockdowns instead of a nationwide lockdown, the recovery in 2021 "might not be as smooth as expected earlier, with uncertainty around the lasting impact of the second wave and a possible third wave in next few months."

IDC expects a rebound in consumer sentiments in the second half of 2021, resulting in a single-digit growth annually. However, the degree of growth will be restricted due to reduced discretionary spending, supply constraints, and anticipated price hikes in components in upcoming quarters, Mr. Singh said.

As per IDC, Xiaomi led the smartphone market during the quarter with 27.2% market share, followed by Samsung (19% market share), vivo (17.3% market share), OPPO (12.2% market share) and realme (10.7% market share).

"Online channels continued their growth momentum ahead of the overall market at 25% YoY, despite a slip in its share to 46% quarter-over-quarter (QoQ), while offline channels grew at 13% YoY. However, both the channels started to face higher channel inventory towards the second half of the quarter," it said.

Additionally, almost 7% of overall shipments were 5G, leading to a 3% YoY increase in average selling price (ASP) to USD 176. The premium segment (over \$500), grew 143% YoY, with 71% of those based on 5G. "Apple, Samsung, and OnePlus continued to dominate in that space; the iPhone 11 and 12 together accounted for 28% of shipments; followed by the debut of the Galaxy S21 series and the OnePlus 9 series," IDC said.

Rupee Pares Losses To Close Flat At 73.34 Against US Dollar

The rupee pared its early losses to close almost flat at 73.34 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday amid a lacklustre trend in the domestic equity markets.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened lower at 73.47 against the greenback and declined to the day's low of 73.53.

The rupee later cut losses and finally ended at 73.34, registering a rise of 1 paisa over its previous close of 73.35 against the US dollar.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.07 per cent to 90.14.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 340.60 points or 0.69 per cent lower at 49,161.81, while the broader NSE Nifty declined 91.60 points or 0.61 per cent to 14,850.75.

Forex traders said concerns



over rising Covid-19 cases weighed on investors' sentiment.

New cases of coronavirus in India fell to 3.29 lakh after 14 days taking the total tally of Covid-19 infections to 2,29,92,517, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net buyers in the capital markets, as they purchased shares worth Rs 583.69 crore on Monday, as per provisional data.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.66 per cent to USD 67.87 per barrel. -PTI

SHORT TAKES

Amazon Prime Day Sale Paused In India Due To Surging COVID-19 Cases

Amazon Prime Day sale has been paused in India, a company spokesperson confirmed to Gadgets 360 on Friday, as the country battles a severe second wave of coronavirus infections that has left thousands dead.

In the past week, India has reported 1.5 million new infections and record daily death tolls as its hospitals run out of beds and medical oxygen.

Amazon, Google, and several Indian firms have jumped in to help the world's second biggest population battle coronavirus by pitching in with everything from airlifts of medical equipment and funding pledges to making medical oxygen.

Amazon's plans to pause its Prime Day event in India was first reported by CNBC early on Friday.



The annual event, offered only to Prime members by Amazon, is typically held in July to boost sales.

The discounts are a key way Amazon markets Prime, a fast-growing and media-streaming service that incentivises subscribers to do more shopping on Amazon.

Smartphone maker Realme has also decided to postpone its upcoming launches due to the current second wave of COVID-19 cases sweeping across the country. It was scheduled to host a launch event on May 4 to unveil a new flagship phone powered by the MediaTek Di-

ensity 1200 SoC. This was largely anticipated to be called Realme X7 Max, a rebranded model of the Realme GT Neo that was launched in China earlier. Realme was also looking to launch a new Realme TV, presumably the Realme TV 4K 43-inch model at the launch event.

In a fresh tweet, Realme India CEO Madhav Sheth has confirmed that the company is postponing upcoming launches and anniversary celebrations as India battles unprecedented challenges. The tweet reads, "After careful consideration, Realme has decided to postpone the upcoming smartphone and IoT products' launch along with anniversary celebrations. In these difficult times, let's focus on contributing as much as possible. Stay home, Stay strong! We will be back soon." -REUTERS

Sensex Tumbles 341 Points On Weak Global Cues, Nifty Ends Below 14,900

Snapping its four-session rising streak, equity benchmark Sensex tumbled 341 points on Tuesday, led by losses in index-heavyweights HDFC twins, Kotak Bank and TCS amid negative cues from global markets.

The 30-share BSE index ended 340.60 points or 0.69 per cent lower at 49,161.81.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty slumped 91.60 points or 0.61 per cent to 14,850.75.

Kotak Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding 3 per cent, followed by HDFC, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, HUL and Titan.

On the other hand, NTPC, ONGC, PowerGrid, Sun Pharma, UltraTech Cement and SBI were among the gainers.

According to Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities, weak cues from



global markets and selling pressure across the counters dragged benchmark indices.

"Rising concerns over inflation globally due to sharp rise in commodity prices dragged Asian markets. Further, China inflation data also weighed on sentiments. However, domestic benchmark indices outperformed its Asian peers," he said.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended on a negative note, while Shanghai finished with gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading with significant losses in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.66 per cent lower at USD 67.87 per barrel. -PTI

India projected to grow at 10.1% in 2022 but outlook for 2021 highly fragile: UN

Press Trust of India

UNITED NATIONS: India is forecast to grow at 10.1 per cent in 2022, becoming the fastest growing major economy in the world, the United Nations said on Tuesday, but cautioned that the growth outlook of 2021 was "highly fragile" as the country was the "new hotbed of the pandemic."

The United Nations, in its mid-year update of the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) which was first released in January 2021, projected that the Indian economy would grow at 10.1 per cent in the calendar year 2022, nearly double the 5.9 per cent growth forecast for the country in the January report.

At a growth rate of 10.1 per cent in 2022, India will be the fastest growing major economy in the world, ahead of China, which is projected to grow at 5.8 per cent, a slowdown from 8.2 per cent in 2021.

The mid-year update said that India will register a 7.5-per cent growth rate in calendar year

2021, after an estimated contraction of 6.8 per cent in 2020.

The mid-year update provides an upward revision for growth projections for India from the UN forecasts released in January.

The January World Economic Situation and Prospects report had estimated that the Indian economy will contract by 9.6 per cent in 2020, and projected a 7.3 per cent growth rate in 2021 and a 5.9 per cent GDP growth in 2022.

The report however noted that the growth outlook is "bleak" for a large number of countries in Africa, South Asia as well as Latin America and the Caribbean, where the pandemic is still raging.

India, with daily new infections averaging over 300,000 during the third week of April, is now the new hotbed of the pandemic. The worst is far from over for Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Colombia," it said, adding that for a vast majority of developing countries, economic output will remain below 2019 levels for most of 2021.

Amid insufficient fiscal space to stimulate demand, many of these countries will face low and

stagnant growth and the prospect of a lost decade," it said.

India has been particularly affected by a brutal second wave, which is overwhelming the public health system in large parts of the country. The country has expanded vaccine eligibility and is ramping up supply in every possible manner, but access to vaccines is unequal and insufficient to meet the massive demand. Given the fluid situation, India's growth outlook in 2021 is highly fragile, it said.

In an overview of the global progress on COVID-19 vaccination, the report said that in India the number of doses administered is low at a ratio of 10 per 100 people, as compared to 68.2 per 100 people in the US, 12.4 in Russia and 13.6 in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2020, investment growth in India fell to 10.2 per cent, the third highest contraction among selected G20 economies after Mexico (-18.2 per cent) and South Africa (-17.5 per cent).

The mid-year update noted that South Asia -- already one of the hardest hit regions in the

world -- will experience the COVID-19 crisis well into 2021.

While a few smaller countries in the region have managed to roll out vaccinations, the largest economies continue to struggle to contain the increasing waves of infections," it said.

Economic growth in South Asia will return in 2021 at 6.9 per cent against a 5.6 per cent drop in 2020, but the recovery will be very uneven, and the scarring effects will run deep, it said.

Indeed, South Asia's regional economic growth in 2021 will still be insufficient to undo last year's 6.7 per cent loss in GDP per capita. Many of the region's households that have fallen into extreme poverty will thus remain trapped in their precarious condition, it said.

Cautioning that risks are furthermore exceptionally high for the region, the report said South Asia was already lagging in economic performance before the pandemic, with regional economic growth as low as 3.1 per cent in 2019.

According to the World Economic Situation and Prospects mid-2021 report, following a

sharp contraction of 3.6 per cent in 2020, the global economy is now projected to expand by 5.4 per cent in 2021, reflecting an upward revision from the UN forecasts released in January.

Amid rapid vaccinations and continued fiscal and monetary support measures, China and the United States the two largest economies are on the path to recovery. While the global growth outlook has improved, led by robust rebound in China and the US, surging COVID-19 infections and inadequate vaccination progress in many countries threaten a broad-based recovery of the world economy, it said.

Vaccine inequity between countries and regions is posing a significant risk to an already uneven and fragile global recovery, said UN Chief Economist Elliott Harris. Timely and universal access to COVID-19 vaccinations will mean the difference between ending the pandemic promptly and placing the world economy on the trajectory of a resilient recovery, or losing many more years of growth, development and opportunities.

Chinese Loan App Cases: ED Attaches Over Rs 76-Cr Assets

Press Trust of India

New Delhi; The ED has attached assets of over Rs 76 crore, including of some fintech companies "controlled" by Chinese nationals and fintech major Razorpay, as part of a money laundering probe against certain Chinese 'loan app' companies whose bullying tactics are alleged to have forced many debtors to end their lives during the stressful times of COVID-19.

The central probe agency said in a statement that its criminal investigation, under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), is based on multiple FIRs filed by the criminal investigation department (CID) Police in Bengaluru after they received "complaints from various customers, who had availed loans and faced harassment from the recovery agents of these money lending companies".

Numerous reports of blackmail and extortion by these

"loan sharks" leading to death by suicide of gullible debtors were reported last year after the coronavirus infection and the resulting lockdown began in the country.

This is the first case of criminal attachment of assets by the ED in these instances which is probing some other cases of this nature in other states too.

The amount attached by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the statement said, "pertains to seven companies out of which three are fintech (financial technology) companies namely Mad Elephant Network Technology Private Limited, Baryonyx Technology Private Limited and Cloud Atlas Future Technology Private Limited which are controlled by Chinese nationals and three NBFCs (non banking financial companies) registered with RBI."

The NBFCs are X10 Financial Services Private Limited, Track Fin-ed Private Limited and Jamnadas Morarjee Finance Private Limited, the ED said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

LG Announces

senior citizens who have lost only earning member of the family will be provided special pension for life while children, who have lost their parents to this calamity, will be provided with special scholarship by the government.

"The Government has decided to provide Rs 1000 per month to all registered construction workers, ponywalas, palikwalas, pithuwalas for the next two months," the LG said, as per official spokesperson, adding that the global pandemic has rendered thousands of daily workers jobless.

"The government is also adopting other mitigation strategies and all concerned officers have been directed to ensure the supply of ration to all ration card holders on priority. Installments of social welfare schemes like old-age pension, Laadli Beti etc and PMAY, MGNREGA, and other welfare schemes will be released immediately," he added.

Announcing these measures while chairing a high-level meeting, the LG, as per the official spokesperson said that in these challenging times, the old-age homes, orphanages will be extended all the support from the government including rations etc.

"Our top-most priority is to defeat this pandemic with people's participation. I urge all of you to follow Covid appropriate behaviour and get vaccinated. We will soon prevail together over this pandemic," Sinha said, as per the official spokesperson.

He further said that the LG also observed that an instruction would be passed soon to all DCs to issue death certificates to the people who died due to Covid-19 disease.

"The Lt Governor said that Rs 55 crore would be released under State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to all the Deputy Commissioners, both Divisional Commissioners and J&K Police for emergency use during the current Covid-19 crisis. Rs 2 crore will be released to all 20 Deputy Commissioners, Rs 5 crore to both Divisional Commissioners and Rs 5 crore to J&K Police for emergency use under SDRF," he added.

The official spokesperson said that earlier, the LG received feedback from the senior officers over the Covid-19 management and other measures in J&K. He also enquired about the availability of Covid dedicated beds, high flow oxygen supply, installation of oxygen plants in the Union Territory.

"He was informed that additional oxygen plants are being imported and would be installed soon in the government-run hospitals. The Lt Governor reiterated that the additional oxygen capacity would cater to the requirement of oxygen, besides helping in enhancing the bed capacity with oxygen support," the official spokesperson said.

He also said that the Sinha directed the concerned officers to enforce strict Corona curfew across Jammu & Kashmir and allow only emergency and essential services during the restrictions to break the chain of transmission.

The meeting was attended in person and through virtual mode by LG's advisors and senior government functionaries.

Cong Terms

Hospitals and peripheral hospitals to check the high mortality rate due to the novel infection. We welcome certain relief measures announced by the Lt Governor for the families of the Covid victims and other poor sections. However, the same is inadequate and there is a need to include other deserving sections in the relief package, the JKPC said in a statement here.

It said the party welcomes certain initiatives taken by the government like pension to senior citizens who lost their bread earners to the pandemic but feels the two monthly relief to labourers at Rs 1,000 per month is meager and should be enhanced to Rs 6,000 per month.

The party asked the government to extend financial assistance to roadside vendors, small traders, transport operators including helpers as well other non registered labourers in the package.

All other daily bread earners should be identified and given financial assistance till lockdown is over to manage meals to their families, the party said.

It also stressed for further strengthening of the overall health and medicare facilities with engagement of required manpower and removing the shortcomings in the logistics in all hospitals to save lives in view of high mortality among COVID-infected patients in Jammu hospitals. (PTI)

65 More Die

officials said that Srinagar reported 846, Baramulla 361, Budgam 322, Pulwama 282, Kupwara 171, Anantnag 198, Bandipora 85, Ganderbal 52, Kulgam 269, Shopian 58, Jammu 602, Udhampur 156, Rajouri 208, Doda 81, Kathua 251, Samba 101, Kishtwar 52, Poonch 87, Ramban 67 and Reasi 101 new cases of coronavirus

Also, the officials said, 3537 more patients have recovered, 1275 from Jammu Division and 2262 from Kashmir. Active positive cases crossed the 50701 mark—18041 in Jammu and 32660 in Kashmir.

23 Prisoners

detected among the 635 inmates lodged at Srinagar's Central Jail, a top police official said Tuesday.

According to an official spokesperson, V. K. Singh, DGP, Prisons on Tuesday visited Central jail Srinagar to resolve last minute issues including a parole case. His visit came a day after prior to relinquishing his charge.

DG directed the staff for strict adherence to SOPs issued to prevent spread of COVID-19 in jails.

"At present, 635 inmates are lodged in the Central Jail Srinagar which included 27 female inmates and there is no COVID positive case in the jail," the official spokesperson said, adding that 4572 inmates are lodged in the 13 jails of the Union Territory.

He further said that 23 inmates —21 in district jail Kathua, one each from Kot Bhalwal and district jail Jammu are Covid positive and are being given necessary medical care.

"Presently, 219 inmates are under quarantine across prisons of J&K as new prisoners undergo mandatory COVID-19 testing and quarantine for 14 days," the official spokesperson added.

More Children

prevailing second wave of virus more children are infected which demonstrates severity of infection

"Cough, cold, fever, body ache and diarrhoea are the symptoms of Covid infection among children. Oxygen saturation of children should be above 94. However, the O2 saturation reading between 94 to 90 is a symptom of mild infection and below it indicates severity of infection," Dr Jan said.

"In severe infection, a child becomes lethargic, vomits and gets diarrhoea. Sometimes children get convulsions and shock due to infection," he added.

While sensitizing to monitor symptoms of their children, the HoD Paediatrics said that parents must monitor and check whether a child is breathing, responding normally or has become lethargic.

"Infectious children should be kept in isolation and administered immunity boosters including vitamins and zinc besides a paracetamol tablet," he said, adding "In a condition of severe symptoms a child should be hospitalized."

However, Dr Jan maintained that Covid vaccination for children was not allowed because the issue is under trial, yet.

"Although, the USA has allowed vaccination for children above 12 year old just a day before, Covid vaccination for children has not been permitted in other countries till now," Dr Jan said.

Regarding breast feeding, he said that Covid positive mothers can breastfeed children while properly following SOPs particularly with wearing face masks and sanitizers applied on hands after washing.

"Besides, other routine immunisation to children after their covid infection can be given two weeks after the child becomes asymptomatic. However, if the child has received steroids or tocilizumab then routine immunisation should be deferred by 3 months," he said.

He also advised that children should be kept away from elderly people because old age people are prone to get covid infection and also have high morbidity risk to them.

The noted Paediatrician also urged people to get vaccinated saying that there was no need to worry for mild reactions.

'We Heard Cries

on pruning positions. "It took the hospital authorities 10 minutes to restore the oxygen supply," the attendant said. "A similar incident happened again in the

morning."

However, Dr. Bilques Shah, the designated Covid Nodal officer at JLNH hospital, Rainawari, told Kashmir Observer that no such incident took place in the hospital.

"For the last 20 days we are continuously treating 60-70 high-risk patients and if oxygen goes off even for a minute there will be a catastrophe," Dr Bilques said.

"We have a direct feeder from a receiving station for stable electric supply," she added.

"In addition to that, we have one more backup power supply from Khanyar receiving station. And then we have 1000 LPM [Litres Per Minute] oxygen plant and one more plant with a capacity of 620 LPM will be ready by tomorrow."

JLNH hospital was one of the first health centres to be declared as Covid-designated hospitals last year when Kashmir got its first Covid case on March 18, 2020.

"And since then, the hospital has remained at the forefront barring some stray incidents," said a senior doctor posted in the hospital. "Even now, in the middle of this second wave, we are doing our best to mitigate the health crisis."

However, complaining about non-availability of doctors, another attendant told Kashmir Observer that people helped each other on Sunday night in stabilizing their patients.

"There was no doctor or nurse present in the ward when the incident happened," he said, adding that the oxygen level in ward 8 is extremely low.

"In our ward, 15-litre oxygen gives an output of only 5 litres. We have complained to the administration, but no action has been taken so far."

3 Militants Killed

militants, the police spokesperson said opened fire upon the search team after rejecting the surrender offer given to them.

"The joint party retaliated to the fire triggering off an encounter. The joint teams also rescued all the civilians trapped in the gunfire and halted the operation for the time to ensure safety and safe evacuation of people from the area of gunfight," he said.

He further said that after ensuring all the civilians were safe, the operation was resumed and all the militants were killed in the ensuing encounter. He said that the bodies of the three killed militants were also retrieved from the encounter site.

The police spokesperson identified the trio as Ilyas Ahmad Dar alias Sameer of Danwathpora Kokernag, Ubaid Shafi alias Abdullah of Batamalo Srinagar and Aqib Ahmad Lone alias Sahil of Khandaypora Kulgam.

"As per police records, all the killed militants were linked with proscribed outfit LeT and part of the groups involved in several crime cases including attacks on security forces and security establishments," he said.

The police spokesperson also claimed that Ubaid Shafi was part of the militant group involved in the killing of a police constable Rameez Ahmad in Aaribagh area of Nowgam in Srinagar on April 1.

"Arms & ammunition including 01 AK-47 rifle, 02 pistols and incriminating materials have also been recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other crimes," he said.

"The last rites of the killed militants shall be performed after conducting medico-legal formalities and the nearest family members of local militants shall be allowed to participate in the last rites," he added.

He further said that a case under relevant sections of law has been registered in this connection and further investigation has been initiated.

"People are requested to cooperate with police till the area is completely sanitized and cleared off of all the explosive materials, if any," the police spokesperson added.

He also quoted IGP Kashmir as urging parents of the "misguided youth" to help police to bring their wards back into mainstream.

Talks Only

Kashmir and provided relief to the people of Kashmir.

"Jammu and Kashmir cannot be an internal issue of India as it is on the agenda of the UN

and there are several Security Council resolutions on it, he said while addressing a news conference in Islamabad.

India has repeatedly said Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and the country is capable of solving its own problems.

Indo-Pak relations deteriorated after India announced withdrawing special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcation of the state into two union territories in August, 2019. India has maintained that issue related to Article 370 of the Indian Constitution was entirely an internal matter of the country.

However, lately there has been some improvement when the two countries agreed in February to restore peace on the Line of Control. It is said that the rival officials have been interacting through the back channel diplomacy to ease tension.

Khan also responded to several questions about domestic issues and defended the performance of his government which came to power in August 2018.

Weather In

forecast of any major rainfall this week," he said.

Regarding Ladakh, he said mainly dry weather is most likely during for next one week. However, he said light rain or snow may occur at isolated places on higher reaches.

Meanwhile, the official said that Srinagar received 9.1mm of rainfall during the last 24 hours till 0830 hours. The summer capital of J&K recorded a low of 12.6 degree Celsius against 10.7 degree Celsius on the previous night which is 2.0 degree Celsius above normal for this time of the season, he said.

Qazigund recorded a low of 10.8 degree Celsius and received 15.2mm of rain during the time, the official said.

Pahalgam, the famous tourist resort in South Kashmir, recorded a low of 8.5 degree Celsius against normal of 5.1 degree Celsius while it had rainfall of 2.6mm during the time.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of 10.3 degree Celsius against normal of 9.3 degree Celsius while it had 12.2mm of rainfall, the official said.

Kupwara received 2.6mm of rain and recorded a low of 10.5 degree Celsius against 9.6 degree Celsius normal 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 5.0 degree Celsius against normal of 5.5 degree Celsius for this time of the year while it has 4.2mm of rain in the last 24 hours during the time, the official said. (GNS)

Meet Kapil Raina

when he was elected as the President of the Indian Commercial Pilot Association, Kapil Raina sought ways to leverage the power and responsibilities bestowed upon him by the position to the benefit of local Kashmiris.

Identifying that Kashmiris frequently travelled to Medina/Jeddah for a pilgrimage to Mecca, and that the absence of a direct flight to and from Saudi Arabia was burdensome for many, Kapil Raina negotiated with the management of Indian Airlines to begin flights connecting Kashmir and Saudi Arabia during 2009.

He successfully spearheaded the mission and was able to start direct flights to Medina and Jeddah, for the first time from Srinagar.

"I have always had a lot of empathy for my people. Even during storms or foggy conditions, no matter how late it was at night, I would opt to fly to help delayed Kashmiri passengers. The route that I started from Srinagar became known as the 'Haji flight' amongst Kashmiris, who are known to have benefitted tremendously by that operation," he stated matter-of-factly.

This initiative has been the most prominent feather in Raina's cap for a long time.

The Hajj flight operation was kickstarted by flying a modest aircraft to voyage people to Medina but it quickly upgraded to using a Boeing 777, one of the largest airliners, for transportation.

Kashmiri Muslims who had to make a pit stop at New Delhi, were able to save travel time and money due to this Kashmiri Pandit's proactive leadership.

Despite being Delhi-based, Kapil Raina does not like being called a migrant.

After studying at Burn Hall and DAV schools,

he moved to Delhi in 1984 with his family.

According to him, he never migrated from Kashmir and has two homes of his own in the valley that he is very fond of.

"I'm proud of being Kashmiri," the pilot said. "The conflicts and wars ravaging us have never affected my relationship with locals. I have had wonderful relationships with everyone who worked or lived around us in Srinagar and my family's business was instrumental in maintaining that."

As a concerned citizen, he thinks about the future of his homeland quite often.

He has been trying to catch the Indian government's attention towards the potential of developing an aviation academy in the valley since 2001.

"Every time the government changes at the central level I write them a letter proposing the establishment of an aviation academy or university in Srinagar but I am afraid my letters are delivered to the trash can," he stated.

The pilot believes that youngsters from J&K have the talent to pursue a career in aviation but are deprived of resources and facilities to train for the same.

On his part, Kapil Raina has mentored countless Kashmiris in their journey to becoming commercial pilots, including a shawl hawker and hence asserts that the potential must not go wasted.

"With an aviation university in the region, young Kashmiris can undergo cabin crew training, aircraft engine maintenance training, commercial pilot training, to seek employment and growth. We have the space and the resources, however, all of it needs to be mobilised. An academy of this nature can create employment and also prepare others for better opportunities around the world," he explained.

But he's yet to receive a response to his decades-long campaign.

Still employed with Air India, currently as a Deputy General Manager (DGM) of Operations and Store, Kapil Raina is a brother to his passengers.

Greeting the guests on his flight to Srinagar with As-salamu Alaykum, an unconventional salutation for an Indian airline, he begins all his trips around his homeland on this warm note most of the times.

The pilot holds the home of his childhood close to his heart and dreams of a strong future for its current children.

"For that, we need to focus on building our technical skills and knowledge as a people," he concludes with hope.

Lightning Kills

He said some clothes and other items were also burnt by the lightning.

The body of the deceased was handed over to his family for last rites after completion of legal formalities, the official said. (PTI)

OGW Held With

materials, ammunition including 12 grenades 182 rounds of AK-47 and an amount of Rs.169500 were recovered from his possession.

"Accordingly, a case FIR No. 30/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Kralpora and further investigation is in progress," the police spokesperson said.

Elderly Couple

Sub-District Hospital Tral for treatment. Their condition is said to be stable.

According to the reports, by the time flames were brought under the control by locals and fire fighters, the kitchen had suffered massive damage.

44 Lockdown

have been seized while 17 commercial establishments have been sealed as per procedure under the law, they said.

The officials said that with the continuing rise in COVID-19 cases, all members of the public are advised to avoid unnecessary travel, visits only to local places, nearby shops for essentials and medicines, use of face masks and sanitisers and avoid crowded spots.

The public are requested to adhere to COVID protocols and containment measures that are in place to prevent the further spread of COVID infection, the officials further said.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has extended curfew measures in place to check the spread of coronavirus till May 17. (PTI)

Some Indian Players Didn't Like COVID-19 Restrictions: MI Coach Pamment

Press Trust of India

AUCKLAND: Mumbai Indians fielding coach James Pamment has claimed that some senior Indian players did not like being subjected to restrictions inside the currently-suspended IPL's bio-bubble but it felt completely safe till the time cases from participating teams hadn't come to light.

Pamment did not elaborate on his assertion about the Indian players and did not take any names either. The IPL was suspended on May 4.

"Some of the senior Indian guys don't like being restricted and told what to do," he was quoted as saying by stuff.co.nz. "But we did feel safe at no point did we feel the bubble would be compromised... We felt the travel was always going to be a challenge."

The New Zealander, a former Northern Districts coach, said he and the MI players started to feel apprehensive shortly before the competition was halted.

"It was when cases started to come with the teams. They were a little more fearful, a little more apprehensive," said the 52-year-old, who returned home on Saturday.

"Chennai (CSK) announced their cases and we'd played Chennai at the weekend, so straight away, the dynamic changed. I certainly noticed from within my group. I'd spent most of my time with the Kiwis and the Aussies, their mindset had changed."

"We started to get Indian guys in our environment whose families were sick. There were be-

reavements as well and we were taking a bit of a cue from those guys who were saying 'no, we want to carry on' and the messages were coming back that this is a good distraction."

Pamment said at no stage did he feel his health was going to be put in jeopardy within the bubble set up by MI at a Mumbai hotel.

"You felt as long as everyone was disciplined and people weren't tempted. You did feel confident you'd be fine, and everybody around you would be fine...an extremely safe bubble being formed."

He said long before the suspension of IPL, he was aware of the pandemic getting worse in India and the event should not have been spread across six venues.

"If it (IPL) had been held solely in Mumbai, perhaps it'd have been easily managed, but once cases rise in Mumbai, you're looking at ground staff, you're looking at different service-type people that it's going to be hard to manage," he said.

"We had a case ourselves on our first travel to Chennai it was a support staff member, fortunately picked up very quickly and he was isolated, and none of the people considered close contacts to him were infected."

"It was a very early reminder that your bubble's not impenetrable. We probably got even stricter around how we operated."

He also said that allowing 70,000 spectators in Ahmedabad for Test matches against England "was a little irresponsible and now Ahmedabad is a hot-bed of COVID".

India's Tour Of Sri Lanka: Hardik Pandya, Shikhar Dhawan In Line For Captaincy



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan and flamboyant all-rounder-turned specialist batsman Hardik Pandya will be locked in a two-way fight for India captaincy if Shreyas Iyer doesn't get fit in time for the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka in July.

India's limited overs specialists will be playing three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs in the island nation during the second half of July, when big guns like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be in England for a marquee five-match Test series.

"It is still not clear if Shreyas will recover fully and will be match-fit in time for tour of Sri Lanka. Normally, a surgery of this scale along with rest, extensive rehab and training to get back in shape takes around four

months," a senior BCCI source privy to selection matters told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"In case Shreyas was available, he would have been the automatic choice for captaincy."

It's only logical that the two contenders for captaincy are 35-year-old Dhawan, who has had good "one and half IPLs" in last two seasons and Pandya junior, who is one of the most accomplished match-winners.

"Shikhar has had two very good IPL including this curtailed one and being the senior most among those who are available for selection, he is a very strong contender. Also he has been a solid performer for India for past eight years," an official said.

As far as Hardik is concerned, his reputation as a white-ball match-winner can't be discounted either.

"Yes, Hardik hasn't been regularly bowling for MI or India in

recent times. However, he is the man with x-factor and among options available. He is miles ahead of his peers in terms of being an impact performer. And who knows, may be extra responsibility brings the best out of him."

Pandya was included in the four-Test series at home against England so that his bowling workload is increased keeping the England tour in mind but it is learnt that the Baroda man is unlikely to bowl more than an odd over or two in the shortest format or ODI in near future.

"Hardik, after his back surgery to cure stress fracture, is not the same bowler anymore. He was a fast medium bowler before injury but to bowl at a brisk 135 kmph plus pace consistently, it could impact his back."

"So he is focussing more on his match finishing skills," a person in the know of things said.

England Players Unlikely To Be Available For Re-Scheduled IPL: ECB

Press Trust of India

LONDON: England have a busy international schedule from June onwards and the players are unlikely to be available for the remainder of the suspended IPL if the T20 tournament is re-scheduled this year, says ECB Director of Cricket Ashley Giles.

The IPL was suspended last week after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble. There are two windows for the T20 event to be resumed this year — one is in the second half of September and before the T20 World Cup (October-November) and the other is after mid-November.

But England's top players will be in action at both times. They have tours to Bangladesh and Pakistan in September and October, while they will compete with Australia at the Ashes right after the T20 World Cup.

"We're planning on involvement of England players in England matches. We've got a full FTP schedule. So if those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," Giles said as quoted by ESPNcricinfo.

There were 11 Englishman in var-

ious franchises in the suspended IPL. "None of us knows what a re-arranged IPL looks like at the moment, where it's going to be or when. But from when we start this summer against New Zealand, our programme is incredibly busy," Giles said.

"We've got a lot of important, high-profile cricket including the T20 World Cup and the Ashes. And we're going to have to look after our players."

Giles dismissed suggestion that this signals a change in approach from the ECB as the management had earlier allowed up to a dozen players to miss the Test series against New Zealand at the start of June due to their involvement in the IPL.

"The New Zealand scenario was very different. Those Test matches were formalised at the end of January, by which time all those contracts and NOCs (no objection certificates) were signed for full involvement in the IPL."

Giles expressed hope that players would be allowed "a bit more freedom" from bio-bubbles as the England summer progresses. The Test players are likely to enter their latest bubble from around May 28.

MCC Rejects Bamboo Bats, Says It Will Be Illegal

Press Trust of India

LONDON: The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has shot down the idea of bats made from bamboo, saying it would be "illegal" under the current set of rules governing the game.

The guardians of the laws of cricket, however, said they will deliberate on the matter during their laws sub-committee meeting.

According to a study by Darshil Shah and Ben Tinkler-Davies from the University of Cambridge, bats made from bamboo are economically sustainable and are also stronger than the ones made from willow, which is traditionally used.

"Currently, law 5.3.2 states that the blade of the bat must consist solely of wood, so for bamboo (which is a grass) to be considered as a realistic alternative to willow would require a law change," MCC said in a statement on Monday.

"Importantly, the law would need to be altered to allow bamboo specifically, as even if it were to be recognised as a wood, this would still be illegal under the current law, which bans lamination of the blade, except in junior bats."

The researchers found the bamboo bat to be "stiffer, harder and stronger than those made of willow, although more brittle" and also sup-



posed to have a larger "sweet spot, closer to the toe of the bat."

"The sweet spot on a bamboo bat makes it much easier to hit a four off a Yorker for starters, but it's exciting for all kinds of strokes," Shah had said in the report.

MCC, however, said it needs to tread carefully to ensure that the balance of bat and ball remains intact.

"MCC's role as Guardian of the Laws includes maintaining the balance between bat and ball, and any potential amendments to the Law would need to carefully take this into consideration, particularly the concept of the bat producing greater power."

The apex body said it will discuss the matter as finding alternatives to willow is a relevant issue. "Sustainability is a relevant topic for MCC and indeed cricket, and this angle of willow alternatives should also be considered," MCC said.

"...this could provide a pertinent angle for further research and the possibility of reducing the cost of producing bats in different areas of the world. The Club will discuss the topic at the next laws sub-committee meeting," it added.

'West Indies Won't Ever See Those Glory Days Again,' Laments Curtly Ambrose

Press Trust of India

KINGSTON: Pace legend Curtly Ambrose believes the current lot of Caribbean youngsters doesn't really understand what cricket means to the West Indies and so the two-time world champions will never be able to relive the glory days again.

West Indies had lifted the first two World Cup titles in 1975 and 1979 and it took 33 years for the team to claim another ICC title when Darren Sammy had guided them to the 2012 T20 World Cup crown and repeated the feat four years later.

"Most of the youngsters we have now probably don't quite understand what cricket means to West Indians in the West Indies and abroad because cricket is the only sport that really unites Caribbean people," Ambrose told Talk Sports Live.

"This is no disrespect to the players we have now because we have a couple of guys who have some quality in them and can become great, but what we have to understand is that I don't think we will ever see those great, exceptional glory days again."

The 57-year-old, who claimed



405 wickets in 98 Tests between 1988 and 2000, said it is difficult to find talented cricketers from the island nation nowadays.

"It's going to be difficult to find another Viv Richards or a (Demond) Haynes and (Gordon) Greenidge, a Brian Lara, Richie Richardson, you know, a Malcolm Marshall, Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Michael Holding, Andy Roberts, and the list goes on and on, Clive Lloyd," Ambrose said.

"It's going to be extremely difficult to find those quality players again."

Ambrose said West Indies team

can improve their ICC rankings but won't be able to dominate the way it did in the 80s and 90s.

"When we were the best team in the world, West Indians all over the globe could walk and boast about how good we were because we were the best, so it's going to be difficult to see those glory days again," he said.

"Yes, we can be competitive and climb up the ICC rankings and be a force to be reckoned with again, but those glory days, I don't think we will see them again."

India's Olympic-Bound Shooting Team Leaves For Croatia Tour

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Olympic-bound Indian shooting team on Tuesday left for Croatia for a two and a half months training-cum-competition tour, its final tune-up to the upcoming Tokyo Games.

With coaches and support staff in tow, a 13-member Indian shooting team took off for Croatian capital Zagreb, where it will undergo a training camp before leaving for Osijek to take part in the European Championships (May 20 to June 6) followed by the combined ISSF World Cup (June 22 to July 3).

"Team India takes off in 20 mins. Bon Voyage. Get the nose to the ground and work hard for your inevitable success team," Raninder Singh, president of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) tweeted just before the team's departure.

The two Olympics bound skeet shooters Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Mairaj Ahmad Khan will be based in Italy.

The Indians, including Gurjoat Singh Khangura, took part in the ongoing shotgun World Cup in Lonato, where they could not make the final of the men's skeet event on Monday.

Former India shooter Suma Shirur, who is now the high-performance coach of the national rifle team, sought blessings before their departure.

"With a 'Bharat Mata ki Jay' we get ready to depart for Croatia.



From there straight to Tokyo2020 Olympics. 80 days in total. The Indian Shooting team needs your blessings to give their best," Shirur wrote on her Twitter handle.

The team left in a chartered flight arranged by the NRAI.

After the stint in Croatia, the team will directly leave for Tokyo to participate in the Olympics, beginning on July 23.

The ISSF World Cup in Osijek is being organised in place of the one earlier scheduled in Baku, Azerbaijan (from June 21 to July 2), which got cancelled due to a surge in COVID-19 cases in that country.

There will be nine coaches for the

Never Break COVID-19 Protocols Of Other Countries: Rijiju To Athletes

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday cautioned Indian sportspersons against breaking COVID-19 protocols of foreign countries while travelling for training or competition.

Rijiju posted the comment while wishing Olympic-bound shooters a successful trip to Croatia, for which they left earlier in the day.

"Safe journey! Never break the COVID-19 protocols of other countries. Focus on training, take care and stay safe. Will provide all necessary support to our athletes and the coaches. All the best," Rijiju tweeted.

The remark came in the backdrop of Bengaluru FC's AFC Cup play-off against Eagles FC in Male being postponed after the visit-

ing team had to tender an apology for violating quarantine protocols in the host city.

Maldives sports minister Ahmed Mahloof had asked BFC to leave the island nation after two players and a support staff member of the team broke the quarantine rules and were photographed walking on the streets of Male.

Club owner Path Jindal had stated that the violators were foreign recruits of the club.

BFC's match was to take place on Tuesday but the game was cancelled following comments by Mahloof, who termed the breach as "unacceptable".

The club later issued an unconditional apology and promised strictest action against the errant players and support staff member.

Checkmate COVID: Anand, 4 Other GMs To Raise COVID Relief Fund



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand and four other Indian Grandmasters will play simultaneous online exhibition matches against other chess players on Thursday to raise funds for COVID-19 relief work in the country.

Any player who has a Chess.com blitz or FIDE standard rating of under 2000 can play with former world champion Anand by donating USD 150 and with the other four GMs by paying USD 25 as registration amount. Donations will also be accepted during the exhibition matches to be broadcast on Chess.com at 19:30 IST.

The website said it will match all donations up to a total of USD 10,000.

All the proceeds from the simultaneous exhibitions involving Anand, Koneru Humpy, Dronavalli Harika, Nihal Sarin and Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu will go to RedCross India and the Checkmate COVID initiative of the All India Chess Federation (AICF).

"We all know India is struggling hard against COVID-19. At this time, we all have been af-

fectured in some way. I don't think there is a single person young or old who has not been affected by this," Anand said in a video message posted on Chess.com.

"Let us support COVID relief in India. You can play some of India's finest grandmasters, and have Chess.com match your donations. Please sign up to participate in Checkmate COVID this Thursday. This is a little contribution from our chess fraternity."

"I look forward to being there and hope we raise money and spirits!"

International Master Danny Rensch and Samay Raina will host the livestream on Chess.com/tv.

"With over one hundred games running concurrently across all simulms, a time control of 30 minutes with a 30-second increment will be used for all games," a statement from Chess.com said.

"With a limited number of boards, make sure to register early for this unique and charitable opportunity to play India's best players."

India is currently reeling under a devastating second wave of COVID-19 pandemic with more than 3 lakh new cases and above 3000 deaths reported daily.

WITH OVER ONE HUNDRED GAMES running concurrently across all simulms, a time control of 30 minutes with a 30-second increment will be used for all games."

IT'S GOING TO BE DIFFICULT TO FIND ANOTHER Viv Richards or a (Demond) Haynes and (Gordon) Greenidge, a Brian Lara, Richie Richardson, you know, a Malcolm Marshall, Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Michael Holding, Andy Roberts, and the list goes on and on, Clive Lloyd."

Caringly yours



Be healthy, be prepared!



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