



P3 CITY

MMU CONDEMNS ISRAEL FOR 'BARBARIC ATTACKS' AGAINST AL-AQSA WORSHIPPERS

The Muthahida Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU) Jammu & Kashmir, led by the Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has strongly condemned the bombing and killings of innocent Palestinians by oppressive Israeli and Zionist...

P5 THINK

PANDEMIC'S PECULIAR PREDICAMENT

You have decided not to visit anyone but a guest arrives uninvited. Worse still, someone said they'd visit and you couldn't bring yourself to say a No. Now they're at your home on Eid. How do you safely host them...



P8 NEWS

14 CHILDREN KILLED IN RELENTLESS ISRAELI AIR RAIDS ON GAZA

The death toll from Israeli air strikes on Gaza has climbed to 53, including 14 children, as UN warned of "full-scale war". Gaza's Health Ministry said on Wednesday...



Eid-ul-Fitr Being Celebrated Today



SRINAGAR: After an unusually long wait Grand Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam late on Wednesday announced that Eid-ul-Fitr will be celebrated in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday. He said evidence of moon sightings were received by him from different parts of Kashmir.

Mufti's message followed a late night announcement by the Pakistan Ruet-e-Hilal Committee declaring Thursday as Eid-ul-Fitr.

Earlier Ministry of Science and Technology in Pakistan had ruled out new moon sightings on Wednesday saying the moon can only be seen when it is 20 hours and 40 minutes old.

Tough Eid Eve Curbs Imposed To Fight Corona Spread



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: A day after several areas in Kashmir witnessed a huge rush of people ahead of Eid festival, curfew-like restrictions were imposed in the valley on Wednesday as authorities enforced the lockdown put in place to

contain an alarming surge in coronavirus cases in the union territory, officials said.

State forces sealed vital roads and erected barricades at many places in the city and other district headquarters to stop unnecessary movement of people, they said.

Markets remained shut and public transport was off the roads.

Movement of only those engaged in essential services and in cases of emergencies was being allowed, they added.

The officials said the restrictions were tightened on [More On P6](#)

ADC Baramulla 'Thrashes' People To Enforce Lockdown

A senior official in the Baramulla district administration drew condemnation on Wednesday after a video of him appeared online in which he is purportedly seen hitting people with a stick, including women, shouting at them and shoving them around to enforce the coronavirus lockdown. The official, Baramulla Additional Deputy Commissioner [More On P6](#)

IGP Calls For Strict Restrictions

Inspector General of police (IGP) Kashmir Vijay Kumar on Wednesday asked cops to revisit the existing security deployments and exercise strict restrictions and allow only employees and media fraternity. According to a police spokesperson, the directions in this regard were passed by IGP in a review meeting at PCR Kashmir through video [More On P6](#)

Cop Suspended For Beating Doctor, Paramedic

Police on Wednesday suspended a constable accused of beating a doctor and a paramedic in Shopian district of South Kashmir. The police action follows after a letter by the medical Superintendent of district hospital Shopian to the Deputy Commissioner of the southern Kashmir district, seeking action against concerned police personnel for [More On P6](#)

65 More Corona Deaths In J&K, Toll 2912

4509 More Cases Take Total Infection Count To 229407

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: At least sixty five people on Wednesday succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir, while as 4509 fresh cases of infection were reported across the Union Territory during the last 24 hours.

According to the officials, 46 people died of coronavirus in Jammu division and 19 others succumbed to

healthcare institutes in Kashmir Valley on

Wednesday taking the fatality count in J&K to 2912.

Among the victims, he said, included a 50-year-old woman from Dooru, a 60-year-old woman from Kokernag, a 44-year-old woman from Anantnag, a 40-year-old woman from Bakshi Abad Anantnag, all of them died at GMC Anantnag.

They said a 39-year-old from Dobra Leh died at SKIMS Soura, nearly three weeks after his admission to the tertiary care hospital.

A 65-year-old woman from Newa, Pulwama, they said, died at District Hospital Pulwama.

A 75-year-old woman from [More On P6](#)

No Shortage Of Covid Drugs: Govt

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Wednesday asserted that there was no dearth of any coronavirus related drug in Kashmir and the same was distributed among the Covid care hospitals as per the demand and requirement.

"Since we are dealing with the Covid supplies and its distribution, so it becomes imperative for us to make it clear to the general public that the situation of medicines is perfectly alright, as the [More On P6](#)



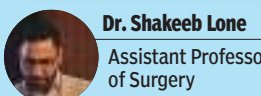
Dr. Irfan Ahmad
Consultant
Cardiologist, GMC

I've not seen any patient with severe pneumonia in this Covid blizzard who've received two timely doses of Vaccine, such is its vital importance, the best boost of antibodies is seen in prior covid pts.



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

Despite repeated requests people are thronging testing centres for getting repeat RT-PCR tests done after being asymptomatic/having recovered from Covid-19. It is requested to general public to adhere to specific testing recommendations. # NO TO RETESTING, ISN'T REQUIRED



Dr. Shakeeb Lone
Assistant Professor
of Surgery

RAPID, a simple, handheld, and highly sensitive miniaturized biosensor can detect SARS-CoV-2 in a sample within 4 minutes. More testing means more number of positive cases detected and isolated from the healthy population ultimately saving lives.

Jitendra Singh Calls For Audit Of O₂ Cylinders, Ventilators In J&K

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Union minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday called for an audit of oxygen cylinders and ventilators in Jammu and Kashmir for their equitable distribution in time of distress for needy patients.

He said even a single death due to alleged unavailability of oxygen causes tremendous social



unrest and negates all the other good work, if any. "A confidence building message has to go out loud and clear that a

premier institution like the Government Medical College (GMC), Jammu will ensure that not a single death occurs on account of oxygen unavailability," said Singh, the minister of state for personnel.

Singh, also a Lok Sabha member from J&K's Udhampur, called for the audit of oxygen cylinders and ventilators in the Union [More On P6](#)

Army Chief Reviews LoC Situation

Agencies

JAMMU: Army Chief General M M Naravane on Wednesday reviewed the security situation along Line of Control (LoC) in the twin sectors of Akhnour and Rajouri.

General Naravane was on a two day visit from 11 May to 12 May 2021 to Nagrota based White Knight Corps and the forward areas including Akhnour, Rajouri and Naushera.

On arrival at the White Knight Corps HQ, Gen Naravane accompanied by Lt Gen Y K Joshi, Northern Army Commander, was briefed by Lt Gen Suchendra Kumar, General Officer Commanding, White Knight Corps regarding the [More On P6](#)

Grenade Attack On Police Party In Samba

JAMMU: Suspected militants carried out a grenade attack on a police party in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir but there was no report of any casualty, officials said on Wednesday.

A grenade was hurled by unidentified persons at a police party which was engaged in checking vehicles at Nad on Samba-Udhampur road around 10 pm Tuesday, the officials said.

They said the grenade missed the intended target and exploded in an open area without causing any damage.

The whole area was immediately cordoned off and a massive search operation is underway to nab the suspected militants who carried out the attack, the officials said. [More On P6](#)

'DON'T LOSE HOPE' 'Covid Patients Recovering Fast In Kashmir'

Auqib Javed

Just when Asiya thought life has reached a dead end, the timely medical suggestion came to the rescue of her entire Covid-19 positive family.

Before tested positive, the 28-year-old private school teacher from Srinagar along with her aged parents had suffered from throat sore, fever and cough.

Amid the growing panic created by Covid's second wave, the trio's test results from a local health centre freaked out Asiya.



"It was suffocating and I didn't know what to do next," she said. "There was no one to help us. My

relatives were even scared and everyone was hesitant to come forward." Few hours later, she

called her friend who connected her with a pulmonologist, who guided her about Dos and Don'ts.

"The doctor counselled and assured me that nothing is going to happen," Asiya recounted. "I felt relaxed within no time, and followed his precautions and medication."

The only thing the patients should keep in mind, Asiya says, is "not lose hope" which gives you "positive vibes".

After passing through a fleeting phase of mental agony, her family's report recently came [More On P6](#)



Health and Medical Education Department, J&K



Shri Manoj Sinha
Lieutenant Governor

Unnecessary / Irrational use of

REMDESIVIR

is unethical!

Remdesivir is an experimental investigational drug granted emergency authorisation use

It is not a life-saving drug in COVID-19

Studies do not demonstrate mortality reduction with this drug

Remdesivir is to be administered only in the hospital settings

It is advised for people who are moderately sick and receiving oxygen

It must never be administered in home settings



- Government is providing Remdesivir for COVID-19 patients admitted in Government Hospitals.
- Government is also supplying Remdesivir to patients referred by the Government and treated in Private Hospitals.
- Private hospitals requiring injection Remdesivir for private patients have to coordinate with Drugs & Food Control organization J&K on Email: controllerdrugsfoodjk@gmail.com

LIVE PHONE IN PROGRAMME

Renowned doctors of J&K are available for Consultation in studio of DDK Srinagar and Covid Control Room

ON GULISTAN CHANNEL

COV-TALK with Doctors

8:00 am to 9:00 am daily
& 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm daily
call on 0191-2520982

ON DD KASHIR

Doctors Speak

(8:30 am to 9:00 am daily
& 7:30 pm to 8:00 pm daily)
call on 0194- 2481813, 2481832

For any sort of query including medical advice - 24x7 Divisional Control Room

Jammu

0191-2549676 / 2520982 / 2674444 / 2674115 / 2674908

Kashmir

0194-2440283 / 2430581 / 2452052 / 2457313 / 2457312

For any kind of Covid 19 query log on to www.covidrelief.jk.gov.in

DDPK-NB-711/21



Gene Therapy A Potential Cure To Children Born Without Immune System: Study

Agencies

Researchers have developed a gene therapy that successfully treated 48 out of 50 children with a form of severe combined immunodeficiency that leaves them without an immune system.

The study led by an international team of researchers at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) - was published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Severe combined immunodeficiency due to adenosine deaminase deficiency, also known as ADA-SCID, is a rare, life-threatening disease that prevents children from living a normal life. It is caused by mutations in the gene that creates the enzyme adenosine deaminase, which is essential to a functioning immune system.

Children with ADA-SCID have no immune system and, if left untreated, the condition can be fatal within the first two years of life. Day-to-day activities like going to school or playing with friends can lead to a dangerous infection. Recently, newborn screening for SCID has been implemented in some countries to help diagnose the condition early in life.

In a new study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, co-lead authors Professor Donald Kohn (UCLA) and Dr Claire Booth (GOSH) reported the two-to three-year outcomes of 50 children who were treated in clinical trials with an experimental stem cell gene therapy for ADA-SCID between 2012 and 2017.

The standard treatment for ADA-SCID involves once or twice weekly injections of the ADA enzyme until a matched bone marrow donor - usually a close family member - can be found. If a matched bone marrow donor is not available, patients require lifelong ADA injections along with preventative medicines. These treatments are expensive and therefore out of reach for patients in many countries.

If approved, gene therapy would be a welcome new treatment option for ADA-SCID as it is a one-time procedure that has the potential to provide life-long results.

Two to three years after the treatment, all of the 50 children treated with the new gene therapy at Great Ormond Street Hospital, UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are alive and well. Of these, 48 are no longer showing symptoms of ADA-SCID, although



The standard treatment for ADA-SCID involves once or twice weekly injections of the ADA enzyme until a matched bone marrow donor - usually a close family member - can be found. If a matched bone marrow donor is not available, patients require lifelong ADA injections along with preventative medicines

they will have lifelong monitoring.

In the two cases in which treatment wasn't successful, both children were able to return to current standard treatments, with one eventually receiving a bone marrow transplant. No serious side effects have so far been reported, with generally mild or moderate complications experienced from the necessary preparation for the gene therapy.

One of the patients treated was four-year-old Sarah from South Yorkshire. She was less than ten days old when her mum Maria became concerned about her daughter's weight loss and sore, bleeding nappy rash that wouldn't heal. Tests revealed Sarah had ADA-SCID:

"I remember the exact time I saw the pa-

per that had the blood test results on and the diagnosis. I saw it was SCID and I was incredibly upset... I wasn't allowed to kiss my daughter or sleep next to her. Everything had to be highly sterilised to keep her safe. It was horrible to not be able to do normal things with my own daughter."

Sarah was referred to GOSH for gene therapy and several years after her treatment is doing very well:

"Before, her nappy rash was always bleeding and sore, she was being sick and losing weight. Six months after she was given the gene therapy her skin was clean and healthy and the other symptoms got a lot better. She's doing so well now and can do everything a normal child her age would do."

Sarah's treatment has had a huge impact on the whole family, but it also inspired Maria to go back to studying and train to become a nurse.

"I now know how it feels to have your child as a patient and to be so sick, and I want to use my experience to help others in a similar position."

In earlier trials of gamma-retroviral gene therapy for other similar diseases, serious side effects including leukaemia have been seen in some patients. Now, lentiviral gene therapy technology has advanced significantly and offers the potential to improve the safety and efficacy profile of this treatment option for patients.

The gene therapy approach described

in the paper involves first removing some of the patient's blood-forming stem cells, which create all types of blood and immune cells. Next, a viral vector is used to deliver a new copy of the ADA gene into the DNA of the patient's cells.

These corrected stem cells are then returned to the patient where, once engrafted, they go on to produce a seemingly continual supply of healthy immune cells capable of fighting infection.

Dr Claire Booth, co-lead author, Mahboubian Associate Professor in Gene Therapy and GOSH consultant in Paediatric Immunology and Gene Therapy: "If approved in the future, this treatment could be standard for ADA-SCID, and potentially many other genetic conditions, removing the need to find a matched-donor for bone marrow transplant and the toxic side effects often associated with that treatment. We need and want guidelines to change so we can start offering this potential cure to children and provide it as a first-choice treatment - this research could set those wheels in motion."

Prof Adrian Thrasher, Professor of Paediatric Immunology at GOSH and Wellcome Principal Research Fellow, said "We started gene therapy at GOSH around 20 years ago and now have refined the process to offer a potential cure for children born with this debilitating condition. Over 200 patients with various genetic conditions across the world have now been treated with this type of gene therapy - this is another very significant breakthrough."

Ten of the children in the study were treated at UCLA using a frozen preparation of corrected stem cells. These children experienced similar outcomes to the children treated with cells that were not frozen. This approach using frozen preparation may allow children to have their stem cells collected locally, have them transported and processed at a manufacturing facility elsewhere, and then shipped back to a local specialised hospital, possibly removing the need to travel long distances to specialist centres.

A trial of the cryopreserved treatment is now underway at the Zayed Centre for Research into Rare Diseases in Children in partnership with Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, UK. The investigational lentiviral vector treatment is licensed to Orchard Therapeutics. Professors Thrasher and Kohn serve on Orchard Therapeutics' scientific advisory board.

Facebook will ask users to read an article before sharing

Agencies

Facebook will soon alert its users with a pop-up notification that asks them to make sure if they have read the article that are about to share and post further. Just like Twitter, the pop-up which is currently under testing will ask users if they're sure they want to share an article that they haven't opened.

The Facebook users can also choose to share it without reading if they want.

"Starting today, we're testing a way to promote more informed sharing of news articles. If you go to share a news article link you haven't opened, we'll show a prompt encouraging you to open it and read it, before sharing it with others," Facebook said in a tweet late on Monday.

The test would be rolled out to 6 per cent of Android users worldwide, reports The Verge, quoting a company spokesperson.

The move is to curb the dissemination of false information on its

platform.

The pop-up message will warn users that not opening the article can lead to "missing key facts".

Facebook plans to institute "demotions for content on Facebook and Instagram that our systems predict may be misinformation, including debunked claims about voting."

"We are also limiting the distribution of Live videos that may relate to the election on Facebook," the company said last year.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Ganderbal

Address: Mini-Secretariat Duderhama Ganderbal Tel No. 0194-2416058

Subject:- Inviting of Tenders for various macadamization works under C&T 2021-22.

Reference: This Office NIT NO.04/2021-22 issued under endorsement No.1436-45 dated 27-04-2021

EXTENSION NOTICE

The Bid submission end date for the subject works floated for tenders vide this office NIT No.'s referred to above which were scheduled to be on 11-05-2021 upto 4.00 PM, is hereby extended in view of prevailing COVID-19 conditions and the details whereof given as under:-

1	Date of issue of Tender	27-04-2021
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	30-05-2021
3	Bid submission start date	30-05-2021
4	Bid submission End date	19-05-2021 upto 4.00 PM
6	Date & Time of opening of Bids (Online)	19-05-2021 at 04:05 PM. in the office of Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Ganderbal

The other term and conditions of the above mentioned NIT's will remain un-altered.

No:- 1968-78
Dated:- 11-05-2021

DIPK-1566/21

Sd/-

Executive Engineer,
(R&B) Division Ganderbal

FREE 24X7



**CRITICAL CARE AMBULANCE SERVICE
IN SRINAGAR**

FOR ASSISTANCE CALL

9484-100-200; 0194-240-4000



**Kashmiri American Society of Healthcare, Medical
Education and Research (KASHMER)**

MMU Condemns Israel For 'Barbaric Attacks' Against Al-Aqsa Worshipppers



Picture Credit: Agencies

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Mutahida Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU) Jammu & Kashmir, led by the Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has strongly condemned the bombing and killings of innocent Palestinians by oppressive Israeli and Zionist forces.

MMU in a statement de-

sheer violation of the basic human rights and against the principles of justice.

"This attack by Israel is inhuman and exposed the nefarious motives of the occupier Zionist regime, which is to evict Palestinians from their home and usurp their land. MMU expresses solidarity with the families of the martyrs," the statement said.

The MMU called out on the Muslim nations and the "justice-loving" countries for their "criminal silence" saying their attitude is shameful and unfortunate.

"It stressed upon the global human rights organisations, United Nations and OIC to rise to the occasion to rein in the oppressive Israeli regime and take steps to ensure protection of lives, honour and properties of the people of Palestine."

nounced that attack on innocent worshippers inside Masjid Al-Aqsa in occupied Jerusalem that too in the holy month of Ramadan and on the night of Laylat-ul-Qadr.

The MMU leadership and its members termed the Zionist aggression and desecration of Islam's third holiest site as unacceptable and

THIS ATTACK BY ISRAEL IS INHUMAN AND EXPOSED the nefarious motives of the occupier Zionist regime, which is to evict Palestinians from their home and usurp their land. MMU expresses solidarity with the families of the martyrs,"

SMHS Hospital Nursing Staff Reiterate Commitment To Healthcare In Pandemic

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: On the International Nurses Day, the SMHS Nursing Staff has reiterated their commitment to healthcare in this deadly pandemic while celebrating the day with Covid-19 patients to instill hope among the victims at a time of desperate struggle against virus.

As this pandemic took a heavy toll on nurses across the world, Nursing staff in SMHS and other hospitals keep their guard up to deliver their services and strengthening the backbone of healthcare in Srinagar and other districts.

"The surge in covid positive cases has constrained health sector everywhere, but nurses in Kashmir are motivated to execute their services to withstand this pandemic." This was maintained by Assistant Matron, SMHS Shapoo, leading the fight against covid-19.disease.

While congratulating all the nursing staff in J&K, she said, "We, nurses are frontline workers executing our duties with full dedication and high spirits to help our government, society and entire humanity to come out of this challenging phase".

She said that the SMHS nursing staff are standing with pa-



Image for representation

tients every time to ensure that their oxygen supply is sustained besides providing all necessary medical requirements and logistics including medicine.

She said, "Nurses are first to attend to the covid patients and supporting them with oxygen and drugs". She maintained that there isn't any issue regarding treatment of infected persons in the hospital as SMHS hospital is equipped with adequate number of beds supplemented with abundant oxygen.

While reiterating commitment, she said that nurses are giving best of their capabilities and hoped that like last year, Kashmir will emerge successfully from the gloom of Covid-19 pandemic.

Also, she appealed relatives of covid patients admitted in SMHS hospital to avoid frequent visits saying that it is imperative to break the chain of virus spread, as nurses are taking due care of all the patients without any discrimination.

DGP Tours Srinagar City, Reviews Lockdown Measures



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Director General of Police J&K Dilbagh Singh Wednesday toured Srinagar city and reviewed the measures in place in view of the 2nd wave of COVID-19. He also reviewed security and deployment arrangements on the occasion of Eid.

The DGP was accompanied by DIG CKR, Amit Kumar, SSP Srinagar, Sandeep Choudhary, SP PC (Cargo), Tahir Ashraf, SP headquarters Srinagar Majid Malik and all Zonal SSPs of Srinagar City.

During the tour, the DGP visited Khanyar, Nowhata, Zakoor, Pandach, 90 feet, Soura, Zonimar, Eidgah, Safakadal, Karanagar, Batamaloo, Hari Singh High Street, Rajbagh, Jawahar Nagar.

A police spokesperson said that the DGP interacted with the JK police personnel and person-

nel of other security forces deployed at various Naka points of the City.

He appreciated the efforts of JK police and other security forces for ensuring complete lockdown in the Srinagar city. He said that lockdown is being enforced to safeguard the lives of the people.

He directed the officers that Doctors, paramedical staff and other essential services providers should not be face any inconvenience during the lockdown during the course of their travel to places of work or service delivery points.

Singh directed them to ensure people friendly atmosphere amidst the Eid festival while maintaining peace and order and added to ensure that health protocols are being followed by everyone as per the government guidelines.

COVID-19: Authorities Enforce Lockdown Ahead Of Eid In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr, authorities on Wednesday tightened Corona Curfew across Srinagar to prevent the deadly virus from spreading.

The strict curfew comes a day after the markets across Srinagar and other districts witnessed a huge rush of shoppers, who were seen buying essentials.

Most of the roads across Srinagar wore a deserted look as the authorities had deployed police and paramilitary troopers on the roads since the wee hours of this morning to enforce the lockdown strictly.

Witnesses said that the roads were blocked by the forces by erecting concertina wires, saying that no one was being allowed to pass through the roads.

They said that the shops, which remained open yesterday, were closed as the authorities didn't allow them to run their businesses after the administration withdrew its orders regarding the partial relaxation for some permissible activities from 08:00 AM



to 12:00 PM. Witnesses said that police had placed rolls of barbed wires on the middle of the roads in Srinagar to prevent private vehicular traffic.

Notably, the Corona Curfew continued to remain in place for 13th straight day. The government had imposed lockdown across Jammu and Kashmir since April 29 evening in order to prevent the virus from spreading. The administration has recently extended the Corona Curfew across Jammu and Kashmir till May 17.

Meanwhile, during last 24

hours, a police spokesman said that police has arrested 145 persons, lodged 92 FIRs and also realized fine to the tune of Rs 1,09,200 from 678 people for violating the guidelines and rules throughout Kashmir.

Meanwhile, 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.

KU-DLSA Organises Webinar On Drug Abuse

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The University of Kashmir on Wednesday hosted a webinar on drug abuse.

The webinar was organized jointly by the varsity's Centre for Women's Studies and Research (CWSR) and District Legal Service Authority (DLSA) Srinagar under the patronage of Secretary DLSA Srinagar and Sub-Judge, Noor Mohammad.

In her opening remarks, Co-ordinator CWSR Prof Tabasum Firdous said that drug abuse has become a "modern day devil" which is creating havoc across



Image for representation

all sections of the society.

"The main objective of this webinar is to generate awareness on the menace of drug abuse, which is on rise in Jammu and Kashmir," she said.

Advocate Naveed Gul and Psychologist Laila Qureshi were the

resource persons for the webinar, who explained how to deal with various aspects of drug abuse prevalent in the society.

Advocate Amtul Basit Deva—moderator and speaker—welcomed the guests and expressed her gratitude to CWSR-DLSA teams for putting in their best efforts to make the webinar a success.

She said more such collaborative webinars should be organized to share knowledge and raise awareness about drug abuse and also provide a platform to research scholars and students to speak on various aspects of the issue.

Body Of Teenage Girl Fished Out From Jhelum After 6 Days

Observer News Service



Image for representation

SRINAGAR: Body of a 15-year-old girl was recovered from Jhelum on Wednesday morning in Panzina area of central Kashmir's Srinagar City.

Official said that a minor girl (name withheld), a resident of SD Colony Batamaloo was found floating in Jhelum river by sand extractors in Panzina area.

The body was fished out and later handed to local police for legal medico formalities after which the body was handed over to family.

The girl had jumped into river Jhelum near Budshah Kadal, Srinagar on May 06.

LAWDA Conducts Demolition Drive In Srinagar

Observer News Service



Image for representation

SRINAGAR: The Enforcement Wing of Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) has conducted a demolition drive in the area of Saidakadal Rangerstop.

During the drive, one under construction structure near bridge, one single storey and plinth for shops, raised in the green belt area were demolished on spot.

Also, the illegal filling in the area of Rakh-i-Arth in Bay 04A was removed on spot. However, opposite Bay 08 there was a stiff resistance from the assembled crowd and as such the encroachment could not be removed fully.

The violators taking the advantage of current lockdown (Covid-19) had indulged in raising these illegal constructions which were on spot demolished by the demolition team. Also legal action warranted under rules was initiated against the violators.

The demolition team was accompanied by the security provided by PCR Sgr and Ladies contingent during the demolition drive.

AC Blast Shatters Srinagar Family, Leaves Lone Bread Earner Handicapped

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: On April 16, Javid Ahmad Baba left home as usual for work but little did he know that his work would lead him to hospital.

Baba, 38, a resident of Narwara Eidgah Srinagar working as air conditioner technician with a private service station on that very day left for Centaur hotel to repair air conditioners there.

Baba said that he along with a colleague left for Centaur to repair four ACs and once they started repairing the second one suddenly there was a blast.

"The blast changed my life as I lost my left hand there and received multiple burn injuries on the other parts of my body," he said.

His colleague Aamir Ahmad also had multiple burn injuries and both were rushed to hospital, however, on reaching SMHS doctors noticed that he had lost his hand completely.

"Some employees of the Centaur brought the hand which was lying at the place of the incident," he said.

"Despite hectic efforts of doctors at SMHS and Barazulla, they couldn't join my hand. I am left handicapped forever," Baba said.

Baba said that since the incident happened neither government nor the company for which he was working has extended any kind of help.

Baba who is father of two minors says that incident has shattered his life as he is unable to earn a single penny and had to feed the family.

"It was the company's work so they must come forward and help me in difficult times," he said.

The family also requested the Governor lead administration to look into their condition and extend help on humanitarian ground—(KNO)

DIAL-EMMA

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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 535- St Agapitus I begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 1110- Crusaders march into Beirut causing a bloodbath
- 1643- Battle of Grantham: English parliamentary armies beat royalists
- 1643- Heavy earthquake strikes Santiago Chile; kills 1/3 of population
- 1648- Construction of the Red Fort at Delhi is completed.
- 1779- War of Bavarian Succession ends
- 1830- Republic of Ecuador is founded, with Juan Jose Flores as president
- 1835- 1st foreign embassy in Hawaii forms
- 1846- US declares war on Mexico, 2 months after fighting begins
- 1861- Queen Victoria announces Britain's position of neutrality
- 1861- The Great Comet of 1861 is discovered by John Tebbutt of Windsor, New South Wales, Australia.
- 1865- Battle of Palmito Ranch, near Brownsville, Texas: final engagement of the American Civil War, Private John Jefferson Williams of B Company, 34th Regiment Indiana Infantry is last man killed
- 1884- Institute for Electrical & Electronics Engineers (IEEE) forms in New York
- 1890- Lord Salisbury offers Helgoland to Germany in exchange for Zanzibar, Uganda & Equatoria
- 1913- 1st four-engined aircraft built and flown (Igor Sikorsky, Russia)
- 1915- US Secretary of State Bryan sends a note to Germany demanding that Germany disavow the attacks on the Lusitania and make immediate reparations; however, the note is written only to 'pacify exited public opinion', according to Bryan
- 1916- 1st observance of Indian (Native American) Day
- 1918- 1st US airmail stamps issued (24 cents)
- 1927 "Black Friday" on Berlin Stock Exchange
- 1934- Great dustbowl storm sweeps across US prairies
- 1940 German breakthrough at Grebbelinie
- 1941- Martin Bormann is named head of Nazi Chancellery in Germany
- 1942- Helicopter makes its 1st cross-country flight
- 1943- German & Italian forces in Africa surrender
- 1943- German occupiers confiscate all radios
- 1945- US troops conquer Dakeshi Okinawa
- 1949- 1st British-produced jet bomber, the Canberra, makes its 1st test flight
- 1950- Diner's Club issues its 1st credit cards
- 1952- Pandit Nehru becomes premier of India
- 1952 The Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament of India, holds its first sitting.
- 1954- US performs atmospheric nuclear test at Eniwetok
- 1958- French settlers riot against French army in Algeria
- 1958- Jordan & Iraq form Arab Federation
- 1960- 1st launch of Delta satellite launching vehicle; it failed
- 1965- Several Arab nations break ties with West Germany after it established diplomatic relations with Israel
- 1979- Shah of Iran & family sentenced to death in Teheran
- 1981- Pope John Paul II is shot and critically wounded by Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca in St Peter's Square, Vatican City
- 1992 - 3 astronauts simultaneous walked in space for the 1st time
- 1996 - Severe thunderstorms and a tornado in Bangladesh kill 600 people.
- 1998 - Race riots break out in Jakarta, Indonesia, where shops owned by Indonesians of Chinese descent are looted and women raped
- 1998 - India carries out two nuclear tests at Pokhran, in addition to the three conducted on May 11. The United States and Japan impose economic sanctions on India.
- 1999 - Carlo Azeglio Ciampi is elected 10th President of Italy
- 2005 - The Andijan Massacre occurs in Uzbekistan.
- 2012 - Manchester City win the English Premier League for the first time
- 2017- 22 year old UK blogger halts spread of global ransomware cyber-attack by accidentally identifying "kill switch"

From KO Archives

'Settlement neared than ever before'

PAK RENEWS APPEAL FOR APHC UNITY

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan today asked the moderate and the hard-line factions of the Hurriyat Conference to unite saying that solution to the Kashmir issue was "nearer than ever before".

"It is very important that unity comes as soon as possible. Entire Hurriyat leadership is moving in that direction. Hope that Hurriyat will be united body as it was before," Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani told reporters here responding to a query about a meeting of Hurriyat factions in Srinagar to discuss the possibility of reunification.

"We believe that freedom struggle in held Kashmir has reached decisive state where a resolutions of Jammu and Kashmir is nearer than ever before," Jilani said.

Referring to differences over the peace process between moderate faction led by Mirwaz Umer Farooq and hardline faction by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, he said their disagreements were 'peripheral

(Kashmir Observer, 13 May, 2005)

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K O V I E W

Covid hope

For the second consecutive day, the bodies of the alleged Covid-19 patients washed up on the banks of Ganga - first in Bihar and then in Uttar Pradesh. The videos and images of the bodies went viral on social media in a grim reflection of the havoc wrought by the virulent second Covid-19 wave.

According to a study, close to 90 per cent of India is witnessing a high Covid positivity rate. 640 districts out of the 734 have more than 5 per cent positivity rate. The Centre has stated that the country's national Covid-19 positivity rate is around 21 percent. The massive active caseload has overwhelmed the hospitals and crematoriums. The healthcare facilities are running short of the medical oxygen and key drugs. There is also shortage of vaccines and the states are struggling to vaccinate their people. Last month the centre made the vaccine available to 18-45 age group too but the supply is now falling far short of the demand.

On a positive note, the past few days have witnessed plateauing of the Covid-19 caseload. New cases of coronavirus in India fell to 3.29 lakh after 14 days taking the total tally of COVID-19 infections to 2.3 crore. There has been a net decline of 30,016 cases in a span of 24 hours. States like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Gujarat that first witnessed a steady rise in the number of coronavirus cases at the beginning of the deadly second wave of the pandemic are now seeing a decrease in new infections.

If this decline in the new cases holds, it would be a great news for the country. It would underline that the ongoing curbs on the movement and the measures to ensure compliance of the Covid appropriate behaviour are paying off. One could hope that the daily caseload declines to manageable levels in the weeks to come, making it possible for the government to ease up the restrictions and reopen the economy.

Last year the economy had dived by a whopping 24 percent in the first quarter. Thousands of jobs were lost as a result. Many sectors of the economy like tourism, travel, hotel industry, retail etc were badly hit. But this year other than impacting economy, the devastating second wave has led to loss of thousands of lives. By the time it ends, this wave would leave deep psychological scars behind, that will take years to heal. Here's hoping that the pandemic draws to an early end, enabling the people to pick up pieces and get back to normal life.

O T H E R O P I N O N

The Congress Must act

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) met on Monday to discuss the defeat in the assembly elections, with party president Sonia Gandhi saying that if the party did not "face up to reality", it would not draw the right lessons. Here is the reality. The Congress got decimated in Bengal, failed to capture power in Kerala and Assam, lost power in Puducherry before the polls and failed to regain it, and is a junior partner in the ruling coalition in Tamil Nadu. To add insult to injury, high-profile defectors who switched ranks have found leadership opportunities in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — with Himanta Biswa Sarma (who left the Congress in 2015) now becoming the third former Congress leader (after N Biren Singh in Manipur and Pema Khandu in Arunachal Pradesh) to take over as a BJP chief minister.

The setback also comes at a time when the question of leadership remains unresolved. Sonia Gandhi is interim president but wants to give way to Rahul Gandhi. He doesn't want to be president but is, for all effective purposes, in-charge. A group of dissenters forced the party to commit to a timeline for organisational elections — but while slated for this summer, it has now been deferred due to the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. And in any case, the dissenters lack a leader with the stature to openly, successfully, challenge the leadership of the Nehru-Gandhi family.

Through all of this, the Congress appears to sense an opportunity in the Centre's mixed record in managing Covid-19. The fact that Rahul Gandhi gave obvious, but sensible, suggestions on the course of the disease, and that party organisations such as the Indian Youth Congress have done a stellar job in providing relief to citizens, gives the party hope that it can shape some of the political narrative around the pandemic. But in the absence of a clear leadership — the key question is not who becomes party president but who becomes the face to take on Narendra Modi in what will once again be a presidential-style contest in 2024 — the party's ability to rise is doubtful. Supplement this with its weak organisation, the shift in incentives for leaders and workers who can sense political opportunities elsewhere, and the erosion in states where the party's base was strong, and the nature of the crisis in the Congress becomes clearer. With noise about a possible non-BJP, non-Congress grouping rising, India's grand old party is once again in a familiar place — the crossroads. Mrs Gandhi's admission must be followed by action.

Hindustan Times



Begging Menace in Kashmir?

Kashmir has seen a rise in the number of able people turn to begging and the industry has gone beyond being credible or aid worthy

Malik Javid

Political uncertainty and conflict ruling the valley from last three decades has not decreased the inflow of panhandlers across the tunnel irrespective of gender and age from hinterlands of other parts of country to our valley. Unfortunately, there seems to be no check on the movement of these mendicants even in the times of a pandemic

Lockdown may have put a break on common man's movement, but there seems to be no break on the movement of beggars looking for alms in our localities. What I have concluded after acutely observing class of population, who have turned this begging into a livelihood profession from past few years is that, there is no check on the credibility of these people at any level — government or community level.

If a person is healthy and hale what is prompting them to choose this ostracized profession needs to be questioned. We can't go on ignoring this elephant in the room. In fact, our silence has led to legitimization of this begging as a profession. Even today amid these tough times, these people seem to be breaching every barricade set by authorities to invade the privacy of our homes only to put their own and others' lives at risk.

From past decade, our valley has seen an exponential rise in the menace of begging. I wouldn't be exaggerating in calling Kashmir a "beggar's paradise". One might not be to certain here about earning livelihood by working as a daily wage in unorganised sector but one is sure to get pocket full of money at the end of day, courtesy of begging in markets, mosques, hospitals, highways and offices. Such is the sad state of our valley.

Political uncertainty and conflict ruling the valley from last three decades has not decreased the inflow of panhandlers across the tunnel irrespective of gender and age from hinterlands of other parts of country to our valley. Unfortunately, there seems to be no check on the movement of these mendicants even in the times of a pandemic.

Two years back, J&K government had banned begging at public and religious places in Srinagar but that order has remained confined to just paper and with authorities have lowered their guard against beggars with

time. Therefore, things have remained unchanged on ground.

Now what this huge inflow of beggars has done is that our own population has succumbed to this alternate route of earning livelihood too now. They seem to have taken cue from these outsiders which has inturn given birth to a new breed of home-grown beggars, who are healthy and hale. Yet they are opting for this much disliked way of earning.

According to our religion, begging was prescribed for those people who had lost their organs of working by birth or accidentally, thus rendering themselves helpless at the mercy of others to earn their living. With time, begging has been turned into a money minting profession with people who could have easily earned their living by using their own hands instead of preferring begging over it. As the time passes, these people get addicted to it to a level of no return. What prompts them to take this profession to

middle to check his credibility. When I enquired from him as to who gave him the authority to collect money in the name of the orphanage, he became silent. I could see the lines of discomfort growing on his face with his colour fading to pale. When I asked him for the contact number of the head of institution he was claiming to represent, he sensed trouble and pulled away his documents from my hand and ran away — but not without passing a comment at me, Agar hass deon chi thaa dee, Eoutha chena police enquiry asee Karan (if you want to give me something then give, the amount of enquiry you are doing even the police doesn't do it with us).

As he left, I began to ponder over his action.

Our society needs to cure the menace of begging through actively arranging destitute management. Institutions that cater to the needy here must also come up with ways to be self sustaining and not rely on donations entirely

Our society needs to cure the menace of begging through actively arranging destitute management. Institutions that cater to the needy here must also come up with ways to be self sustaining and not rely on donations entirely

earn their bread and butter is the assured hefty amount at end of the day without any toiling.

A few days back, I was preparing to take my routine sleep on our veranda after midday prayers when I saw a gentle voice of a young boy wearing a blue skull cap and matching shalwar kameez approach me. With the first glance itself, I could conclude from his face that he would have been close to twelve years. He was holding a bundle of few old notes in the close fist of his right hand and a few laminated documents of some orphanage institution under his left armpit. His pockets on either side of shalwar kameez had visibly bulged out due to weigh of coins. Before I could to check his credentials, he started his memorised sermon when I intercepted him in the

to the needy here must also come up with ways to be self sustaining and not rely on donations entirely. For instance, revered and respected Islamic scholar Maulana Tariq Jameel who recently started his clothing MTJ brand to run his Islamic institution. In an interview he was quoted as saying, "I don't want spread hands before people to run my institutions, I want them to be self-sustaining by running them on money earned through this clothing MTJ brand"

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

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

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RTI on RBI Inspection

This is in response to the article "RBI's inspection reports under RTI" by Raja Muzaffar Bhat published in Kashmir Observer on 11th May. This is great news that the Supreme Court has denied to hear the review petition filed by several banks together. Now all the banks have to reveal the

details of big loan defaulters. In addition to it, the annual inspection list has also to be provided under the Right to Information Act by RBI and other banks. Pertinent to mention that ever since Justice N V Ramana took over as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court there are lots of expectations from him. He is man from a

journalist background plus having brought office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) under the ambit of RTI Act 2005 some time back. I am sure there will be more transparency in the banking sector, plus some historic judgements are expected by SC in the coming months. It is hoped that J&K Bank will also make the list of

big loan defaulters public. There are many big shots who took hundreds of crores from this bank and fled the country. Their names should be made public soon

Yours Sincerely
Advocate Bashir Ahmad Bhat

Eid Greetings to Everyone

Eid Ul Fitr marks the end of the blessed month of Ramadan. This Ramadan has been markedly different from those bygone with merry streets and happy mosques. Some spent it in hospitals and others at home — united in their experience of beseeching God for safety and health. The world around has grief writ-large on its face. Today, we remember: those fighting for life at hospitals, people isolating in the silence of their rooms and others struggling to make ends meet. We also remember those in Palestine fighting the just fight against occupation and protecting holy Al Aqsa.

Even as the atmosphere is draped in gloom, Eid is a very welcome event. This special issue for eid is in the spirit of a celebration that is sensitive as well as hopeful. Hope it brings a little joy in our lives and makes the day a lot better than most.

Ramadan In Review

The blessed month of Ramadan this year was the most difficult one in my life. Hardly have I moved an inch out of my house as apprehension and fear for my family and friends kept me engulfed day and night. It started with very close relatives being tested positive for covid and ended with the death of two out of four of them. Opening social media to read and watch stories of millions fighting covid-19 or losing the battle to it, SOS messages, cries, struggles, separation and helplessness, burdened my heart with despair. Undoubtedly, if there wasn't the blessing of this month and the Tawakkul I have in heart, probably there would not have been a morning everyday

Sheikh Arsh
Social Media Manager, KO

The sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan rejuvenates iman. Charity and social work takes an accelerated pace. This year the month coincided with the second wave of Covid-19 and fear, helplessness brought us a few steps closer to Allah as He seemed to be the only hope in distress. This month to me and to my family was an intense psychological test as my mother's sister battled for life on a ventilator, who is safe now by the grace of God. Now that Ramadan is gone, it hurts to think that we wouldn't have its soft embrace to make us feel better.

Namra Hussain
Student and Researcher

QuarantEid

Being a person who has been quarantined/isolated thrice (14 days, 17 days & 3 days) since the pandemic began, I understand how boring and depressing it can get when you are facing nothing but the four walls. The second wave of Covid-19 with its new variants has left its imprints across all ages. More young people are infected right now. They must be finding it challenging to cope up with the quarantine, especially now that Eid is on cards, some people might experience FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Here is an attempt from my side to provide an antidote to your FOMO so that you can utilize your social capital efficiently on Eid.

Your health comes first. Please check if your oxygen saturation, pulse and your body temperature are within normal range. If all is well and you're in the celebration mood then check this list out to make your "QuarantEid" special.

- Meals with the family are an important aspect of Eid. Starting from breakfast, make sure you connect with your family on a video call to relish your every meal in the Eidy familial setting.
- Eid Namaaz is central to Eid. Renew your vigour with clean clothes and offer the prayers with the same zeal that you normally manifest in Eidgah.
- Let us switch from texting to video calling this Eid. Start calling your friends, neighbours and relatives and extend Eid greetings and other wishes. If you're an Eidhi demanding person, don't hesitate to ask for the same wherever possible.
- For a vibrant evening, you can create a shiny aura of your room by decorating it with colourful balloons and fairy lights or whatever decorating item is within your reach. Complement it with your favourite songs and especially look for Coke Studio for Sufi/religious melodies.

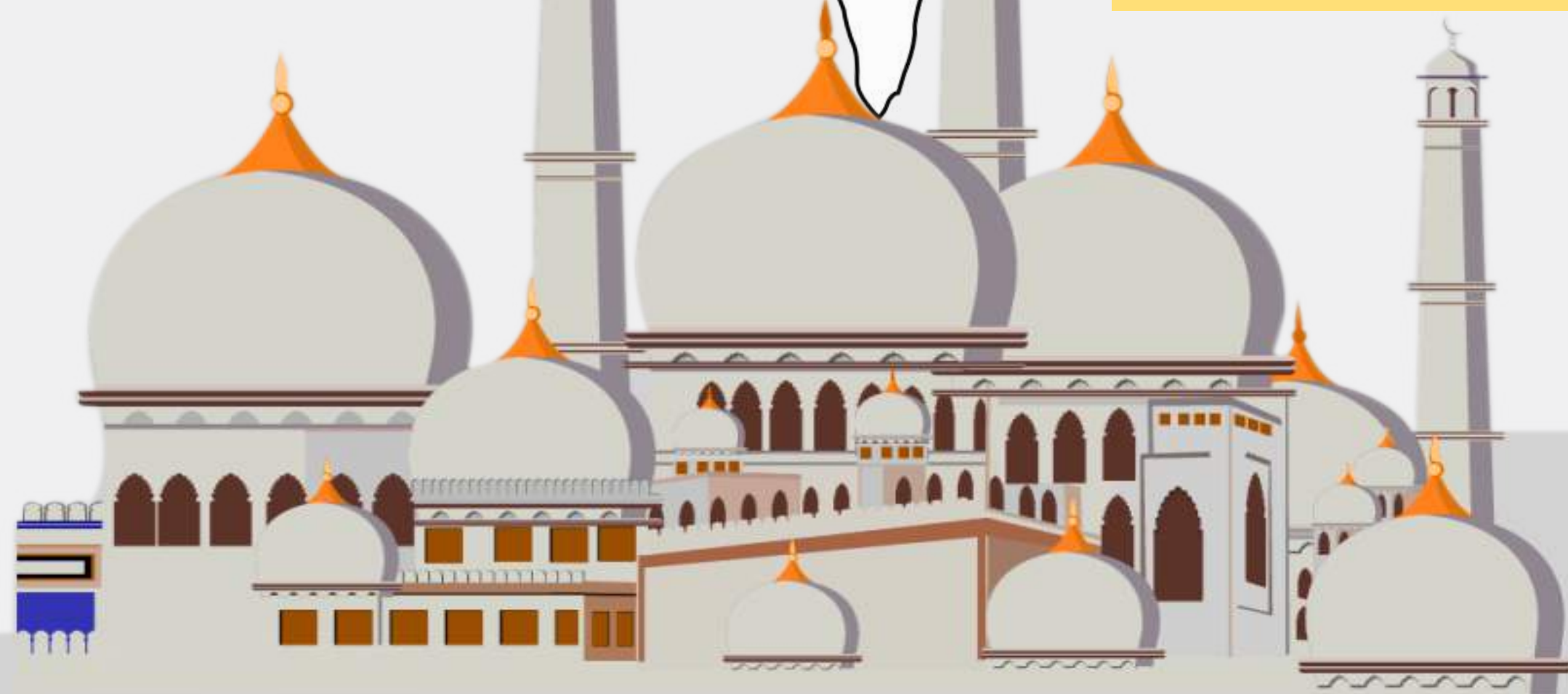
Some activities that you can do virtually with your friends and family:

- Watch some movie or listen to music jointly with your friend/s using the Rave-Watch Party app from Google Play Store for android. It allows synchronized watch parties where you can watch from Netflix, YouTube, Vimeo, Reddit, Drive and other websites. You can connect with friends through chat and voice while binge-watching. For desktop, use <https://twoseven.xyz/> using Chrome to watch movies and videos with friends.
- You can also play multiplayer games like Ludo King, Clash of Clans, Modern Combat 5: eSports FPS, Call of Duty: Mobile on your mobile phone.

Your QuarantEid is a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with your cultural heritage. You can video chat with your friends/family and sing "Eid aayi ras ras/ Eid gah wass wai" like the good old days of Kashmir.

Since we are in the midst of troubling times with many of our people needing one or other form of help, if possible, you can do your little bit in alleviating the sufferings of people around you by donating to deserving individuals/organisations.

Wish you a wonderful



JKPCC Hits Out At Centre For Totally Failing Ut In Dealing With COVID-19

Agenceis

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) on Wednesday hit out at the BJP at the Centre for pushing the country into a disaster saying it is due to several blunders of both the central and Union territory governments in dealing with the COVID-19 situation.

The J-K unit appreciated the Congress leadership for setting up a task force of experienced leaders to monitor the grim situation, a press release stated.

Appreciating the initiatives of party president Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi to appoint a COVID task force of experienced leaders besides cautioning the government from time to time about dangers of the first and second waves of the pandemic, the Congress said the BJP government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi consistently ignored the concerns shown by the Congress leadership thereby landing the country in disaster today.

The JKPCC said the disastrous situation faced by the country was a result of several blunders

committed by the Modi government as it shifted blame on others and indulged in false propaganda through its blind followers, who fail to realise the pain and sufferings of lakhs of citizens dying without minimum treatment.

The Congress has gone on record to remind the central government of its responsibilities in view of the anticipated threat posed by the raging pandemic but the Modi government not only ignored the Congress' alarm but also ignored the warning signals by its own experts.

"The BJP was more interested in wresting away West Bengal than taking urgent measures to save the people," it said.

The party said when COVID cases were steadily going up, the Government of India exported vaccines to 93 countries and over 9,250 metric tonnes of medical oxygen to other countries against the domestic shortage.

The Congress said the doctors and health workers are facing the brunt of the lack of basic facilities to deal with COVID-19 even after more than one year to fill the gaps and create necessary infrastructure, the JKPCC said.

The people in Jammu and Kashmir are dying for want of necessary facilities, especially inadequate ventilator supported beds and necessary manpower all around, despite best efforts by the doctors and the Lieutenant Governor's administration, they said.

"The centre failed to monitor the health authorities to create the required facilities. As a result, there is acute dearth of facilities to meet the challenge," it said.

There are no ICU beds available in the premier GMC and other GMCs are mostly occupied with heavy pressure on the management. It is all because of shortcomings of the system to deal with the situation of this magnitude, they said.

The BJP government have to own up responsibility in light of the casualties and sufferings of the people and must apologise to the victims and their families for the utter neglect and failures, especially in Jammu.

The Congress demanded immediate vaccination on priority basis to Jammu and Kashmir as it is a backward region with weak health infrastructure and facilities, the handout said.

Indian Navy to contribute with its "full might" in these difficult times: Navy Chief on COVID-19

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: India is perhaps facing the biggest humanitarian challenge since the Independence because of coronavirus pandemic and the Indian Navy will collectively rise to confront the adversity facing the nation, Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh said on Wednesday.

In a message to Navy personnel, Admiral Singh said the Navy will step up its outreach in extending medical assistance as the pandemic is spreading to rural India and people residing in those areas are in need of help.

"This is an unprecedented situation for us. This is perhaps the biggest humanitarian challenge to the country to date since Independence," he said.

"I think, possibly, there is no one among us, who doesn't have someone in the family, or someone very close to us, who has not been COVID positive, or hospitalised, or worse still, succumbed to the disease," the Navy Chief said.

The chief of naval staff said that the force has to contribute back to the nation with its "full

might" in these "difficult times".

He also noted that nearly 80 per cent of the uniformed Naval personnel have received their two vaccine shots due to which the force is relatively safe.

"No one knows when the pandemic will end. But I can say, with utmost confidence that our courage, our determination, will never end. We will collectively rise as 'Team Navy' in this adversity, and do our best for the nation, for the Navy and for our communities," Admiral Singh said.

"I am proud of what has been achieved in the last few weeks, especially by our healthcare teams and our operational units. I look forward to continuing this effort and supporting our country in these difficult times," he said.

The Navy chief said all the Navy teams are putting their shoulder to the wheel to support the national effort.

"At this time, I see two priorities for the Navy; first, to contribute fully to the national effort, and second, to protect our communities, our defence civilians, our ex-servicemen, and all their families in every

way," he said.

The Navy has been vigorously supporting civilian authorities in several states to deal with the fast-spreading coronavirus cases, including through setting up of dedicated health facilities to treat people with COVID-19.

The Navy has already launched a mega operation to bring liquid medical oxygen from several countries in the Persian Gulf and southeast Asia.

"The pandemic is spreading to rural areas and they are in need of help. Our outlying units could adopt a village and render assistance just like INS Chilka has done," he said.

Complimenting the naval personnel for their untiring efforts to help the nation deal with the crisis, the Navy chief said he believed the forces can do even more, and added that its contribution will increase in the coming days.

"Our nation has tremendous faith in its armed forces, and it is our duty to live up to the expectations of our citizens," he said.

At the same time, Admiral Singh said the medical infrastructure of the Navy is under stress.

"Our medical and nursing officers and medical staff have really been at the forefront, braving this difficult situation. There has been no respite for them over the last one year, and they have worked round-the-clock to manage patients and provide the best healthcare possible," he said.

"All of us are proud of their efforts, their dedication," the Navy chief said.

Admiral Singh said options are being explored for the vaccination of family members of the armed forces personnel.

"In terms of our families, we are exploring options for their vaccination. We are looking at ways to commence early vaccination," he said.

At the same time, he stressed the need to look at the opportunity to utilise the "state-sponsored" vaccination initiative.

"I would like to express my deepest condolences to all who have lost their near and dear ones. My heart goes out to each and every one of you. Let us, as the naval community, remain strong, and help each other, and the nation, in this challenging time," he said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Tough Eid

Wednesday in the wake of crowds gathering at several places in the city here and many other areas of the valley for Eid shopping.

Massive traffic jams were witnessed on Tuesday at several parts of the city including the commercial hub of Lal Chowk with people thronging the markets.

On April 29, the Jammu and Kashmir administration imposed a curfew in 11 districts in a bid to tackle the surge in Covid-19 cases, which was subsequently extended to all the 20 districts the next day.

The curfew, which was supposed to end at 7 am on May 3, was extended in the twin capitals of Jammu and Srinagar besides Budgam and Baramulla till May 6.

However, the authorities in other districts of the Kashmir valley also ordered extension in the restrictions first till May 6 and then till May 10. The restrictions were again extended till May 17.

ADC Baramulla

(ADC) Mohammad Ahsan Mir, apologised after the video went viral, but said, "I feel until we do something extraordinary, people will not understand."

In the video, the official is purportedly seen screaming at and flogging an elderly woman while asking her to go back. He is then seen hitting a man twice, kicking him around before pushing him away with a stick.

He is also seen raising the stick at another woman who pleaded before him, and then flogging another person who was carrying timber on a handcart.

The ADC then goes on to hit an elderly man as he tries to shut the door of a premises in the market.

His "rowdy act" evoked widespread criticism on social media and demand for strict action.

"Law enforcement agencies can't behave like GOONS. With Authority there is Responsibility. Strict action should be taken against him for violating Human Rights. He can't beat people," BJP leader Sheikh Khaled Jehangir tweeted.

A Twitter user, Inam-ul-Haq, said the act was shameful and demanded action against Mir in the same manner as in the case of West Tripura District Magistrate Sailesh Kumar Yadav who was transferred days after a video of him disrupting a wedding midway in a bid to enforce Covid-19 norms went viral on social media.

"Shameful Act: ADC Baramulla beating people including women! Action needs to be taken against him like Tripura DM," he said.

Another user Karlremarx said the "violent and rowdy behaviour" by the official is "shameful".

"This is ADC Baramulla beating people with a stick including women to observe lockdown. What is this way of imposing the lockdown? This violent and rowdy behaviour by the officers is shameful. DC Baramulla should take note immediately, he wrote, referring to the video.

Waseem Gul, another Twitter user, said no one is above law and tagged the Twitter handles of the offices of Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor.

"ADC Baramulla beating people & is not even sparing women. This is a shameful act and strict action needs to be taken. Nobody is above law, he said.

In his defence, Mir said all he was trying to do was to enforce the lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus.

"It was an unfortunate incident. Basically, a story was broadcast yesterday that there was no lockdown in Baramulla. So, I set out at 6 am to implement the lockdown. I was not carrying a stick but a corn stalk. Unfortunately, a video was made," Mir said.

When told that he was being accused of the taking the law into his own hands, the official said he did not beat up anyone.

"I only raised the stick, but did not beat anyone. I only hit a man just because he was a policeman (in civvies) and told him that he should not have come out during the lockdown.

"People were coming out unnecessarily and it was only a deterrent to make people understand the gravity of the situation," he said.

"If there is some excess, I apologise," he said,

however, adding, "I feel until we do something extraordinary, people will not understand.

IGP Calls For

conferencing with district SsSP of Kashmir Zone. DIG central Kashmir and SSP Srinagar attended the meeting at PCR Kashmir.

"On the occasion, IGP Kashmir was briefed by the participating officers about the overall situation scenarios in their respective areas and the measures being adopted to contain the Covid-19," he said.

He said that while interacting with the officers, IGP urged upon them to revisit the existing security deployments including security/restriction arrangements in view of Covid-19.

"He also urged them that the strict restrictions should be exercised and the employees only with passes shall be allowed including media fraternity. He also directed the officers to ensure hassle free movement of health workers especially doctors and avoid any kind of argument or L&O situations at the checkpoints," the police spokesperson said.

Kumar, he said also directed officers to ensure hassle free movement of such vehicles and treat them at par with ambulances.

"While mentioning the special helpline for doctors and healthcare workers established earlier on Zonal level, he directed the officers to establish a special helpline on similar pattern at district levels so as to avoid any hindrance in passage of healthcare workers," he said.

He further added that the IGP also urged upon the officers to strategise the deployments on eve of Eid-ul-Fitr to thwart the nefarious designs of militants and anti-national elements.

"He also stressed for better synergy and coordination with other security agencies deployed in their respective areas. He also directed to establish special joint nakas with CRPF at strategic locations and share GPS coordinates accordingly to strengthen the security grid," he added.

As per the police spokesperson, the IGP highlighted the importance of the measures to be adopted against militancy and directed officers to ensure appropriate measures to stop recruitment of local boys in militant folds and provide opportunity to local trapped militants for surrender.

"IGP Kashmir also directed the officers to review the existing security deployed with the Panchayati Raj Institutions including DDC, BDC, MC, etc. residing in their respective areas. He further instructed officers to avoid any slackness in security of these PPs and ensure better coordination & synergy with them to avoid any untoward incident," he said.

He further added that the IGP Kashmir also reiterated the need to enhance anti-militancy grid by generating specific intelligence and intensify search operations and anti-militant operations in their respective districts and take all proactive steps for maintaining peace and stability in their respective areas.

"He also emphasized upon the officers to keep strict vigil over the militant associates and take all necessary measures under law against them," the police spokesperson said.

"IGP Kashmir also directed the officers to ensure guard checking and strict night curfew in their areas so as to thwart the evil designs of the anti-national elements," he added.

beating a doctor and a paramedic during Corona Curfew.

A senior police officer said that the Constable has been placed under suspension for violating clear instructions by IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar.

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65 More Corona

Chattergam succumbed to the virus at SKIMS Bemina, two days after she was admitted there.

A 70-year-old man from Ganderbal died at SKIMS Soura, nine days after he was admitted there.

A 70-year-old woman from Pulwama died at JLN hospital Raniwari, they added.

Meanwhile, 4509 fresh cases of virus were detected across J&K—1759 were from Jammu Division and 2750 from Kashmir Valley, taking

the total tally to 229407.

Giving district wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 863 cases, Baramulla 377, Budgam 260, Pulwama 327, Kupwara 81, Anantnag 233, Bandipora 108, Ganderbal 139, Kulgam 200, Shopian 162, Jammu 621, Udhampur 149, Rajouri 230, Doda 190, Kathua 193, Samba 105, Kishtwar 83, Poonch 86, Ramban 78 and Reasi 24.

Moreover, they said, 3603 more Covid-19 patients have recovered—1316 from Jammu Division and 2287 from Kashmir. There are 51542 cases—18438 in Jammu and 33104 in Kashmir. (With GNS inputs)

No Shortage Of

medicines that we require for the treatment of Covid-19 are available with us in adequate quantity," General Manager (GM), Jammu and Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation (JKMSC), Dr Abdul Majid Mirab said Wednesday.

He further said that as per the mandate of JKMSC, from diagnosis to treatment they are providing every required medicine/ medical supplies to the patient.

"In terms of diagnostics, we provide Rapid Antigen, RTPCR logistics to the end users like the Directorate of Health Services, Government Medical College and SKIMS-JVC Medical College to conduct investigations," Dr Mirab said.

"If we talk of stock position in terms of Oxygen cylinders and Concentrators we have been getting the same from the Government of India continuously. Yesterday we also received 200 Oxygen Cylinders and we also got 100 certified Oxygen concentrators and the same are also being distributed among the concerned quarters," he added.

Dr Mirab further said that the stock position of JKMSC is perfectly fine and there is no need to worry and they are also upgrading the facilities from time to time. Besides this, he said that on the directions of Lt. Governor of UT of Jammu and Kashmir, the JKMSC has been providing Covid Management Kit for home treatment to the patients who are detected Covid-19 positive.

"This kit is given to such patients on spot after he is reported Covid-19 positive through Rapid Antigen Test or the same is handed over to him at his home if he has been confirmed positive through RTPCR test and the Covid Management Kit contains pulse oximeter and other mandatory medicines required for the treatment of the virus," he said.

Dr Mirab also said that there is a monitoring system that keeps track of the health of the patients under home isolation and keeps guiding them till they turn negative.

"With the existing monitoring system in place, the person is called twice by the concerned officials to check his health status including pulse and saturation level and on that basis patients are being managed at home," he said, adding "The public should not pay heed to rumours; rather the only important thing that people should focus on right now is to follow the Covid-19 related SOPs and guidelines in letter and spirit to come out of this pandemic.

Jitendra Singh Calls

territory for equitable distribution in the time of distress for needy patients, according to a Personnel Ministry statement.

He made the clarification during a high-level meeting of administration and medical staff convened by him in view of certain reports emanating from GMC, Jammu with regard to COVID-19 management facilities.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to LG, R R Bhatnagar, Financial Commissioner, Atal Dullio, Divisional Commissioner Raghav Langer, DC Jammu Anshul Garg apart from the Principal, GMC, Jammu, Dr Shashi Sudan Sharma and others.

Singh said community management is a vital component of optimum COVID-19 management and the GMC as well as the administrative authorities should not feel shy of taking the community into confidence and soliciting their cooperation.

He asked about the steps being taken by the administration for augmenting oxygen capacity of the Government Medical College, Jammu and other district hospitals across the UT.

In this regard, he was informed that two

oxygen plants each of 1,200 lpm capacity have been set up in GMC, Jammu, the statement said.

A 1,000 lpm oxygen plant has also been set up in Chest and Diseases Hospital, Jammu, it said.

Further, in Government Hospital, Gandhi Nagar another 1,000 lpm plant has been set up, the statement said, adding that two more plants are being set up in GMC, Jammu to augment its oxygen capacity.

With regard to the buffer stocks of oxygen cylinders, Singh was informed that presently a stock of 400 cylinders was present in GMC, Jammu, it said.

While commending the steps being taken to augment the oxygen capacity of hospitals, the minister called for the audit of oxygen capacity as well as ventilators in the UT so that no lives are lost for the want of critical care.

He further expressed his support to the administration and hospital staff for fighting the battle against COVID and saving the lives of people.

Singh instructed the divisional commissioner to post one mechanical engineer and one biomedical engineer in the GMC to exclusively look after the upkeep of oxygen supply so that the patient's attendants or nurses do not have to undergo the ordeal of struggling to maintain oxygen supply.

He asked for a regular issue of medical bulletin by the authorities and keeping public representatives informed about what is being done by the GMC.

Singh also reviewed the situation of ventilators to handle critical patients.

In this regard, he was informed that around 60 ventilators and respirators were being provided to GMC, Jammu, the statement said.

To overcome the shortage of staff, Singh asked the administration to engage post-graduate students, final year medical students, paramedical and nursing students.

He urged the GMC doctors to surrender their private rooms/chambers in Chopra Nursing Home so that they could be converted into COVID chambers.

For the patient's relatives, Singh asked for arranging proper SOPs and PPE kits.

Instead of being dealt by police force, the patient's relatives should be sensitively counselled with the help of social volunteers and well-meaning NGOs, he said.

For this, the minister assigned the responsibility to DC Garg.

While taking stock of the vaccination status in Jammu, Singh was informed that around 96 per cent of population of the age-group of 45 plus had been vaccinated in Jammu alone, while the figure was around 60 per cent for the whole UT.

He was also informed that the vaccination in the age-group 18-45 years was under process and daily around 200-250 shots in this age group were being provided in Jammu and around 16,438 people had received the first dose.

Singh suggested that better information flow to the public should be carried out to facilitate the vaccination process and if a vaccination centre is not operating at a certain time, it should be frankly conveyed to the public.

He said that the referral process should be streamlined and only patients that need critical care should be shifted to GMC, Jammu.

In this regard, Singh was informed that home kits were being provided to COVID-19 patients and call centres had been engaged for making calls to them on a regular basis so that patients, only in dire need, may visit hospitals.

The minister also called for better coordination and synergy between various departments, involvement of civil society groups and NGOs for reaching out to the public to fight the virus and follow COVID-appropriate behaviour.

He further said that the Union Government was committed to support the UT administration and to fill in missing gaps, where required, to save lives and improve the health infrastructure.

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Army Chief

prevailing security situation, operational preparedness, COVID-19 management and the assistance provided to the veterans and the people of the region in the fight against the

pandemic.

The COAS, accompanied by the Northern Army Commander and GOC White Knight Corps, thereafter visited the forward areas at Akhnoor, Naushera and Rajouri.

General Naravane interacted with troops deployed in the forward areas and appreciated the sustained efforts of all ranks of the White Knight Corps towards maintaining the sanctity of the Line of Control as well as wholeheartedly assisting the civil administration, veterans and civil population especially in border areas to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Later in the day, the General officer visited the Military Hospital at Jammu and reviewed the medical preparedness for COVID -19.

Covid Patients

negative and recovered successfully, like many others.

"Your will power should be strong and you should think positive and follow the doctor's advice," she said. "You will recover quickly."

So far, according to the daily government bulletin, over 160035 patients have recovered out of 206954 during the second wave of deadly coronavirus in the erstwhile state.

While 44307 are active positive in JK, 2612 have died (1097 in Jammu division and 1515 in Kashmir division.)

Dr. Mir Mushtaq, spokesperson to the Health Department at Directorate of Health Services Kashmir told Kashmir Observer that since the pandemic broke out in Kashmir last year a total number of 127221 positive cases were reported in valley, out of which 96970 were recovered, while 28736 are active positive cases.

"The fatality rate is 1.19 per cent, which is very less," Dr. Mushtaq said. "Majority of people are recovering but that doesn't mean we should lower our guards."

Among the recovered patients is octogenarian Mohammad Yaqoob of uptown Srinagar.

Bedridden since last 10 years, the elder contracted the virus in the month of March.

Terming his grandfather's recovery despite comorbidities a miracle, Mohammad Sharik, said, "It was heart-wrenching because the person who couldn't even move out of his room got Covid because people used to visit him."

Sharik didn't give-up and kept his entire family alert. He checked his grandfather's saturation, was in contact with doctors and didn't take anything lightly.

Although he was shifted to SKIMS for further treatment, Yaqoob himself didn't give up despite his age and defeated the virus after several days in SKIMS.

"Out of 100 percent only 17 are right now admitted in different hospitals of the valley," said Dr. Irtifa Kanth, Junior Resident Medicine, at SMHS.

The huge chunk of 83 percent of patients, with minimum or no oxygen requirement, he says, is in home quarantine, and majority of them are recovering on their own.

"The high oxygen dependency patients are less than 20 per cent and they are admitted in the hospitals including those who are on ventilator," Dr. Kanth said.

Quoting the official figures, Dr. Kanth said that out of the 83 percent in home quarantine, only 5-10 per cent worsened at home and were reported to the hospitals.

"The majority of the people recover at home without any complications," the doctor said, adding that the patients have to take certain things in mind during home quarantine.

Apart from taking adequate fluids, he said, they should check blood sugar regularly.

"If the patient is diabetic, s/he needs complete isolation and should report to hospital in wake of breathlessness."

Even after 5 days if the fever is not under control, Dr Kanth said, a patient has to report to hospital.

"If there is chest pain or body fatigue, report to hospital. Just be in contact with doctors."

If all these things are followed in letter and spirit, Dr Kanth said, the patient will recover within 20 days. "The people who are recovering are very high than those who are dying," he said.

Crediting various NGOs for providing oxygen at the doorsteps of people, the doctor said. "We have less mortality in comparison to other states of India."

Div Com Reviews Covid Containment Measures, Facilities In Kupwara Hospitals



KUPWARA: The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole Wednesday had a whirl wind tour of North Kashmir district of Kupwara to take stock of Covid containment measures and facilities available in health institutions there.

During the tour, the Div Com visited various Hospitals including District Hospital (DH), Handwara; Sub District Hospital (SDH), Langate, SDH Kupwara, Covid Dedicated Hospital Kupwara and took stock of facilities being provided in the Hospitals. He also reviewed other Covid related facilities including availability of oxygen and medicines. Testing, tracing and treatment facilities were also reviewed.

The Div Com also inspected quarantine wards, Hospital Laboratories, Emergency wards at Kupwara, Handwara and Langate Hospitals and passed on spot directions for further improvement in Covid management facilities. He also took stock of infrastructure, bedding and other required facilities being provided to Corona positive patients in the Hospitals.

Pole also inspected the oxygen

generation plant at SDH Kupwara, District Covid control room at Kupwara and also inaugurated Covid Immunization Centre at ANMT School SDH, Kupwara.

He said that the aim of his tour was to get first hand assessment and feedback from ground zero. He directed CMO Kupwara to ensure that vaccination drive is accelerated through a camp mode and aware the public aware of the need to take doses of vaccine so that cent percent vaccination of targeted groups could be achieved.

The Div Com interacted with doctors and staff members on duty and appreciated their contribution towards containment of the pandemic. He stressed on following the SOPs while attending the patients. During the visit, the Div Com also enquired about the status of sample collection, vaccination, registration under Ayushman Bharat Sehat Scheme, contact tracing, ICU facilities, availability of bedding capacity etc.

Talking to media persons, the Div Com appealed to people, especially above 45 years of age to strictly follow the guidelines of 'no venturing out unnecessarily' for their better safety. He also urged people to follow social distance, maintain hand and face hygiene and above all ensure wearing masks. He also advised people to keep in touch with radio and television as all Government information is easily accessed through this medium of communication.

Youth Found Dead In Baramulla Orchard

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: A youth was found dead on Wednesday morning mysteriously in an orchard in his native area in Sheepora in Delina Baramulla.

An official said that some locals spotted the body in the orchard in Delina and informed the police.

He said that a team of police from the concerned police station reached the spot and took the body into their possession.

Official identified the deceased as Mohammad Abbas Mir son of Ghulam Mohammad Mir, a resi-



dent of Sheepora Delina.

A senior police official said that the body was shifted to a nearby hospital and after fulfilment of legal formalities the body was handed over to his legal heirs.

COVID: Four Kulgam Villages Declared Red Zones



Observer News Service

KULGAM: Four villages have been declared as red zones in South Kashmir's Kulgam after a rise in covid-19 cases.

Invoking prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc, Disaster Management Act and The Epidemic Disease Act, District Magistrate Kulgam said there would be no inward and outward movement of any person from the villages declared red zones and the people would

stay at their homes to ensure complete lockdown.

In this regard, the District Magistrate on Wednesday issued the order according to which, Ashmuji, Koker gnd, Manchwa and Shurat villages have been declared containment zones, for the safety and well-being of the general public.

A district official while talking about these 4 villages told news agency Kashmir News Trust that these areas have become more vulnerable as far as further transmission of the Covid-19 virus is concerned. "It is necessary to break further transmission of the disease in the area and it becomes imperative to take stringent precautionary measures like declaring concerned villages as red zones," he said.

...INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY 2021

'Nurses Are The Backbone Of Healthcare Sector'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: On International Nurses Day, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Wednesday lauded the exemplary contribution of the nurses in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic.

Hailing nurses for their selfless services and spirited fight against Covid, DAK said they have been working tirelessly since day one of the pandemic.

"They have been toiling round the clock and saving lives by putting themselves in danger. Working quietly behind scenes, nurses have been caring for Covid patients and consoling their relatives," DAK said in a statement.

The statement said they are working day in and day out without proper food and beyond shift hours.

It said nurses and other medical staff are working in very very harsh conditions and the equipment they wear are very uncomfortable.

"Their kindness, compassion and empathy has made a difference in the lives of so many patients," it said.

The DAK President said nursing staff are the backbone of the health sector. Their utmost commitment to keep people safe and healthy in these challenging times is truly exceptional.

"It was unimaginable for any health system to cope with such a huge health crisis, but the strong will of these brave hearts made it possible," he said.

"May 12 is of special significance the world over as it



DHSK Hails Services Of Nurses

SRINAGAR: Director Health Services Kashmir, Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather Wednesday hailed the services of nurses for the Covid-19 mitigation on the International Day of Nurses.

A spokesperson of Directorate of Health Services Kashmir said the director in his message hailed the role of nurses in healthcare services and said that they are everyday heroes.

"I appreciate the role of all the healthcare workers, especially the nurses who are fighting the Covid-19 diseases treating patients," the director said.

marks the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the iconic British social reformer who is also called the founder of modern nursing.

Celebrated since 1965 as International Nurses Day, this day lauds the humanitarian work done by nurses

He said that the nurses are the backbone of the hospitals and clinics taking care of millions of Covid-19 patients for months after putting their lives at risk.

"Nurses are at the forefront of fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. Like doctors and other healthcare workers, nurses are continuously providing high quality care often working without a break," he said.

The director said the nurses across the globe are showing courage and dedication and are suffering personal sacrifice to care for others.

across the world.

This year, however, the significance of the day is extremely crucial as nurses and the medical fraternity have become the beacon of hope against the deadly coronavirus pandemic plaguing the world," said the statement.

CPI(M) Demands Assistance For Manual Labourers, Artisans Affected Due To Lockdown

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Demanding immediate financial assistance for labourers, daily-wagers, artisans and other people affected with frequent lockdowns in the last almost two years in Jammu and Kashmir, CPI (M) Secretary Ghulam Nabi Malik Wednesday said Covid-19 crisis have made the survival of economic weaker section of the population difficult.

In a statement he said artisans working in J&K constitute a considerable percentage of total employment in the region.

"COVID-19 lockdown has made the survival of thousands of families who are dependent on the handicrafts sector difficult. People are eking out a tough existence in Kashmir. Daily wagers are not able to find work to feed their families. Thousands of businesses can't pay their staff or keep them on their rolls."

He said that thousands of labourers from the region, who used to go to Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, UP and other places during the winter months to find labour work, couldn't go last

season due to the Covid pandemic. People associated with handicrafts, who had gone to West Bengal, Goa and other states during the winter had to stay back this time.

Similarly people associated with the tourism and transport industry are finding it hard to earn livelihood since August 2019 as there have been hardly any working days available.

"ASHA's under NHM, Anganwadi workers and helpers, Mid-Day Meal workers, CPWs, MGNREGA employees, contractuals, construction workers, need based, seasonal, casual Labourers, daily wagers are without wages for months and the current lockdown has worsened their financial problems further."

He said with lakhs of people in the unorganised sector starting at loss of livelihood, there is a need to increase the working days under the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee scheme (MGNREGA) from the existing 100 days to 200 days. A fund to extend financial assistance to all workers in the informal and unorganised sectors, whose livelihood is affected besides a

moratorium on bank loans for a year for small and medium enterprises and retail traders, is the need of the hour.

"The public distribution system (PDS) should be expanded to cover all essential commodities. Free ration through PDS to people, including people living below poverty line must be provided in this hour of crisis."

Similarly, he said, there is a need to ensure availability of fertilisers, pesticides for farmers amid current lockdown. The government should keep in view that the summer crop is not only a key crop cycle for farmers but is equally important for the growth of Jammu and Kashmir's economy which largely depends on the agricultural and horticulture sectors. A mechanism must be put in place to ensure that farmers carry on their activities without any hindrance.

The specific impact is on the poorest and most vulnerable sections as they are bearing a disproportionate part of the lockdowns and must be looked into immediately. A cash transfer of Rs 7,500 per month for all non-income tax paying families must be announced immediately, he said.

DC B'pora Seeks Cooperation Of Religious Heads To ensure covid Appropriate Behaviour

BANDIPORA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Dr. Owais Ahmad Wednesday held an interactive meeting with prominent religious leaders, Imams and Khateeb of the district ahead of the Eid Festival.

The interaction was held in view of the upcoming Eid Festival and the DC sought the cooperation of religious leaders in ensuring covid appropriate behaviour during the festival times by ensuring social distancing is maintained and no large gatherings take place anywhere in the district.

Dr Owais said that the religious leaders, Imams, Khateeb and Management Committees of local Masjids have a key role during the fresh wave of Covid-19 and appealed to them to use their influence for ensuring that every person follows Covid appropriate behavior in and outside the mosques.

He also impressed upon them to sensitize people to get vaccinated at an earliest adding that the vaccine is safe and effica-

cious against Covid-19 infection.

During the interaction it was unanimously decided that no congregational prayers shall be held in Eidgahs and instead Eid Prayers shall be held at local mosques amid strict covid-19 guidelines and social distancing.

The Imams, Khateeb and other Religious leaders assured full support to the administration in this regard. They pledged to follow in letter and spirit the decisions and directions of administration that are being issued for tackling the rate of infections.

Dr Owais emphasized that the war against the pandemic will be won only by collective efforts and everyone needs to be responsible at this critical juncture.

He urged the people to ensure social distancing and use of face masks. He said the people especially senior citizens with comorbidities should avoid visiting masjids for their own well-being.

ASP, Ashaq A. Tak, Tehsildars and other senior officers were also present during the interaction.

Eid Prayers Only Till 7AM In Bandipora: Admin

Observer News Service

In view of the spike in Covid-19 cases, the district administration in Bandipora on Wednesday appealed people to offer Eid prayers before 7 am. However, no congregational prayers shall be held in Eidgah and instead Eid prayers shall be held at local mosques amid strict covid-19 guidelines of social distancing. An official said that the administration has decided and appealed to the people to offer the Eid prayers before seven o'clock in the morning and there will be no Eid congregational prayers across the district. He said that the move comes amid a growing number of coronavirus patients in the district. The official appealed to people to strictly follow every direction as advised by administration and medical professionals regarding the Eid prayers in view of the pandemic.

Police Arrest Two Persons For Illegal Extraction Of Minerals In Budgam

BUDGAM: Jammu and Kashmir Police Wednesday arrested two persons in Budgam and registered FIR number 79/2021 at Police station Magam under relevant sections of law for illegal extraction of minerals in the district.

In a statement, police said that during night patrolling at Narbal, Police Party arrested two persons for violating the Corona Curfew and illegal transportation of Bajri at Narbal Magam. It said that police seized two loaded vehicles bearing registration numbers JK02AP 6318, JK05 1074.

The arrested persons have been identified as Ashiq Ahmad Shah, Javiad Ahmad Shah sons of Ghulam Nabi Shah, both residents of Takiya Batpora Kunzar.

Police Arrest 145 Persons, Fine 678 For Violation Of Covid SOPs

Observer News Service



SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Police Wednesday said that during the last 24 hours it has arrested 145 persons, lodged 92 FIRs and also realised a fine of Rs 1,09,200/- from 678 people for violating the guidelines/rules throughout Kashmir valley.

"Besides, 15 vehicles were also seized in Budgam and Kulgam for violating guidelines/restrictions and indulging in illegal extraction and transportation of minerals. 04 shopkeepers were also booked by police in Ganderbal and Handwara for violating Covid-19 norms," a police spokesperson said in a statement.

He said to ensure strict implementation of Corona Curfew and adhering of guidelines issued by Govt in view of Covid19 Pandemic, Wednesday SP Handwara Sandeep Gupta-IPS visited market Handwara and its adjacent areas and checked naka deployed at different locations of PD. He was accompanied by ASP Handwara Shri Mashkoor Ahmad-JKPS, SDPO Handwara, Tehsildar Handwara and SHO Handwara.

The special drive against the violators of Covid-19 guidelines/rules continued throughout all the districts of Kashmir Valley to ensure that people adhere to SOPs/ guidelines envisaged by government to curb COVID-19 pandemic.

BOTTOM

Abdullah's, CPI(M), JMF Condemn Israel's 'Atrocities' On Palestinians

'Muslim World's Silence Criminal'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: National Conference (NC) Wednesday condemned the atrocities being committed by Israeli forces in Palestine, Masjid Al Aqsa and has expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine.

In a statement National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah, Vice President Omar Abdullah, and other senior leaders expressed solidarity with the innocent victims of violence and bloodshed in Palestine.

Condemning the Israeli attacks against Palestinians in east Jerusalem, the leaders said, "Even in the holy month of Ramzaan, Israel has unleashed an unjust and despicable war in east Jerusalem, Al Aqsa Mosque, Sheikh Jarrah and Bab Al Amud

resulting in killing of scores of innocent Palestinians. Even women and children are not being spared."

Expressing anguish and pain at the Israeli assault on Islam's third holiest site Masjid Al Aqsa, National Conference leaders said, "Nothing can be more tragic than this deafening silence of some of the prominent Muslim countries on this latest Israeli aggression. Just to please the USA, they couldn't muster courage to condemn the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians," adding, "They should put up a strong and united face and mount pressure on Israel and its allies to immediately stop this aggression in Palestine."

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has also denounced the Israeli attacks on Palestinians, saying that the air raids carried out by Israel on the Gaza strip led to the death of many Palestinian citizens.



"Israel is moving towards the complete occupation of East Jerusalem by attacking Palestinians who were protesting it's attempt to forcefully expel

residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood to make way for Jewish settlements. Israeli forces raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the third holiest

shrine for Muslims and injured hundreds of people praying in the Mosque during the month of Ramadan," CPI (M) said in a statement.

Netanyahu, who had repeatedly failed to win a majority in the Israel elections, launched these attacks for petty political gains and to cover up the government's failure to protect people from the raging Covid pandemic. Palestinians living in Israel are even discriminated from being

(JMF) Wednesday strongly denounced the Israeli attack on innocent people of Palestine.

Zaffar Ahmad, Chairman of JMF in a statement termed the forceful expelling of residents of Sheikh Jarrah to pave way for Jewish to settle is a barbaric act of loot and gross violations of human rights.

ISRAEL IS MOVING TOWARDS THE complete occupation of East Jerusalem by attacking Palestinians who were protesting it's attempt to forcefully expel residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood to make way for Jewish settlements. Israeli forces raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the third holiest shrine for Muslims and injured hundreds of people praying in the Mosque during the month of Ramadan."

vaccinated, reflecting the apartheid policies pursued by Israel, the statement said.

It added that these acts of Israel are in gross violation of human rights and various resolutions passed by the UN. The CPI (M) condemned these acts and called upon the government of India to voice its support to the people of Palestine.

Meanwhile, the executive body of Jammu Muslim Front

Raiding AL-AQSA Masjid is a cowardice act of the government of Israel and the right thinking nation should forge unity to limit its real and boycott trade, social cultural relations and even travel ban should be imposed for her inhuman behavior, the statement said.

He appealed United Nations to take a serious note of it and convene a meeting to denounce this act of genocide.

Muslims to Celebrate Eid al-Fitr Amid COVID-19 Measures

Agenceis

Muslims around the world are preparing to celebrate Eid al-Fitr – one of the holiest occasions in the Islamic calendar – while coping with coronavirus restrictions.

Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's holiest sites, declared Wednesday as the final day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan and Thursday as the start of the three-day holiday. The beginning and end of Islamic months are determined by the sighting of the new moon.

Other countries that will celebrate on Thursday include Algeria,

gatherings, while Tunisia imposed a curfew and movement restrictions until May 16.

However, other countries will ease restrictions as reported daily infections decline. Those include Jordan, which will shorten the nighttime curfew starting Thursday.

Eid al-Fitr is usually marked with special prayers, while families exchange visits and share cookies filled with dates or nuts.

However, it will be a different picture in the besieged Gaza Strip where Israeli forces in recent days have launched intensive air raids on various locations across the coastal territory.



Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. Oman has yet to announce if it will mark Eid on Thursday or Friday.

Some countries have imposed new restrictions during the holiday to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Authorities in Iraq, where daily infection rates remain high and the vaccination drive is slow, have announced a 10-day lockdown starting Wednesday.

Egypt meanwhile ordered shops to close by 9pm until May 21 in an attempt to limit crowds and social

"This was supposed to be a moment to buy goods, food and needs," Al Jazeera's Safwat al-Kahlout, reporting from Gaza City, said. "But because of the recent escalation, people in Gaza have remained indoors because there is no infrastructure or shelters to hide," he added.

Residential buildings have also been hit, al-Kahlout said, leaving many families homeless.

"We are in the [final] days in Ramadan; families usually gather around the table [to break fast]; now, they are suddenly homeless," he added.

Most Of India Should Be Locked Down For 6-8 Weeks: Top Official



Agenceis

The head of the main Indian health agency responding to the coronavirus has said districts reporting a high number of infections should remain locked down for another six to eight weeks to control the spread of the rampaging disease.

Dr Balram Bhargava, head of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said in an interview to Reuters news agency that lockdown restrictions should remain in place in all districts where the rate of infection is above 10 percent of those tested.

Currently, three-fourths of India's 718 districts have what is known as a test-positivity rate above 10 percent, including major cities like New Delhi, Mumbai and the tech hub of Bengaluru. Bhargava's comments are the first time a senior government official has outlined how long lockdowns, which already encompass large parts of the country, need to continue to rein in the crisis in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has shied away from imposing a nationwide lockdown because of the economic effect and has left it to state governments.

Several states have introduced varying levels of curbs on economic activity and public movement to stop the spread of the virus, which are mostly being reviewed and extended on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

"The high positivity districts should remain (shut). If they come to 5 percent from 10 percent (positivity rate) we can open them, but that has to happen. That won't happen in six-eight weeks, clearly," Bhargava said in the interview held at the New Delhi headquarters of the ICMR, the country's top medical research body.

Referring to the capital, one of India's hardest-hit cities where the positivity rate reached about 35 percent but has now fallen to about 17 percent, Bhargava said: "If Delhi is opened tomorrow, it will be a disaster."

India is in deep crisis in the current wave of COVID-19 infections with about 350,000 cases and 4,000 deaths being reported daily. Hospi-

tals and morgues are overflowing, medical staff is exhausted and oxygen and drugs are running short.

Many experts say the actual case tallies and deaths could be five to 10 times higher. Modi and other top political leaders have faced a public backlash for addressing mass election rallies where no key COVID-19 safety protocols were followed.

The federal government also did not intervene to stop a religious festival in a northern state in March that was attended by millions of devout Hindus.

Bhargava did not criticise the Modi government but conceded there had been a delay in responding to the crisis.

"I think the only discontent we have was there was a slight delay accepting the 10 percent (recommendation), but that did happen," he said.

He said an April 15 meeting of the National Task Force on COVID-19 had made the recommendation to the government to lock down areas with a 10 percent positivity rate or higher.

Yet, in a televised speech on April 20, Modi dissuaded states and said a lockdown should be used as "last resort" and the focus should remain on "micro containment zones".

On April 26 – more than 10 days after the task force meeting – India's home ministry wrote to states, asking them to implement strict measures for "large containment areas" in hard-hit districts, but only for 14 days.

India's home and health ministries, as well as Modi's office, did not respond to requests for comment.

Reuters reported earlier this month the head of the National Centre for Disease Control had privately told an online gathering that strict lockdown measures were required in early April.

Two senior ICMR officials told Reuters the organisation was frustrated about political leaders addressing large rallies and allowing religious gatherings, saying the actions publicly flouted required safety measures.

Modi himself addressed several of the political meetings, maskless.

"Our messaging has been completely incorrect, not in sync with the situation," said one of the officials, referring to the government. "We have miserably failed."

14 Children Killed in Relentless Israeli Air Raids on Gaza



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The death toll from Israeli air strikes on Gaza has climbed to 53, including 14 children, as UN warned of "full-scale war".

Gaza's Health Ministry said on Wednesday another 320 Palestinians in the territory were wounded in the strikes that started late on Monday.

Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz vowed more attacks on embattled Gaza before considering a ceasefire.

"The army will continue to attack to bring a total, long-term quiet. Only when we reach that goal will we be able to speak about a truce," Gantz said.

At least six people have died in Israel since the start of Israeli military action on Gaza. Two of them were killed in the town of Lod after a rocket hit a vehicle in the area early on Wednesday.

Israeli warplanes also shelled a building near the headquarters of the Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza. No one was killed or injured in the attack. Meanwhile, the coast of northern Gaza was

shelled by Israeli boats.

This is the heaviest offensive between Israel and Hamas since a 2014 war in Gaza and has prompted international concern that the situation could spiral out of control.

Gazans' homes shook and the sky lit up from Israeli attacks, outgoing rockets and Israeli air defence missiles intercepting them. At least 30 explosions were heard within a matter of minutes just after dawn on Wednesday.

UN Middle East peace envoy Tor Wennesland tweeted: "Stop the fire immediately. We're escalating towards a full-scale war. Leaders on all sides have to take the responsibility of de-escalation."

"The cost of war in Gaza is devastating & is being paid by ordinary people. UN is working with all sides to restore calm. Stop the violence now," he wrote.

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.

Israel's attacks on Gaza follow weeks of violence against Palestin-

ians amid spiking tensions in Jerusalem during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

The Israeli police deployed heavy-handed tactics against Palestinian worshippers in and around Al Aqsa Mosque in the last week, on the compound revered by Jews as Temple Mount and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary.

Another flashpoint in recent days has been a court case that could end with Palestinian families evicted from occupied East Jerusalem homes in Sheikh Jarrah claimed by Jewish settlers. If the court rules for the settlers, Palestinians living in the neighbourhood would be displaced for a second time, the first when they were moved into Sheikh Jarrah as refugees by Jordan in the 1950s.

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

Six people in Israel, including three women and a child, were killed by rocket fire on Tuesday and early Wednesday, while 45 others have been injured.

"A Hell Out Here": COVID-19 Ravages Rural India

Agenceis

India's coronavirus death count crossed 2,50,000 on Wednesday in the deadliest 24 hours since the pandemic began, as the disease rampaged through the countryside, leaving families to weep over the dead in rural hospitals or camp in wards to tend the sick.

Boosted by highly infectious variants, the second wave erupted in February to inundate hospitals and medical staff, as well as crematoriums and mortuaries. Experts still cannot say for sure when the figures will peak.

State leaders clamoured for vaccines to stop the second wave and the devastation that it has wrought, urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help them procure urgent supplies from overseas.

Deaths grew by a record 4,205 while infections rose 3,48,421 in the 24 hours to Wednesday, taking the tally past 23 million, health ministry data showed. Experts believe the actual numbers could be five to 10 times higher.

Funeral pyres have blazed in city parking lots, and bodies have washed up on the banks of the holy river Ganges, having been immersed by relatives whose villages were stripped bare of the wood needed for cremations.

Lacking beds, drugs and oxygen, many hospitals in the world's second-most populous nation have been forced to turn away droves of



sufferers, while tales of desperate relatives searching for someone to treat dying loved ones have become sickeningly commonplace.

Although the infection curve may be showing early signs of flattening, new cases are likely to fall off slowly, according to virologist Shahid Jameel.

Indians need vaccines "here and now", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, said in a letter to PM Narendra Modi. India has fully vaccinated barely 2.5% of the population.

Delhi had run out of its reserves of shots and had to close down several centres, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia told reporters.

India is using the AstraZeneca vaccine made at the Serum Institute in the western city of Pune and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech but production is well short of the millions of doses required.

The country accounts for half of COVID-19 cases and 30% of deaths worldwide, the World Health Organization said in its latest weekly report.

The full impact of the B.1.617 variant found in India, which the WHO has designated as being of global concern, is not yet clear, it added.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said his government was looking at all possible solutions to tackle a surge in cases of the coronavirus variant first detected in India, including in the northern English town of Bolton.

"It may be more transmissible ... maybe even considerably more transmissible," he told parliament.

Daily infections are shooting up in the Indian countryside in comparison to big towns, where they have slowed after last month's surge, experts say.

More than half the cases this week in Maharashtra were in rural

World Could Have Prevented COVID-19 Catastrophe: Expert Panel

Agenceis

An independent panel has concluded that the catastrophic scale of the coronavirus pandemic could have been prevented but a "toxic cocktail" of dithering and poor coordination meant the warning signs went unheeded.

In its long-awaited final report on Wednesday, the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR) said a series of bad decisions meant COVID-19 went on to kill at least 3.3 million people so far and ravage the global economy.

Institutions "failed to protect people" and science-denying leaders eroded public trust in health interventions, the IPPPR said. Early responses to the outbreak detected in Wuhan, China in December 2019 "lacked urgency", with February 2020 a costly "lost month" as countries failed to heed the alarm, said the panel.

It called on the richest countries to donate a billion vaccine doses to the poorest to tackle the current pandemic, and it also urged the world's wealthiest nations to fund new organisations dedicated to preparing for the next pandemic.

The IPPPR's report was requested by World Health Organization (WHO) member states in May last year. The panel was jointly chaired by former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and former Liberian

strophic human crisis."

The threat of a pandemic had been overlooked and countries were woefully unprepared to deal with one, the report found.

The panel did not spare the WHO, saying it could have declared the situation a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) – its highest level of alarm – on January 22, 2020. Instead, it waited eight more days before doing so.

Nevertheless, given countries' relative inaction, "we might still have ended up in the same place," said Clark. It was only in March after the WHO described it as a pandemic – a term that is not officially part of its alert system – that countries were jolted into action.

As for the initial outbreak, "there were clearly delays in China – but there were delays everywhere," she added.

Without the lag between the first identification in Wuhan and the PHEIC declaration – and then the "lost month" of February 2020 – "we believe we wouldn't be looking at an accelerating pandemic, as we have for the last 15 or 16 months or so. As simple as that," said Clark.

The panel made several recommendations on how to address the current pandemic.

Rich, well-vaccinated countries should provide the 92 poorest ter-



an president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

The report, "COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic", argued that the global alarm system needed overhauling to prevent a similar catastrophe.

"The situation we find ourselves in today could have been prevented," Sirleaf told reporters. "It is due to a myriad of failures, gaps and delays in preparedness and response."

The report said the emergence of COVID-19 was characterised by a mixture of "some early and rapid action, but also by delay, hesitation, and denial".

"Poor strategic choices, unwillingness to tackle inequalities and an uncoordinated system created a toxic cocktail which allowed the pandemic to turn into a cata-

strophies in the COVAX scheme with at least one billion vaccine doses by September 1, and more than two billion by mid-2022, it said.

The G7 industrialised nations should pay 60 percent of the \$19bn required to fund vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics via the WHO's Access to COVID Tools Accelerator programme in 2021, it added. Fellow G20 nations and others should provide the rest.

The WHO and the World Trade Organization should also get key vaccine-producing countries and manufacturers to agree to voluntary licensing and technology transfers for COVID-19 vaccines, the panel said.

"If actions do not occur within three months, a waiver of ... intellectual property rights should come into force immediately."

Norway Will Not Use AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine: Report



Agenceis

Norway will not resume its use of the COVID-19 vaccine made by AstraZeneca due to a risk of rare but harmful side-effects, newspaper VG reported on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Erna Solberg is expected to announce at 1600 GMT whether Norway will resume the use of the AstraZeneca shot, as well as the government's decision on Johnson & Johnson's inoculation.

The prime minister's office and the health ministry were not immediately available for comment.

Authorities on March 11 sus-

pended the AstraZeneca rollout after a small number of younger inoculated people were hospitalised for a combination of blood clots, bleeding and a low count of platelets, some of whom later died.

A study in Denmark and Norway found slightly increased rates of vein blood clots among people who have had a first dose of AstraZeneca's vaccine, including clots in the brain, compared with expected rates in the general population.

On May 10, a public panel of medical, legal and other experts said the two vaccines should not be offered as part of the national inoculation scheme, although volunteers should be allowed to take them.

NEWS MAKERS

Zarif Turns Down Reformist Appeals To Run For President, Potentially Reshaping 2021 Race

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Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, has announced he will not be running for president in the June 18 election, officially turning down a major appeal by the Reformist camp and potentially reshaping the race.

In a rather cryptic Instagram post on Wednesday, Zarif officially announced what he had already implied by resisting weeks of Reformist lobbying and refusing to announce a presidential bid.

While the Iranian foreign minister had denied having presidential



aspirations in the past, he had refused to emphatically and publicly rule out a run in recent weeks and as the election drew nearer.

In announcing his decision, Zarif

said he had reached the conviction that his candidacy would not have been in the best interest of the country.

He said he had made the decision not on the basis of personal inter-

ests or for his own convenience, but because "I have reached this conscientious conviction that me running would not be in the best interest of the country and the nation given the perturbations that have been displayed in the past eight years, in particular since New Year's Day, at the cost of ruining national unity and self-confidence and the hope and trust of the people."

While he did not explain, Zarif was apparently referring to a controversy that arose after an audio file leaked in which he could be heard criticizing what he called "the field" for interfering in the determination of foreign

policy and conduct of diplomacy.

In his Instagram post, Zarif thanked the many people who had pleaded with him to run but said he had reached the decision after much private deliberation.

"Speaking from experience, I know and you know that not to vote is a choice, but one that would only lead to the victory of the minority," he said, however.

A career diplomat and academic, US-educated Zarif has spent many years representing Iran in the international community. Formerly, he was Iran's ambassador to the United Nations (UN), from 2002 to 2007.