

## KASHMIR OBSERVER

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P3 CITY

**'BUSES CAN WAIT, NOT OUR DUES': CITY TRANSPORTERS FROWN OVER NEW FLEET**

Srinagar Regional Transport Corporation (SRTC)'s move to add new fleet to its yard has left "unpaid, underpaid and undervalued" employees embittered. The troubled transporters are expressing

P4 THINK

**VIOLATION OF MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE RULES 2016**

J&K Pollution Control Board (PCB) which has now been named as J&K Pollution Control Committee (PCC) a few months back imposed a huge penalty on Municipal Council (MC) Bandipora....



P7 NEWS

**COVID-19: LG DIRECTS FOR HIRING ADDITIONAL PARAMEDICAL STAFF**

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Sunday visited Government Medical College, Jammu to review Covid clinical management measures being undertaken by the Hospital...



Life becomes easier and more beautiful when we can see the good in other people.

—Roy T. Bennett

## NEWS DIGEST

**IED Detected, Defused In Shopian: Police**

**SRINAGAR:** State forces detected and neutralised an improvised explosive device (IED) on Sunday following inputs about a militant attack in south Kashmir's Shopian district, police said. They had inputs about the attack and the IED was recovered after intense searches were launched this morning. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Shopian, Amrit Pal Singh said. The IED was "detected and neutralised between Sujan and Turkhwan-gam (areas in Shopian)

**Man Critical After Attack By Bears**

**SRINAGAR:** A man was attacked and seriously injured by two wild bears on Sunday in Haril area of Handwara in north Kashmir's Kupwara district. 36-year-old Saif-ud-Din Khatana was attacked by two bears outside his home in Monabal village of Haril in Handwara on Sunday afternoon, reports said. The cries of Khatana alerted the villagers who rushed to the spot and chased away the beasts

**KU Prof GM Bhat Dies Of Covid-19**

**SRINAGAR:** Kashmir University's senior professor and Head of Department (HoD) of Department of Electronics, Professor Ghulam Mohiudin Bhat on Sunday passed away due to Covid-19 complications. Prof. Bhat succumbed to the virus at JLNH hospital where he was admitted for some time, officials said. He had earlier served as Dean and Director of Engineering College at Zakura Campus of Kashmir University. A resident of Chewa Safapora in Ganderbal district,

**Corona Curfew Extended In Ladakh**

**LEH:** The curfew imposed in Ladakh to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has been extended by another week till May 24, officials said on Sunday. The extension of the curfew, which was scheduled to end on May 17, was ordered by the district magistrates of Leh and Kargil in separate orders, they said. As of Sunday, Ladakh's COVID-19 tally stands at 16,333 and the

**2 Held For Trying To Smuggle Polythene Bags**

**JAMMU:** Two Punjab residents were taken into custody on Sunday for trying to smuggle 16 quintals of banned polythene bags in a mini-load carrier in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. The Jammu-bound vehicle loaded with potatoes was stopped and searched by a police party at Tappal near Ghagwal on Jammu-Pathankot highway, resulting in the seizure of 64 sacks of polythene bags ● [More On P6](#)

**Pakistani Drone Spotted Along IB**

**JAMMU:** A suspected Pakistani drone was seen hovering along the International Border (IB) here, prompting security forces to launch a massive search operation to check if it had dropped anything inside the Indian territory, officials said on Sunday. However, nothing suspicious was found during the search operation, they said. This comes two days after a Pakistani drone dropped an AK-47 rifle, a pistol and some ammunition along the IB in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir. The suspected Pakistani drone was seen hovering in Kanachak sector here late on Saturday night. Some residents saw a streak of yellow light in the skies ● [More On P6](#)

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

**'Where're Vaccines': Kashmiris Decry Dose Shortage**

Auqib Javed

**SRINAGAR:** For over a fortnight now, Arshid Meraj is trying everything to get his sixty-plus parents vaccinated in different health centres of Srinagar. But whenever he risks his life on the curfewed and covid plagued streets, the designated infirmaries in the summer capital send him away saying, "We've run out of stock." This dearth



of Covid antidote is being reported when Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha has already set the 10-day deadline to get 45-plus people

vaccinated in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. "It's becoming frustrating now," Arshid, sounding

anxious, said.

"On one hand, this government is pressing alarm bells over this viral situation and putting the entire population under curfew, and on the other hand they're keeping hospitals devoid of this critical dose at this crucial juncture."

Even the so-called 'doctor contacts' are hardly working now, continued Arshid, a medical representative by profession.

"I contacted most of my doctor friends in Srinagar, but even they aren't able to do anything due to dearth of vaccines in the hospitals right now."

This concern is already being debated in the ● [More On P6](#)

**J&K Govt Fully Prepared To Fight Coronavirus: LG**

Press Trust Of India

**JAMMU:** The Jammu and Kashmir administration is fully prepared in the fight against coronavirus, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said on Sunday, as he lauded the efforts of frontline and healthcare workers in helping to combat the pandemic.

Sinha was speaking during 'Awaam ki Awaaz', a radio programme aimed at making the process of governance more participatory and people-centric by giving a platform to the public to share their suggestions and views.

The Lt Governor dedicated the second run of the radio programme to 'corona warriors' and expressed his gratitude towards them for putting their lives at



risk for the service of the people.

While sharing suggestions received to strengthen the infrastructure, Sinha said the UT administration is fully prepared in the fight against the pandemic.

In the last six months, J-K administration has strengthened health infrastructure across the UT. We have added 26 new oxygen generation plants. Fourteen more plants will ● [More On P6](#)

**59 More Deaths, 4141 Fresh Cases In J&K**

Observer Monitoring Desk

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir reported 4141 fresh covid-19 cases while 59 persons succumbed to the virus in the last 24 hours, officials said on Sunday.

They said that 1690 of the fresh cases were reported from Jammu Division and 2451 from Kashmir Valley, taking the total count to 244608.

Regarding the COVID-19 deaths, they said that 31 were reported from Jammu Division and 28 from Kashmir Valley, taking the overall toll to 3149.

Providing district-wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 831 cases, Baramulla 252, Budgam 320, Pulwama 177, Kupwara 148, Anantnag 199, Bandipora 89, Ganderbal 152, Kulgam 228, Shopian 55, Jammu 625, Udhampur 192, Rajouri 237, Doda 77, Kathua 186, Samba 145, Kishtwar 41 Poonch 106, Ramban 65, and Reasi 16.

Moreover, they said, 3934 more COVID-19 patients have recovered—1185 from Jammu Division and 2749 from Kashmir Valley. There are 51623 active cases—20434 in the Jammu and 31189 in Jammu.

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**20K Covid Care Centre Beds Being Activated: Govt**

**A**s many as 20,000 COVID care centre (CCC) beds are being activated across Jammu and Kashmir for admitting coronavirus positive patients with no or mild symptoms and cannot do home isolation, an official order said on Sunday. The order, issued by chief secretary B V R Subrahmanyam, said the CCCs would be opened close to rural areas in all the 20 districts with 1,000 beds each. Health Department will work out the feasibility of providing some of these CCC beds with oxygen support, Subrahmanyam, who is also chairperson of ● [More On P6](#)

**Life Remains Crippled On Day 18**

**T**he lockdown imposed in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of an alarming surge in coronavirus cases entered the 18th day on Sunday as the normal life remained affected in most areas of the union territory, officials said.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration had on Saturday extended the lockdown till May 24. The officials said restrictions on the movement and assembly of people continued to remain in force on Sunday, though the curbs were not strict. Markets remained shut and public transport ● [More On P6](#)

**Train Services Suspended Till May 24**

**R**ailway authorities on Sunday extended till May 24 the suspension of train services from Banihal to Baramulla and vice versa. Official sources said that railway authorities have conveyed the decision to the field agencies. On May 10, the authorities suspended the services in view of the covid-19 situation in Kashmir Valley and as per the guidelines and SOPs issued by the government. The decision had followed huge rush of passengers at stations amid continuing increase in the number Covid cases. ● [More On P6](#)

**BJP Leader Performs 'Havan' To Ward Off Corona**

**T**he BJP's Jammu and Kashmir vice president Yuthvir Sethi performed a 'havan' to "ward off" the coronavirus, a party spokesman said Sunday. The fire ritual was performed following all COVID-19-related guidelines, the spokesman said, adding that Sethi was joined by party colleagues Anil Masoom, Ajit Yogi, Parveen Kemi, Pawan Sharma, Roshan Lal Sharma and Satish Kumar. Sethi said he has full faith that the 'havan' will help eliminate the disease, which has infected over 2,40,000 people and claimed more than 3,000 lives in the Union Territory ● [More On P6](#)

**93% Deaths In J&K Among Unvaccinated People: CS**

Press Trust Of India

**JAMMU:** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam on Sunday said 93 percent of the reported COVID-19 fatalities in the past one month occurred in unvaccinated people in the union territory.

He said 49.37 percent fatality was recorded in COVID-19 patients who ignored initial symptoms, delayed taking the test, or reached hospitals in critical conditions at later stages. s per the analysis of COVID mortality carried out by J-K National Health Mission

(NHM) between April 15 and May 12, which accounted for a total of 495 deaths in Jammu division and 311 deaths in Kashmir province, 93 percent of the deceased were unvaccinated, while rest of the seven percent were partially vaccinated. Reviewing the public health response to COVID-19 amid the surging cases at a meeting here, the chief secretary directed ramping up of COVID care facilities and speedy vaccination of target groups. He also directed district administrations to utilise full testing ● [More On P6](#)

**Pro-Palestine Demos: Mural Artist, 16 Others Set Free After 'Counselling'**

Ajaz Ali

**Srinagar:** Police on Sunday released 17 youth, including an artist who had drawn graffiti on a platform showing a sobbing woman with her head covered with Palestine's flag, two days after being arrested over pro-Palestine protests in several parts of the Valley against the Israeli aggression in Gaza strip.

In a statement issued to media here on Sunday, a police spokesperson said that after counselling, 17 boys were handed over to their families by police in its endeavour to strengthen the bond between police and public and to "bring teenagers back into the mainstream".

"SSP Srinagar Sandeep Chaudhary-IPS today held

counselling cum interaction meeting with the family members of misguided youth," he said, adding that

SP South, Sajjad Shah and SP North Srinagar Mubashir Bukhari and other officers of the Srinagar district were also present on the occasion.

The police spokesperson said that during the counselling, family members of the boys were advised to take proper care of their wards and keep a watch upon their activities, actions and behaviour.

"The youth were properly counselled and advised to focus on their studies, professional work and utilize their energy in positive direction," he said.

"The family members and the youth duly appreciated this

endeavour and acknowledged their role of responsible citizens. The parents assured that they will guide their children towards positive direction so that they could not get engaged in such activities which can lead to spread of infection," he added.

The police spokesperson further said that the youth were arrested for participating in protests in violation of Section 51 of DM Act during Corona Curfew.

Meanwhile, a senior police officer told Kashmir Observer on Sunday that 30-year-old Mudassir Gul, a professional artist was among the youth released on Sunday.

Gul, a resident of Padshahi Bagh locality of this capital city was arrested on Friday night for drawing graffiti ● [More On P6](#)

**Mehbooba Questions Arrest Of Anti-Israel Protesters**

**P**DP president Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday criticised the arrest of people for holding protests against Israel over the Middle-East conflict during a corona curfew in the Union Territory. People all over the world are protesting against the atrocities committed by Israel on Palestine. But in Kashmir it's a punishable offence where an artist is booked under PSA & a preacher is arrested simply for expressing solidarity ● [More On P6](#)



**Dr. Faheem Younus**  
VP/ CQO/ Chief of Infectious Diseases University of MD UCH

Any SINGLE symptom should make you think COVID. Cough or fever or shortness of breath or body aches or loss of smell/taste

Don't wait for ALL symptoms. Get tested and isolate for 10 days

Don't delay or dismiss. You'll end up spreading it to others.

When in doubt, get tested



**Dr. Iqbal Saleem**  
Professor of Surgery, GMC

A result oriented lock down would mean breaking the chain of transmission of the virus. The time would be judiciously used for upgrading the available medical facilities especially oxygen. The vital cog in the wheel would have been vaccinating people at risk...??? Have we done it



**Dr. Shah Nawaz B. Kaloo**  
Consultant Interventional Radiology, Liver Cancer Interventions, Max Hospital

Vaccine  
If you didn't do it yet, do it now!  
Tell your family & friends too.  
#COVIDSecondWave

**Sehrai's Sons Not Booked Under PSA: Police**

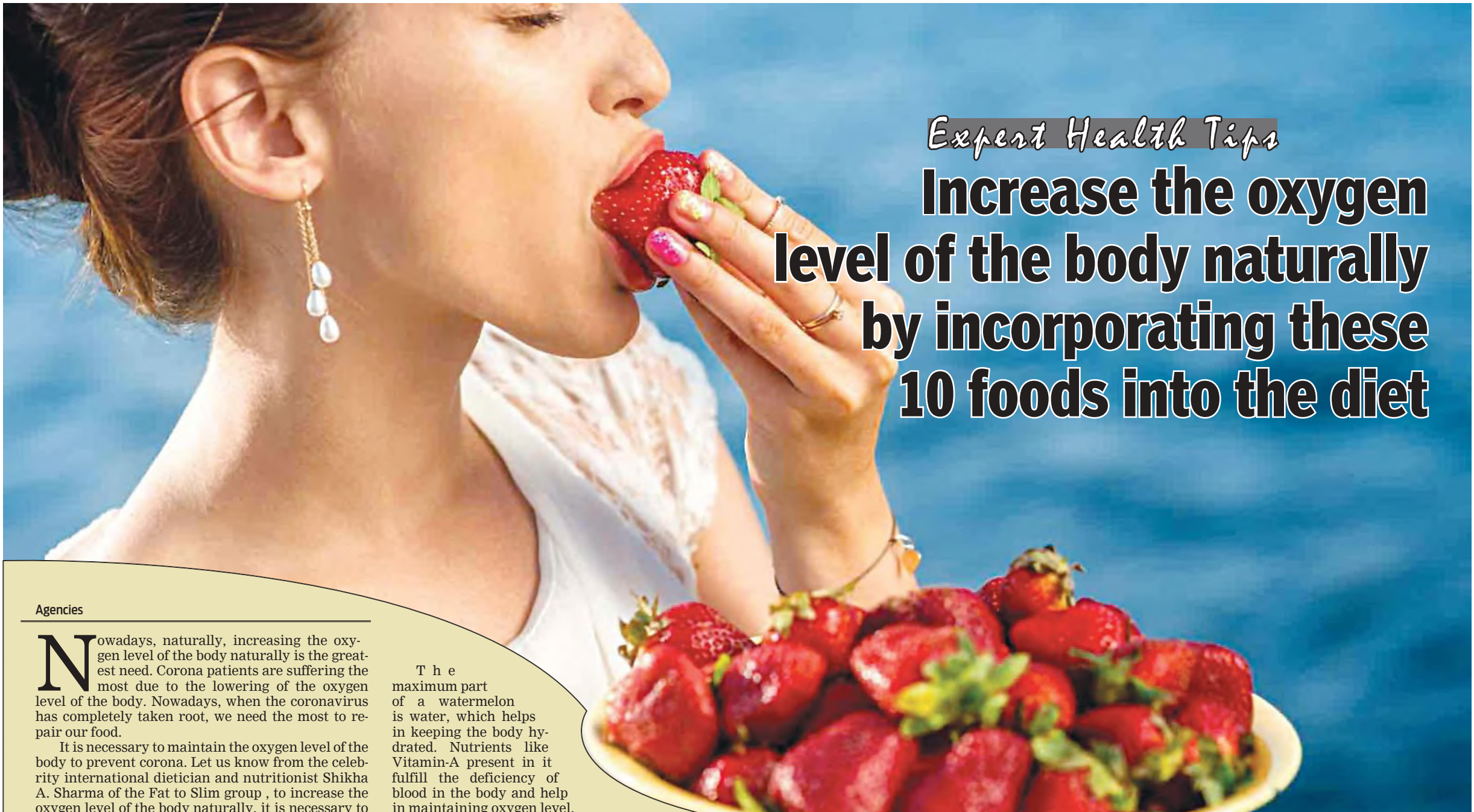
Observer Monitoring Desk

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir Police Sunday said that both sons of deceased Tehreek-e-Hurriyat chief Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai and four others have been arrested for raising anti-national slogans during Sehrai's funeral at Tikipora, Kupwara.

"Both sons of Late Sehrai & 4 others have been #arrested for raising #antinationl slogans during funeral. But, they haven't been booked under PSA. Plz don't spread #rumour," Jammu and Kashmir police tweeted.

Earlier, there were media reports that Sehrai's both sons have been slapped with PSA. Police, however, clarified that the duo haven't been booked under PSA.





Expert Health Tips

# Increase the oxygen level of the body naturally by incorporating these 10 foods into the diet

Agencies

Nowadays, naturally, increasing the oxygen level of the body naturally is the greatest need. Corona patients are suffering the most due to the lowering of the oxygen level of the body. Nowadays, when the coronavirus has completely taken root, we need the most to repair our food.

It is necessary to maintain the oxygen level of the body to prevent corona. Let us know from the celebrity international dietician and nutritionist Shikha A. Sharma of the Fat to Slim group , to increase the oxygen level of the body naturally, it is necessary to include some foods in your diet.

1. Black gram

Black gram is a good source of iron and its intake is very beneficial for health. Black gram helps in maintaining the oxygen level of the body. Be sure to include black gram in your daily diet. You can also take these as sprouts.

2. Orange

Oranges are rich in vitamin C, which increases the immunity of the body and is also beneficial in colds. Orange is rich in antioxidants. Being full of various nutrients, orange helps in curing many major diseases as well as helps in increasing the oxygen level of the body. Do include this in your regular diet.

3. Watermelon

The maximum part of a watermelon is water, which helps in keeping the body hydrated. Nutrients like Vitamin-A present in it fulfill the deficiency of blood in the body and help in maintaining oxygen level.

4 Strawberry

Strawberries have antioxidant properties and polyphenol compounds, which are beneficial for health. Vitamin-C elements present in it help in fulfilling many nutritional deficiencies in the body. The level of energy and oxygen is maintained in the body due to the consumption of Sarovar. Corona patients should also include it in their diet.

5. Apple

Apples contain a sufficient amount of antioxidants and disease-fighting elements. Some elements are also found in apples which help in the formation of new cells in the body. Consuming apple helps maintain the oxygen level of the body.

6. Kiwi

Kiwi contains an enzyme called actinidin, which helps in the digestion of proteins in the body. Along

with this, Vitamin-C present in Kiwi helps the body recover from the coronavirus. Kiwi intake is a panacea remedy for Corona patients. With this, the body gets energy, and the oxygen level is maintained.

7. Mango

Consuming mangoes rich in Vitamin-A and Vitamin-C helps to protect against many diseases in the body. Consumption of mangoes develops the immunity of the body, which helps in fighting many diseases. Consumption of mangoes leads to oxygen level maintenance of the body.

8. Gooseberry

Amla is rich in anti-oxidant elements, as well as

being a good source of Vitamin C, the amla intake strengthens immunity. Not only this, amla has an important role in maintaining oxygen levels inside the body. Do include this in your regular diet.

9. Roasted cumin

Roasted cumin has an important role to maintain the oxygen level of the body. Iron is found in plenty of cumin which fulfills the lack of blood in the body. To maintain sufficient oxygen level, fry the cumin seeds and use it, do not add salt to them.

10. Vitamin D

To maintain the oxygen level of the body, include vitamin-D-rich nutrients in your diet. This helps in getting energy from the body and also helps in recovery from the corona.

# ‘New hydrogel can protect against resistant bacteria, may treat wounds’

Agencies

A team of researchers at Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden, has developed a new material that prevents infections in wounds - a specially designed hydrogel, that works against all types of bacteria, including antibiotic-resistant ones.

The new material offers great hope for combating a growing global problem.

The World Health Organization describes antibiotic-resistant bacteria as one of the greatest threats to global health. To deal with the problem, there needs to be a shift in the way we use antibiotics, and new, sustainable medical technologies must be developed.

"After testing our new hydrogel on different types of bacteria, we observed a high level of effectiveness, including against those which have become resistant to antibiotics," says Martin Andersson, research leader for the study and Professor at the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Chalmers University of Technology.

Research and development of the material has been ongoing for many years at Martin Andersson's group at Chalmers, growing in scope along the way, with a particular focus on the possibilities for wound care. Now, the important results are published as a scientific article in the journal ACS Biomaterials Science & Engineering.

The main purpose of the studies so far has been to explore new medical technology solutions to help reduce the use of systemic antibiotics. Resistant bacteria cause what is referred to as hospital-acquired infection - a life-threatening condition and is increasing in incidence worldwide.

Mimicking the natural immune system

The active substance in the new bactericidal material consists of antimicrobial peptides, small proteins which are found naturally in our immune system.

"With these types of peptides, there is a very low risk for bacteria to develop resistance against them since they only affect the outermost membrane of the bacteria. That is perhaps the foremost reason why they are so interesting to work with," says Martin Andersson.

Researchers have long tried to find ways



to use these peptides in medical devices, but so far without much success. The problem is that they break down quickly when they come into contact with bodily fluids such as blood. The current study describes how the researchers managed to overcome the problem through the development of a nanostructured hydrogel, into which the peptides are permanently bound, creating a protective environment.

"The material is very promising. It is harmless to the body's own cells and gentle on the skin. In our measurements, the protective effect of the hydrogel on the antimicrobial peptides is clear - the peptides degrade much slower when they are bound to it," says Edvin Blomstrand, a doctoral student at the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Chalmers, and one of the main authors of the article.

"We expected good results, but we were really positively surprised at quite how effective the material has proven," adds Martin Andersson.

According to the researchers, this new material is the first medical device to make successful use of antimicrobial peptides in a clinically and commercially viable manner. There are many varied and promising opportunities for clinical application.

Startup company Amferia takes the research from lab to market

In recent years, foundational research into the antimicrobial peptide hydrogel has run in parallel with the commercial development of the innovation through the spin-off company Amferia AB.

The company was founded in 2018 by Martin Andersson together with Saba Atefyekta and

Anand Kumar Rajasekharan, who both defended their dissertations at Chalmers' Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering.

The material and the idea, which is currently developed as an antibacterial wound patch, has generated interest around the world, attracting significant investment and receiving several awards. The company is working intensively to get the material to market so that it can benefit wider society.

Before the new material can benefit hospitals and patients, clinical studies are needed, which are ongoing. A CE marking of the material is expected to be completed in 2022. Furthermore, the wound patch version of the new material is undergoing trials in veterinary care, for treating pets. The company Amferia AB is already collaborating with a number of veterinary clinics around Europe where the hydrogel is now being tested.

"Amferia has recently entered into a strategic partnership with Sweden's largest distributor of premium medical & diagnostic devices to jointly launch these wound care products for the Swedish veterinary market during 2021" says Martin Andersson.

More about antimicrobial peptides and the new material

The beneficial properties of antimicrobial peptides have been known for some decades, and thousands of different varieties occurring in the natural immune systems of humans, animals and plants have been discovered. Researchers have long tried to mimic and use their natural function to prevent and treat infections without having to use traditional antibiotics. However, because the peptides are broken down as soon as they come in contact with blood or other body fluids, successful clinical usage has proved elusive.

The researchers knew that smart new solutions were needed to protect the peptide from degradation. The new material in the study has been shown to work very well, allowing the peptides to be applied directly to wounds and injuries on the body, with the effect of both preventing and treating infection. The material is also non-toxic, so it can be used directly on the skin. The potential of this new material can also be seen in the flexibility that it offers for different types of products.

# How to avoid sun damage after months in lockdown

Agencies

After a winter of lockdown and with coronavirus restrictions beginning to lift across the UK, many will be hoping for good weather this summer. Restrictions on foreign travel have meant that more people plan to stay within the UK for their summer holidays than ever before.

This shift, along with our social lives increasingly being based outside, makes it particularly important that people don't underestimate the risks posed by the sun in the UK.

Skin damage caused by the sun is associated with both skin cancer and premature ageing of the skin. The culprit in both cases is ultraviolet radiation (UV). Invisible to human eyes, although it can be seen by many animals, including reindeer, UV sits just beyond the purple end of the visible light spectrum.

One reason that it is so harmful is that its energy can be absorbed by our cells' DNA, causing it to become damaged. If the cell isn't able to repair this DNA damage, this can lead to genetic changes, or mutations, which in turn can cause cancer. Because of their location on the surface of the body, skin cells are the main target for UV damage.

The body does have some protection against these harmful effects. Molecular mechanisms within our cells are able to detect and repair the DNA damage before it can cause mutation. When skin cells detect DNA damage, they activate alarm signals that get passed on to pigment-producing cells to tell them to start producing more pigment to help protect against further damage. It's the production of this pigment, melanin, that causes a suntan.

A tan is therefore a sign that your skin has been damaged. The protection it provides has been estimated to be equivalent to an SPF of around 4. This means that although it will take four times longer in the sun to do so, you can still burn.

If you're exposed to lots of UV, then the amount of DNA damage can overwhelm cells' defences. All is not lost though, because a damaged cell has a final line of defence where it can activate death programmes, "choosing" to die by a process called apoptosis. This means that badly damaged cells, which could go on to become cancerous, are eliminated from the body before they can cause harm.

Anyone who's ever had sunburn has experienced this process in action. Huge amounts of dying cells in the skin leads to inflammation, causing the characteristic painful reddening of the skin that can be an unpleasant end to a day out in the sun.



# 'Buses Can Wait, Not Our Dues': City Transporters Frown Over New Fleet

**"We Can't Even Afford Medicines And Employees Who Have Tested Positive For Covid Have No Money For Treatment And To Support Their Families."**



By Umer Ahmad

Srinagar Regional Transport Corporation (SRTC)'s move to add new fleet to its yard has left "unpaid, underpaid and undervalued" employees embittered.

The troubled transporters are expressing resentment over the department's purchasing power when most of them are hardly managing their families due to pending salaries.

"We haven't received any salary from last 5 month," said Firdous Ali, union President SRTC.

Ali said that there are 2100 employees who are being dragged into every situation be it Covid, elections or any emergency duties.

"And yet," he said, "we are not being paid. How can we work when we have

been a permanent employee by now as per the rules.

"But instead of coming to our rescue," he rued, "our department is planning to buy new buses. Who will drive them if the department won't take care of its employees?"

Procuring new vehicles and keeping salaries of its employees pending, he said, shows insensitivity and bad workmanship.

"We remain at the forefront of every tricky situation in the valley and yet we are facing this unfortunate treatment," Ali added. "Currently, we are out on the roads performing our duties. Many of our drivers have tested positive for Covid and yet the department is hardly concerned for our wellbeing."

It is very difficult for transporters to survive in the current situation, Ali said. "We can't even afford medicine and

is leaving us with no choice but to leave the job and take any daily wage work. That way, at least, we can provide meals to our

couldn't keep its promise."

Further, Hussain said, hundreds of the transporters who retired from last two



children." Kashmir Observer contacted SRTC officials for their take on the concerns raised by its distressed staff, but all attempts failed to get the official response. As and

years haven't received any retirement funds worth Rs 25 crore from the department.

"My term ended in 2019 and I was hoping to get my daughters married with the

**“WE REMAIN AT THE FOREFRONT OF EVERY TRICKY situation in the valley and yet we are facing this unfortunate treatment,” Ali added. “Currently, we are out on the roads performing our duties. Many of our drivers have tested positive for Covid and yet the department is hardly concerned for our wellbeing.”**

when they respond, the digital version of this story will be updated.

Meanwhile, decrying the indifference, transporters said they are ready to serve people in tough times, "but we have no resources left to perform our duties. We have to arrange transport from our homes because there is no public transport available on roads."

Wajahat Hussain, Chairman Workers Union, SRTC, said that while government is planning to build its fleet, it is not paying any heed to solve the employees' liability.

"We protested for our basic demands early this year and finally on 8 March 2021 government in a meeting told us that our salaries will be cleared in two-monthly installments," Hussain said. "But only one installment was paid and government

retirement money but it has been two years since I haven't received a single penny," said Farooq Ahmad, a resident of Khanyar who retired from the department in 2019 after serving it for 39 years.

"We approached all the officials but they just give us fake assurance that our demands will be fulfilled but so far nothing has been done so far."

Meanwhile, "unpaid" Ali is getting worried for his family amid another Covid curfew in Kashmir.

"I am working with the department from last 10 years with a monthly salary of Rs 7500," Ali, the union president, said.

"It is hard to support a family with such a small amount now. My children have been thrown away from school because I couldn't afford their monthly fees."



**“WE PROTESTED FOR OUR BASIC DEMANDS EARLY this year and finally on 8 March 2021 government in a meeting told us that our salaries will be cleared in two-monthly installments,” Hussain said. “But only one installment was paid and government couldn't keep its promise.”**

nothing to feed our families?"

As a consolidated worker with SRTC from last 10 years, Ali said he should have

employees who have tested positive for Covid have no money for treatment and to support their families. The government

## 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

- 1756 - Britain declares war on France (7 Years' or French & Indinn War)
- 1803 - John Hawkins & Richard French patent the Reaping Machine
- 1814 - Denmark cedes Norway to Sweden (National Day)
- 1865 - The International Telegraph Union (later the International Telecommunication Union) is established.
- 1897 - The first successful submarine that can run submerged for any considerable distance and combines electric and gasoline engines is launched in the USA by its designer John Philip Holland
- 1902 - Greek archaeologist Valerios Stais discovers the Antikythera mechanism, an ancient mechanical analog computer.
- 1940 - Germany occupies Brussels, Belgium & begins invasion of France
- 1940 - Nazis bombs Middelburg/B IJzerdrat begins illegal defiance
- 1948 - Soviet Union recognized Israel
- 1949 - British government recognises Republic of Ireland (previously Irish Free State)
- 1958 - Emergency crisis proclaimed in Algeria
- 1960 - 1st atomic reactor system patents, J W Flora of Canoga Park CA
- 1968 - European Space Research Org launches 1st satellite
- 1969 - Russian probe Venera 6 landed on Venus
- 1976 - Earthquake in Uzbekistan: thousands killed
- 1983 - Israel & Lebanon sign a peace treaty
- 1990 - World Health Organization takes Homosexuality out of its list of mental illnesses
- 1993 - Intel's new Pentium processor is unveiled
- 2007 - Trains from North and South Korea cross the 38th Parallel in a test-run agreed by both governments. This is the first time that trains have crossed the Demilitarized Zone since 1953.
- 2013 - 90 people are killed and 200 are injured after a series of bombings across Iraq



HIJRI  
CALENDAR

05

SHAWWAL  
-UL-  
MUKARRAM

1442

## PRAYERS

FAJR

3: 52

ZUHR

12: 27

ASR

5:21

MAGRIB

7:30

ISHA

9:04

## From KO Archives

## MOVE TO SHIFT CAPITAL SPARKS DEBATE

A M Sofi

**SRINAGAR** - Even as the proposal to shift the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir is yet to take off, controversy dogs the idea with debate rag-ing for and against the govern-ment move.

Giving vent to the opposi-tion to shifting of the capital, several political parties, includ-ing main opposition National Conference, said the massive expenditure needed for moving the secretariat and other offices could be diverted to building schools, hospitals and roads in the state.

"We need no new capital at an exorbitant expenditure of Rs 3,500 crore which could be uti-lized for the betterment of Kashmiris by constructing schools, colleges, hospitals and roads which are in a dilapidated condition across the valley," NC President Omar Abdullah told PTI.

Ridiculing the idea, another senior leader of the party Ali Mohammad Sagar said "instead of finding ways and means to mitigate the problems of the people the PDP-led coalition government is trying to squan-der the funds for unproductive projects."

He asked the coalition gov-ernment to desist from changing the capital for "petty politi-cal gains."

CPI(M), which supports the coalition government from out-side, opposes the idea. State Secretary of CPI(M) M Y Tari-gami said "I don't think it is a very serious move yet."

The government complexes should be moved a little away from the market and the beauti-ful city but not relocated in any other place. Why go there (Parihaspora) to Lalitaditya. The kings are buried there let them rest in peace.

"It is wrong to assume that government wants to benefit vil-lagers by moving the capital city. The government has in fact done very little for the upliftment of rural areas," he said.

Author of the proposal to shift the capital and Finance Minister Muzaffar Hussain Baig said the basic objective behind a new capital was to decongest and develop Srinagar as an exclusive tourist resort 'with heritage villages and other amenities to make it among the most attractive tourist destinations on the globe.

The proposal for a new capital has received the Centre's nod which would be ready within next three years at an. estimated cost of Rs 3,500 crores, he said.

Opposing the idea, Chair-man of National Democratic Front and former MP Abdul Rashid Kabuli accused the gov-ernment of not attending to the problems of Srinagar, a city of 15 lakh people.

Shifting capital from Srinagar to Parihaspora and moving government offices to rural areas is like shifting of Union capital from Delhi to South India, Kabuli said.

The city of great antiquity has had a chequered history which dates back to 250 BC when king Ashoka founded Srinagar as capital which occupied the site of the present Pandre-than about five runs from Srinagar and named it as Srinagari.

The place was the venue of the Buddhist conference during the reign of Kanishka and Muslim preachers, Syed Sharifuddin Bulbul and Mir Syed Ali Hamdani chose this place to spread Islam, he said, adding the latter capitals of Kashmir founded by successive rulers lost their importance to the city.

It was during the Dogra rule (1846-1947) that Srinagar be-sides being the capital of Kashmir was elevated to the status, of the summer capital.

Travellers and tourists have been drawn in numbers to see sym-bol of the paradise on earth and pilgrims and preachers have found the city a place for attainment of ultimate spiritual contentment.

(Kashmir Observer, 17 May, 2005)

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All relatives and neighbours are requested to kindly recite a Surah Fateha for the departed soul. Condolences will be received on phone only in view of the pandemic.

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### NO HOLDS BARRED



It is unfortunate that municipal institutions who are supposed to enforce laws like Solid Waste Management Rules (SWM Rules 2016), Biomedical Rules and Plastic Waste Management Rules are violating them themselves. Wetlands like Wullar are under threat from the Municipal Council of Bandipora, Sopore and Hajin

### How can District Administration Bandipora or Baramulla give permission for setting up a garbage dump site around the wetlands ?

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

J&K Pollution Control Board (PCB) which has now been named as J&K Pollution Control Committee (PCC) a few months back imposed a huge penalty on Municipal Council (MC) Bandipora. The Pollution Control Committee acted after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) took notice of this case as the municipal institution was constantly dumping solid and liquid waste near the Wullar lake at Zalwan village just outside the town. This was viewed as gross violation of

Municipal Solid Waste Rules 2016 (MSW Rules 2016) by NGT and Pollution Control Committee. The municipal council which was earlier a municipal committee has been dumping all the untreated municipal solid waste near the Wullar catchment area and for this illegal act, several notices were issued to MC Bandipora by NGT as well as PCC. Pertinently, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had taken a serious note of this illegal waste dumping when this author filed a petition before the tribunal more than 2 years back.

#### Misleading NGT

Last year, NGT had issued orders directing the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir and J&K Pollution Control Board to stop the illegal practice of waste dumping by MC Bandipora at Zalwan. Municipal Council Bandipora in its written response last year had misled the tribunal by saying through a written response that it was not dumping municipal waste at Zalwan. In my counter response submitted through my counsels Advocates Rahul Chowdhary and Saurabh Sharma, I apprised the NGT that Municipal Council Bandipora was "lying". I produced photographic evidence and videos plus written statements of the locals. A local social activist from Bandipora Mushtaq Ahmad Mir had also made a video at the Zalwan dumping site refuting the claims of Municipal Council Bandipora. That video went viral on social media.

The State Pollution Control Board (now called PCC) vide its Order Number : 45- PCB of 2021 Dated: 9.02.2021 directed

the Executive Officer Municipal Council Bandipora to deposit a sum of Rs 64,12,000 into Environmental Compensation Fund (ECF) account. This account number 0023040510000001 is operated by J&K Pollution Control Board now known as J&K Pollution Control Committee (PCC)

#### Order not in public domain ?

It is heartening to see the order issued by the Pollution Control Committee (PCC), but I am unable to understand why this order was not put into public domain for almost three months. The PCC had given 45 days to MC Bandipora to deposit the compensation money into the Environmental Compensation Fund (ECF) but even after 2 months the concerned Executive Officer hasn't deposited the money. The PCC earlier called PCB needs to take up the case with District Magistrate Bandipora who will do the necessary recovery under J&K Land Revenue Act as he is empowered to do so.

#### Targeting another wetland

After being slapped a penalty of more than Rs 64 lakhs by Pollution Control Board now called Pollution Control Committee (PCC), the Municipal Council Bandipora as per media sources has identified another shore of Wullar to dump its municipal waste. This is being done to show that municipal waste was no more dumped at Zalwan. The news-report says that the new site at Nadihal village also happens to be a wetland area. I am yet to visit the area. According to news agency Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Nadihal garbage dumping site is also part of Wullar catchment area and tons of garbage emitting foul smell has been dumped at the place causing a lot of inconvenience to the local population. Dozens of stray dogs are also seen at the site which is threatening the lives of young and old of the village.

#### Problem in Tarzoo Sopore

The Municipal Council Sopore also continues to violate the MSW Rules 2016 by dumping the municipal solid waste collected from Sopore town at Dharnambal in Tarzoo area. The land where this



waste is being unscientifically dumped is a panchayat land which was encroached without the consent of the panchayat committee, the locals told this author when I visited the spot on 10th April this year. In addition, the authorities are now planning to encroach upon a huge chunk of forest land near the encroached Panchayat land where a permanent dumping site would be set up. Five village panchayats through a joint gram sabha held on April 10th 2021 Dharnambal Tarzoo Sopore passed a resolution against the unscientific waste dumping. The authorities were directed to stop the illegal practice. It seems there is no one to listen to these elected representatives. On the one side the Government claims that panchayat representatives are empowered to decide their developmental issues but when decisions are taken through a democratic process in a gram sabha it has no takers. The copy of the resolution has been sent to Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Additional DC Sopore and Municipal Council Sopore around 2 weeks back, but Municipal Council Sopore continues to dump the waste at Dharnambal.

Last year, the MC Sopore was dumping its waste near Ninglee tourist huts which is part of Wullar catchment area. That illegal work was stopped after I brought the matter into notice of National Green Tribunal (NGT) and locals filed a PIL in J&K High Court through Advocate Shafiqat Nazir, a noted environmental lawyer. The then Chief Justice JK High Court Geeta Mittal made a personal visit to the spot last year in October and the site was finally shut down. Unfortunately, the old garbage which contains even hazardous waste continues to be there which was earth filled in haste on the eve of Chief Justice's visit.

#### Law enforcers turn violators

The job of municipal institutions is to ensure better sanitation and health of citizens in cities and towns. When legislations were enacted governing the environment and municipal solid waste, the municipal institutions were empowered to enforce and implement these rules and regulations. It is unfortunate that municipal institutions who are supposed to enforce laws like Solid Waste Management Rules (SWM Rules 2016)

## Wetlands Under Threat

# Violation of Municipal Solid Waste Rules 2016

, Biomedical Rules and Plastic Waste Management Rules are violating them themselves. Wetlands like Wullar are under threat from the Municipal Council of Bandipora, Sopore and Hajin. There are three wetlands in Jammu & Kashmir and one in Ladakh which have been declared as Ramsar Sites. Wullar, which is one among them, was declared as a Ramsar site almost 30 years back. Sunisar Mansar in Jammu and Tsomoriri lake in Ladakh are also designated Ramsar sites. A Ramsar site is a wetland area designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. In Spite of such a great international importance of these wetlands, authorities at the helm are leaving no stone unturned to destroy these instead of looking after its conservation. Wullar lake is a live example as this wetland is dying a silent death due to constant dumping of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) from its East, West and Southern areas. The dumping of this municipal waste has been institutionalized by authorities as Municipal garbage dump sites have been created within the wetland area. Locals are resisting but authorities are least bothered to listen to their woes.

#### Conclusion

The Wetland Conservation and Management Rules 2017 has listed out activities prohibited within notified wetlands. Wullar is not only a notified wetland but a wetland of international repute (Ramsar site) which is under serious threat. Under wetland conservation rules setting up of any industry and expansion of existing industries, manufacture or handling or storage or disposal of construction and demolition waste, solid waste dumping, discharge of untreated wastes and effluents from industries is completely prohibited. How can District Administration Bandipora or Baramulla give permission for setting up a garbage dump site around the wetlands ? The penalty money of Rs 64,12,000 is also not recovered from MC Bandipora. If the penalty money is recovered, it will send a signal to other municipal institutions who will be forced to manage the municipal solid waste (MSW) on scientific lines as guaranteed under MSW Rules 2016.

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

*Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat is an Acumen Fellow and Founder and Chairman of J&K RTI Movement*

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# The Fallacy Of The Colonial 'Right To Self-Defence'

Colonial powers have long demanded the 'right to self-defence' against the people they have colonised.

Patrick Gathara

The violence convulsing the Middle East has produced heart-rending images and statistics. As I write this, at least 160 people, the vast majority of them Palestinians, including at least 41 children – the vast majority Palestinian – have been killed as the Israeli military carries out bombing raids in densely populated Gaza and armed Palestinian groups hurl rockets at Israeli cities. Meanwhile, inter-communal violence has broken out across Israel.

In response, Western governments, led by US President Joe Biden, have been quick to unequivocally condemn Palestinian groups for the rocket barrages, but have been much more circumspect about condemning Israel's attack on Palestinian civilians.

Lukewarm expressions of "dismay" and "grave concern" at Palestinian deaths have been interspersed with declarations of "unwavering support for Israel's security and for Israel's legitimate right to defend itself". They have also included appeals for "moral clarity", implying that the actions of Palestinian groups, though causing a tiny fraction of the death and

destruction that Israeli bombardment has wreaked, were nonetheless much more objectionable.

While some progressive politicians – such as US congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – have pointed out the hypocrisy of a blanket assertion of the Israeli right to self-defence, even they have balked at outright rejection of Israeli justifications.

Colonial occupiers have long claimed a "right" to defend themselves from the resistance of native communities, including by committing mass murder. The history of African colonisation is littered with the corpses and mass graves of those who dared to resist the militarily superior Europeans.

In her book, the British Gulag, historian Caroline Elkins describes a "murderous campaign" by the British in colonial Kenya following the 1950s Mau Mau peasant uprising, including the establishment of concentration camps for 1.5 million Kikuyu civilians and a brutal system of torture camps that may have claimed the lives of tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of those suspected to have pledged themselves to the rebellion.

The idea that imperial land grabbers

have the right to terrorise, brutalise, torture and murder those whose land they steal under the rubric of "self-defence" flies in the face of UN General Assembly Resolution 37/43 of 1982 which recognised "the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, in-

Thus, today in Gaza, rather than seeking "moral clarity", the West is using moral obfuscation to justify attacks on a refugee population by a colonial power that has evicted them from their land, blockades them in what is, in essence, an open-air prison, and then claims the right to do so in peace and quiet.

cluding armed struggle". That resolution specifically reaffirmed this right in the case of the Palestinian struggle.

Thus, today in Gaza, rather than seeking "moral clarity", the West is using moral obfuscation to justify attacks on a refugee population by a colonial power that has evicted them from their land, blockades them in what is, in essence, an open-air prison, and then claims the right to do so in peace and quiet.

When Western media speaks of a "cycle of escalation", it equates oppression to the resistance to oppression, presenting the violence as a conflict between two sides with equal claims to security and land. It ignores that the Palestinians are engaged in a struggle for national liberation against a decades-long illegal and immoral occupation, and the imposition of a regime of racial and ethnic discrimination which Human Rights Watch, in a report the media pointedly refuses to bring up, says fits the definition of the international crime of apartheid.

In interviews, Israeli spokespeople repeatedly stress the difficulty that Israel's self-declared "most moral army in the world" has in finding and killing what are

in essence Palestinian resistance leaders, who, they say, are hiding behind civilians.

The Western press is happy to accept that the leaders of Hamas and other groups are legitimate targets, and with it, the implication that while its tactics may be somewhat unsavoury, Israel is nonetheless waging a legitimate war. Uncritically accepting this framing makes Western media complicit in the delegitimisation of Palestinian resistance to colonial domination and dispossession by the Israeli state.

As Ocasio-Cortez pointed out, regurgitating the line that "Israel has a right to defend itself" without including the context of oppression simply excuses and legitimises even more oppression. But she should have gone further. If Western media, politicians and diplomats truly seek moral clarity, it behoves them to reject outright as gaslighting and bothsidesism, the outrageous proposition that colonial states such as Israel have a right to defend themselves from those they oppress.

Al Jazeera



# #WeStandWithPalestine Kashmiris Trend Solidarity For Besieged Brethren

On the occasion of Eid, Kashmiris with united and univocal voice supported their oppressed brethren: “I’m from Kashmir and I support Palestine.”



Sameer Dar

“

Kashmiris are expressing this solidarity when Palestinians in different cities are facing their own “Kristallnacht” moment—the Night of Broken Glass—by the neo-Nazis of Israel—whose forefathers faced the similar attacks from German Nazis in different Europeans cities in the run-up of World War-II—when properties and people were attacked in a vengeful huff.

Kashmiri twitter and timeline is currently bleeding with Palestine solidarity. The online tribute started after Tel Aviv stormed Masjid Al Aqsa followed by aerial bombing on Gaza. “It’s Eid here in Kashmir but it doesn’t feel like it,” Mohammad Abrar, a twitter user said. “The chaos happening in the world due to the pandemic has left us all shaken. The misery has been compounded by attacks on civilians in Palestine by Israeli terrorists. Our thoughts are with our Muslim brothers. #PalestineBleeding.” [https://twitter.com/Abrar\\_Wani/status/1392634326613778432](https://twitter.com/Abrar_Wani/status/1392634326613778432)

This act of solidarity is stemming from the region which shares its postcolonial political umbilical cord with Palestine. For their faraway ‘conflict cousins’, K-twitter, this Eid, replaced their signature festive greetings with the message of support and solidarity. “How long will you keep them in the chains of slavery?” asked a Kashmiri twitter user. “Inshallah, they will soon be gone.” [https://twitter.com/gash\\_sohail/status/1392859015915270151](https://twitter.com/gash_sohail/status/1392859015915270151)

This virtual support, reportedly gagged by the ‘Zionist bots’, online hounds and fake-news peddlers, is pouring when Covid curbs have enforced another lockdown in the valley. Despite grounded life, reports of solidarity protest came from the fringes of the summer capital, on day two of Eid-ul-Fitr. “Speaking for Palestine is our moral duty,” said another Kashmiri netizen. “We as Muslims are duty bound to call Israel for its Genocide in #Gaza #Palestine. We have to make sure we make Settlers responsible for every single tear that falls from the eyes of people of Palestine. #GenocideinGaza #IsraelTerrorist.” [https://twitter.com/Raqif\\_M/status/1393165526927503367](https://twitter.com/Raqif_M/status/1393165526927503367)

Earlier, many Kashmiri linked Zionist aggression on the fasting Muslims of Sheikh Jarrah (a neighbourhood in Jerusalem, an epicenter of the current escalation over Muslim evictions) and Gaza with Israeli premier’s another desperate power hunt. “As Netanyahu fails to form a government after the expiry of a 28-day deadline on May 07, a new aggression is orchestrated to dodge the elections by using Palestinian blood as a diversion,” wrote Azhar Hussain, a K-twitter user, while taking part in the trending #PalestineBleeding campaign. [https://twitter.com/\\_azharhussain/status/1392895454761811968](https://twitter.com/_azharhussain/status/1392895454761811968)

Apart from commoners, some prominent Kashmiri voices are equally throwing their weight behind the solidarity campaign.

“Palestine is not only a Muslim goal but also a humanitarian cause,” said Masroor Ansari, a Kashmiri religious figure. “Every worthy and decent human being should stand in solidarity with Palestinians. We condemn Israel’s ethnic cleansing of East Jerusalem. #WeStandWithPalestine.” <https://twitter.com/MasroorAnsari/status/1393135672882384898>

To raise concern over the Zionist aggression on innocent Palestinians, many Kashmiris also shared some disturbing ground visuals. <https://twitter.com/RestWheels/status/1392903087229005830>

But as Israeli airpower is relentlessly blowing residences in Gaza, with America’s “right to defend” vocal support, the harrowing images, as United Nations fears, are only setting the stage for “full-scale war”. “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity,” another Kashmiri netizen denouncing the Zionist violence said. <https://twitter.com/lamaaqibshafi/status/1392821612236328961>

The current escalation, however, hasn’t dampened the festive spirit. Many Kashmiris shared pictures showing how beleaguered Palestinians are observing Eid in the backdrop of their residence-turned-ruin sites. Much of that solidarity, many say, has to do with Kashmir’s own culture of resilience — upholding the spirit of gaiety amid gloom. <https://twitter.com/theshahaadil/status/1392810903008026625>

Others while turning the pages of history shared the images when war-torn Jews first arrived in Palestine in 1947. “After wholeheartedly welcoming them, the refugees turned settlers since then are only evicting natives from their homeland in the name of the so-called Promised Land.” <https://twitter.com/RoufMQureshi/status/139269325504663554>

Kashmiris are expressing this solidarity when Palestinians in different cities are facing their own “Kristallnacht” moment—the Night of Broken Glass—by the neo-Nazis of Israel—whose forefathers faced the similar attacks from German Nazis in different Europeans cities in the run-up of World War-II—when properties and people were attacked in a vengeful huff. But then, the “real Jews” were quick to con-

demn the act of “Zionist Jews”, saying that by the end Palestinian flag will unfurl over the entire region. [https://twitter.com/\\_azharhussain/status/1393078312373653509](https://twitter.com/_azharhussain/status/1393078312373653509)

One of the heartbreaking moments of the current aggression, however, remains the plight of children. Apart from killing around three dozen of them in Gaza, the bombing is terrifying the young survivors — most of whom are abandoning their homes with their parents as Israel is mobilizing ground force along with the aerial aggression. Expressing concern over this existential crisis, Kashmiris shared images of the Palestinian children caught in conflict. <https://twitter.com/MirShEraz10/status/1392501216861560834>

Amid all this, the nation which popularized the culture of graffiti is once again using the writing on the wall to send a strong message to the world: “Dear World! We don’t need sympathy. We need action.” And the denizens of the land where Palestinian struggle always find resonance are only magnifying the telling images. <https://twitter.com/MushtaqBashir/status/1392131356574945286>

With death toll rising in Zionist war crimes on Gaza, many Kashmiris are likening UN with ‘a wolf in disguise’, for once again acting as ‘sissy and spineless’ — like its ex-avator, called League of Nations. <https://twitter.com/BilalNtry/status/1393084236739923969>

In the midst of anger and anguish, Kashmiris linked the current carnage with the real dream of Zionist state of Israel. “It is not religious expedition or saving Jews,” a Kashmiri twitter user said. “Zionist are trying to expand their territory and occupy land.” <https://twitter.com/shadabpeerzada/status/1393024407480664066>

But as the current crisis is escalating and apparently heading towards the full-blown war, some Kashmiris believe that involvement of Iran-Turkey against Israel is only a matter of time now. <https://twitter.com/rishikaul16/status/1392954876036927489> At the end of the day, what made this Kashmiri solidarity campaign heartfelt was the teary-eyed Eid prayers for the twins — Divided by borders, united by pain. <https://twitter.com/ibrahimhadi313/status/1392872894506553355>



# Medical Students Being Deployed For Ward Duty In Jammu GMC Hospital: Jitendra Singh

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said medical and nursing students are being deployed for ward duty at the Government Medical College (GMC) Hospital in Jammu, which will reinforce patient care and build confidence among relatives of patients.

At a meeting to review COVID-19 care facilities at the hospital, he said relatives and attendants of the patients will

be given identity card for their convenience.

"Similarly, following the decision in the earlier meeting, medical and nursing students are being deployed for ward work, which will reinforce the patient care and also build confidence among the patients' relatives, said Singh, the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). He is the parliamentary Udhampur constituency in Jammu and Kashmir.

The minister was informed during the meeting that Chopra

Nursing Home, affiliated to the GMC, will start functioning with 100 bed capacity to begin with.

At the same time, it will be ensured that the senior consultants take regular rounds of the wards and are available as and when required, he was informed.

An exercise has been initiated to audit oxygen and ventilators also, the minister said.

"The ventilators issued through PM CARES fund are to be utilised optimally and in case any ventilator is not functioning,

it will be identified on real time basis and rectified, he said.

The minister was informed that three oxygen plants having capacity of 5,184 cubic metre per day are operational in GMC Jammu and two more will be installed soon.

At present, GMC Hospital is having 893 oxygen-supported beds out of its total capacity of 1,111.

In view of the spike in COVID-19 cases, it is proposed to make all the 1,111 beds as oxygen-supported beds, Singh said.

## COVID Spreading To Villages, Sensitise Ground Workers On Containment, Surveillance: Centre To States

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** With gradual ingress of COVID-19 infection in rural and peri urban areas, the Centre on Sunday urged states to ensure community-based and primary health centre services to manage the situation while stressing on sensitisation of ground workers on containment, surveillance and use of RAT for screening, and tele-consultation.

The states were also urged to train the ground-level staff

on rapid antigen test (RAT), which is the preferred test for screening of the infected cases to enable timely isolation and prompt treatment, the Union Health Ministry said.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan along with Member (Health) of NITI Aayog V K Paul chaired a high-level video conference meeting with all the states and union territories.

The focus of the meet was on COVID-19 containment and

management in peri-urban, rural and tribal areas along with the effective clinical management of COVID-19, including the black Mucormycosis fungi which is being recorded in a growing number of states, the ministry said.

The meeting assumes importance in the context of the rural hinterland of the country recording a very high number of cases with increasing fatality and positivity rate, combined with low reported levels of testing.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### 'Where're Vaccines'

valley's virtual space where anxious Kashmiris are deconstructing the official response.

It's good that the government has set the deadline, said a Kashmiri netizen, "but how they're going to execute it, as there've been a total number of zero vaccines administered in South Kashmir barring Shopian in the last 16 days and the percentage of people of 45+ age group who've received the first dose is below 50%."

This vaccine shortage is further escalating due to Covid curbs.

Last week, when 24-year-old Abubakar from Srinagar's HMT locality stepped out to take his parents to a local health community centre for the vaccination, he was sent back by the cops outside his home.

"I told them my parents have to get vaccinated and showed them the booking slot but they said we can't allow you because of Covid curfew," Abubakar said.

"We aren't against the curfew but the administration should facilitate people for the vaccination," said another local Mohammad Aijaz.

"Government is encouraging people for vaccination, but at the same time isn't allowing us to go to hospitals/ community centres for the same," said Hilal Ahmad, a trader from Srinagar.

"We're literally caught between devil and deep sea! What're we supposed to do in this situation?"

However, the administration is saying that it's doing everything possible to slow down the spread of coronavirus. In this regard, it has now extended the Covid curfew till May 24.

"The health department has set up the vaccination centres in the vicinity where people don't have to travel," said Dr Mir Mushtaq, spokesperson of the Govt. Health Department. "People should go one by one, not in groups," he added. "No one will stop them from getting vaccinated."

Earlier, voicing concern over the curbs in the valley, journalist Gowher Geelani wondered: "Is strict Corona Curfew a cover to hide shortage of vaccinations?"

Reacting to Geelani's take on the vaccination situation, senior scribe Mufti Islaah said, "Strict or not so strict curfew, fact is there are no vaccines available in Kashmir. A top official was pleasantly surprised to know 500 plus shots were available in Valley yesterday. Can well imagine. One hopes vaccine shortage is over."

In another tweet on Sunday, Mufti Islaah said: "Vaccine is a key in fighting Covid but unfortunately not a single jab received in Kashmir today. The shortage of vaccines is a concern. 28 lakh of 1.3 crore souls have been inoculated-mostly single shots - so far."

As the vitriol over vaccination turned vexed, many more Kashmiri newsmen detailed the crisis further and held the government responsible for the dose delay.

"Vaccine shortage in Kashmir, shocking mortality in Jammu!" journalist Majid Hyderi said.

Further, detailing the crisis, senior newsman Shuja ul Haq said that only around 500 people were vaccinated in Kashmir, while around 14000 vaccinations were held in Jammu on Saturday. "This is visibly a very slow pace," he said.

Taking the debate forward, another senior Kashmiri journalist Samaan Lateef said that there are no vaccines for Kashmiris.

"What's NarendraModiGovtupto?" he asked. "In Jammu 14000 were vaccinated and in Kashmir only 500. Lt. Governor's office has failed to improve Kashmir's healthcare even during pandemic."

Commenting on the administration's inability to manage Covid-19 crisis, many netizens petitioned the other state governments for help.

"NitishwarKumar! There's a shortage of vaccine in Jammu & Kashmir! Kindly use your influence and help in vaccination! 100 plus vaccination centres have been closed due to shortage of vaccine," said netizen Sanjay Koul.

The current vaccination shortage, many officials told Kashmir Observer, has been triggered by the 'insufficient stock' delivered to J&K last week.

"We received the last vaccine supply last Saturday," a senior official said. "That stock has already been consumed and now there're no vaccines available in the UT right now."

Amid the criticism, New Delhi Sunday said that more than 1.84 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and UTs, while nearly 51 lakh doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days.

But in the valley, beneficiaries are complaining that even after registering for vaccines online and reaching the centres, they are being told there are no vaccines.

"I was supposed to get my first dose on Saturday," said Idrees Bhat, a Srinagar resident. "But I was sent back saying that the health centre has no dose."

Even the official executives are saying that the Covid-19 vaccination drive has slowed down in J&K.

"Since last one week not a single person was vaccinated by our teams due to shortage of jabs at four facilities where we used to vaccinate

600 people daily on an average," said Tajamul Rashid, an admin officer at J&K government.

Vaccinations literally stopped in the valley, on Saturday, with many districts, including Srinagar—with only two active vaccination centres, including the one in SMHS Hospital—reporting zero doses.

"Till date," an official said, "only 1,98,783 people have received Covidshots in Srinagar, which is much lower than Jammu."

Already, the administration has drawn flak over the handling of second Covid wave, and the slow-vaccination process leading to shortage in Kashmir.

But as the debate raged on, some political figures joined the chorus on Sunday, stating that if immediate remedial measures aren't taken, the scarcity of vaccines can put the lives of millions of people from J&K at risk.

"There is a wave of mounting anger and frustration due to tardy vaccination rollout in J&K with some high-risk groups crying out for protection," Imran Reza Ansari, former J&K minister said, adding how health centers across the valley are battling the shortage of COVID-19 vaccines and that many centers have been closed due to the unavailability of vaccines.

"The vaccine is the only bulwark available against the current calamity and denying the populace such a facility amid the present peak is deplorable and inexplicable."

Interestingly, the valley is grappling with the vaccine shortage when experts are warning against the vicious impending third wave.

In fact, the shortage of Covid vaccine has created a crisis-like situation with almost everyone being turned away from the government designated vaccination centers across Kashmir, National Conference said Sunday.

"The scarcity of vaccines is not only affecting both the first dose seekers but second time vaccine beneficiaries as well," said NC's Party Provincial President Nasir Aslam Wani. "Even those people who have already registered and got the confirmation SMS are being turned away."

This besides putting the people to undue trepidation is also jeopardizing their wellbeing, he said.

"If the vaccines are not available why is it then people are asked to flock to these designated vaccination centers in the first place," NC leader said.

"The authorities have been maintaining that adequate viles are available with them but the ground situation is contrary to what is being claimed. Even the priority groups aren't able to get their first and second doses done."

To avoid jumbling at vaccination centers, NC leader emphasized door-to-door and walk-ins vaccination drives, to achieve the goal of universal vaccination in a hassle free manner.

But with health centres literally running dry of doses and batons regulating the public movement, many Kashmiris summed up the situation with the classic Koshur sarcasm: "Vaccine registration toukar lo ge, vaccine kaha se laoge? [Even if you manage registration, how will you get vaccine?]"

### States, UTs To

to states and UTs free of cost, it said.

Of this, the total consumption, calculated based on average up to May 14, including wastages, is 18,43,67,772 doses, according to data available at 7 pm on Saturday.

"More than 1.84 crore Covid vaccine doses (1,84,41,478) are still available with the states and UTs to be administered. States with negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than vaccine supplied as they have not reconciled the vaccine they have supplied to Armed Forces," the ministry said.

It said 50,95,640 vaccine doses are in the pipeline and will be received by states and UTs within the next three days.

Vaccination forms an integral component of the comprehensive strategy of Government of India of containment and management of the pandemic (including Test, Track, Treat and Covid Appropriate Behaviour).

The Centre has been supporting the nationwide vaccination drive by providing Covid vaccines free of cost to states and UTs, in addition to several efforts to ramp up its production and supply, the ministry stated.

Implementation of the Liberalized and Accelerated Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination has started from May 1 as part of which the government has opened up inoculation for all aged above 18.

Under the Strategy, every month 50 per cent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by the Centre. It would continue to make these doses available to state governments free of cost as it was being done earlier. (PTI)

### 9000 Vaccinated

According to official data pertaining to the vaccination drive across the Union Territory, not a single person above 45 years in Kashmir Valley was on Sunday administered vaccine jabs due to the reasons best known to the health department. However, in Jammu division, 8750 people above 45 years received vaccine jabs.

Giving district wise break up of vaccination on Sunday, the official data says that in Jammu district 3093 people, in Udhampur 1157, in Rajouri 986, in Kathua 40, in Poonch 661, in Ramban 887, in Doda 731, in Kishtwar 360, in Reasi 524 and in Samba district 311 people above 45 years received vaccine jabs.

The official date further says that till Sunday, 2,814,272 doses of vaccine have been administered in the Union Territory. Among them, Kashmir division has received 1,335,954 vaccine shots and Jammu division 1,478,318 jabs of Covishield and Covaxin.

Pertinently, on Saturday J&K LG had set the timeline of 10-days for achieving the target of 100% vaccination of the above 45 years age group with the first dose of Covid vaccine. He announced this decision during a series of meetings with the member of Covid Task Force and Deputy Commissioners, SSPs, and other concerned officers of the Union Territory.

### J&K Govt Fully

be added by the end of this month and additional 34 oxygen generation plants will be installed within six months, he said.

In the next six months, he said, J-K would have a total of 99 oxygen plants in the medical facilities to serve the general public.

We are still in a better position than many developed countries when it comes to health infrastructure. Nevertheless, I believe that there is a need to improve primary health centres right now, the Lt Governor said.

Addressing the people of J-K, Sinha shared the slew of measures recently announced by his administration to help those who lost their loved ones to COVID-19.

Along with the entire country, Jammu and Kashmir is also going through the challenging times of coronavirus. In the last few weeks, many families in the Union Territory have lost their loved ones to the epidemic. The administration is with them in this hour of grief, he said.

He said, I know no human life can be compensated for. But it is the responsibility of the government to take care of its people and to stand with them in these tough times.

Sinha said his administration has taken many such decisions to provide relief to the families affected by the catastrophe.

Senior citizens who have lost the only earning member of their families will be provided with a special pension for life while children, who have lost their parents to COVID-19 pandemic, would be provided with special scholarships, he said.

He said every family who has lost their near and dear ones due to COVID-19 will be provided with financial assistance for self-employment through the Jammu and Kashmir Bank.

Sinha said the pandemic has affected the lives of some of the most vulnerable sections of society.

J-K UT administration is providing Rs1,000 per month to registered construction workers, ponywalas, palkiwalas, pithuwalas for the next two months. Apart from this, the amount allocated by the government to the beneficiaries of the Social Security Schemes will be transferred immediately and ration will be provided on priority basis to all ration card holders, he said.

In these challenging times, the Lt Governor said the old-age homes and orphanages will be extended all the support from the government including rations.

We have to fight the COVID pandemic by following the corona protocol completely while taking the development of Jammu and Kashmir to new heights. From May 8, dry ration is being made available to poor families under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, he said.

The Lt Governor also called for 'Jan Bhaghidari' and cooperation in the fight against the deadly virus.

I urge everyone to wear face masks, register themselves for the vaccination, get tested and ensure COVID appropriate behaviour, he said.

Addressing the people who are insisting on self medication due to misinformation, the Lt Governor requested them to take the medicines after consultation with the doctors only.

During the programme, Sinha shared some of the inspiring stories of good Samaritans and saluted their spirit and dedication towards human service.

We are grateful to the amazing civil society groups, NGOs and voluntary organisations, healthcare workers and nurses for the relentless efforts and strength they all have been providing to the society. This is an unprecedented contribution to the service of humanity, he said.

Sharing a phrase of Mahatma Buddha -- this too shall pass -- the Lt Governor said, Together we will fight COVID-19. Be supportive to each other and stay safe.

### 20K Covid Care

the State Executive Committee of the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, said.

The order was issued following a detailed review of the current COVID-19 situation in the union territory by the Lt Governor at a high-level meeting here on Saturday.

The meeting extended the ongoing 'corona

curfew' till 7 am on May 24 and said the restrictions would be strict except for essential emergency services and movement work and scheduled marriages up to permissible gathering norms, which shall remain exempted.

The ceiling on gatherings permissible for marriages continues to be 25 only, while the permitted essential services would be limited to the barest minimum and not too expensive in order to minimise movement.

Subrahmanyam said the districts would set up local district level triage centres to ensure proper examination of patients and correct referral, reducing unnecessary load on tertiary and referral hospitals.

No patient would be denied admission to a hospital or treatment facility just because they do not have a COVID-19 positive test result, the order said, adding the deputy commissioners would utilise all available staff for COVID-related work such as mobilisation for vaccination, testing, surveillance and information, education and communication (IEC) activities, including government staff whose institutions are otherwise closed.

Asha and Anganwadi workers will be trained and empowered to assist in COVID mitigation efforts. COVID testing should become more targeted and focus on areas with high positivity and on unvaccinated population, the chief secretary said.

He said all COVID-19 positive patients would be provided corona kits, while the health department would ensure establishment of tele-medicine arrangements in all districts to enable patients to call and consult doctors.

The order said the General Administration Department would issue orders to ensure that there is only 50 percent attendance in government offices below the level of under secretary, except in the secretariats and HOD offices where staff has already been split by half.

However, all staff needed for COVID-related duties would continue to attend to their work assigned to them by the DCs.

The order said the payments under MNREGA, pension and other schemes would be expedited to provide relief to people.

Any deviation from this order shall attract penal action under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Subrahmanyam said. (PTI)

### Life Remains

was off the roads, they said.

However, private cars were seen plying in some areas of the city here and other district headquarters in the valley and the Jammu region, the officials said.

Several roads have been sealed by security forces and barricades have been put at many places in the city here as well as in other district headquarters of the valley to prevent the movement of people.

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 till May 17.

However, On Saturday, the lockdown was extended till 7 am on May 24.

### BJP Leader Performs

of Jammu and Kashmir.

He, however, said the guidelines issued by the government to contain the coronavirus should be followed strictly as there is no alternative to them. (PTI)

### 93% Deaths in

quotas for early detection, isolation, and medical treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Emphasising the instrumental role of vaccination in checking COVID-induced fatality, Subrahmanyam directed the departments concerned to ramp up vaccination centres to the maximum capacities for achieving universal vaccination in 45 years and above age group.

Regarding the 18 to 45 years age group, it was informed that supplies are being reinforced and arrangements be immediately put in place for targeted vaccination of vulnerable populations, an official spokesman said.

### Pro-Palestine Demos

on a platform showing a sobbing woman with her head covered with Palestine flag. He had also written "WE ARE PALESTINE" next to the image of the woman. The graffiti had gone viral on the social media networking websites including Facebook and Twitter.

On Friday, sporadic pro-Palestine demonstrations were reported from parts of the Valley despite government imposed curfew to contain coronavirus spread in the Union Territory. At many places, the protesters set Israeli flags ablaze to vent out their anger against the airstrikes in Gaza that have left nearly 188 Palestinians, including 55 children and 33 women, with 1,230 people wounded. Eight people in Israel have been killed, including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier.

Following the protests, the police had detained as many as 21 youth during a series of raids.

### Mehbooba Questions

with Palestinians, she alleged on Twitter.

On Saturday, police arrested 21 persons from

Srinagar and Shopian districts for holding pro-Palestine protests during a curfew imposed in the UT due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The police also arrested a South Kashmir-based religious preacher Sarjan Barkati for allegedly delivering an speech on Eid day. Barkati had expressed support for the people of Palestine.

The PDP leader alleged that Kashmir is an open-air prison" and "there is no outlet left to express one's opinion".

The PDP president, while referring to the detention of two sons of late separatist leader Mohammad Ashraf Sehrai, said the Public Safety Act (PSA) was the Centre's "go-to method for every problem" in Kashmir.

The two were detained from their residence in Barzulla area of the city late Saturday evening in connection with a case registered by police in Kupwara district on May 6 after pro-freedom slogans were raised at the separatist leader's funeral, officials said. (PTI)

### IED Detected

by alert state forces", he said.

"Police and the Army were aware of likely attempts by some militants attempting to use an IED against state forces. However, forces are committed to foil all attempts of militants to disturb peace in Kashmir," Singh said.

### Man Critical After

towards the nearby forests.

Khatana, who had reportedly suffered skull and facial injuries in the ferocious attack, was removed by the villagers to a nearby heath facility. However, the doctors there referred him to the district hospital Handwara for treatment.

A local news agency GNS reported that the seriously wounded man was referred to Srinagar's SMHS hospital for advanced treatment. The report described Khatana's condition as life threatening.

### KU Prof GM Bhat

Prof Bhat was presently residing at University quarters in the Main Campus.

### Corona Curfew

death toll at 165, according to officials.

In his order, Leh District Magistrate Shrikant Balasaheb Suse said the extension of restrictions that are already in place is meant to avoid the further spread of the infection.

"restrictions imposed on all kind of movements/activities across Leh district shall be extended from 17.05.2021 (5 AM); and shall remain in force till 24.05.2021 (7 AM)," he said.

All shops selling groceries, vegetable and fruit, chicken, milk, dairy products, automobile spare parts, confectionery items and tyre repairs shops would be allowed to open from 7 am to 2 pm. The supply and distribution of essential commodities by wholesale distributors would be allowed between 5 am to 9 am and their movement would be allowed on the production of a valid trade license or registration certificate, the order stated.

All government employees, staff of public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, universities and other such offices would be allowed to commute to and from their workplace on the production of a valid identity card and duty roster issued by the concerned heads of departments.

The order stated that developmental activities and construction work would be allowed only when the labourers are present at the site and adequate facilities for their stay are available at the worksite.

Similarly, agricultural activities would be allowed with strict observance of COVID-19 related standard operating procedure (SOP), it said.

In a separate order, Kargil District Magistrate Santosh Sukhadeve said a detailed review of the current COVID situation was conducted by the District Disaster Management Authority. It was of the considered view that stringent containment measures are required at a macro level in order to restrict the movement and intermingling of people.

The restrictions would be extended till 7 am on May 24 and there would be no curbs on activities that are already allowed, he said.

### 2 Held For Trying

which were being transported illegally, a police official said.

Driver Baljinder Paul and owner Jasvinder Singh, both residents of Punjab, were detained and the pollution control department, Samba, was informed for further action, he said. PTI

### Pakistani Drone

for quite some time before it vanished in the darkness, officials said.

A search, which began at 5:30 am on Sunday, was carried out by joint teams of Army, Border Security Force (BSF) and police in a vast area between Panch Talli and Laliyal, about 1,500 meters from the IB, they said.

"A massive search operation was carried out in Kanachack sector after the suspected movement of the drone but nothing objectionable was recovered during the operation," a police official said. (PTI)



## Govt Well Equipped To Tackle Covid Pandemic: DHSK

Oxygen, Medicines, Every Other Necessity Available To Meet Demand

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Director Health Services Kashmir (DHSK), Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather Sunday said that the Government is well-equipped to tackle the 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic in Kashmir division.

Divulging the details, the Director said that all district and sub-district hospitals in urban as well as in rural areas, besides associated or tertiary care hospitals across Kashmir are well prepared to meet any emergency situation arising due to Covid pandemic.

He said medical oxygen which has been seen as one of the key requirements in case of severe cases in Covid care hospitals has been made available in all such hospitals to meet the demand, "The medical Oxygen plants with a minimum capacity of production of 1000 lpm and at some places 2000 lpm have been installed in all the Covid hospitals in Kashmir," Dr Rather added.

He said since Oxygen is considered as a lifeline to ensure survival of patients, so no compromise is being made on the production and ensuring the availability of the same in all Covid hospitals.

Talking about the supply position of medicines especially those mostly used in treatment of Coronavirus by the doctors, Dr Rather said that they have enough stocks of medicines available with them which are being supplied to the hospitals as per demand and requirement. He further assured that there is no shortage of such medicines and all treatment protocols of patients are going on smoothly.

The Director said that people need not to press the panic button and government has already put in place 2nd line including extra beds at various places in all the districts including Srinagar at Hajj house, NIT and at other identified venues in addition to SMHS, JLNH, CD hospital and SKIMS.

"In case all the beds at our Covid care hospitals are occupied, there is always a 2nd line at our disposal to cater to the demand and provide best of the treatment facilities to the patients and fight the pandemic," he added.

While appealing people to follow Covid-19 related SOPs in letter and spirit and get vaccinated, the Director said, "People should follow SOPs even after the vaccination and ensure strict adherence to three things including mask, hand hygiene and social distancing".

He said on the directions of Lt. Governor, the health department has started distribution of Kits for patients in home isolation which includes both medicines and pulse oximeters so that they are provided healthcare facilities at their doorsteps.

Dr Rather said that besides distribution of Kits, the government has established Call Centres both at districts as well as at divisional level to assist patients in home isolation. "The home isolation patients can make a call to these Call Centres in case they feel health related complications, an ambulance with a doctor shall arrive at their home and conduct a check-up of the patient and in case he requires admission in hospital the same shall be done," he added.

ing Covid services also provides Covid services for pregnant women.

"Since the oxygen facility was started it has proved to be helpful for patients especially for severe Covid patients needing oxygen support," the director said.

He said the hospital has kept oxygen cylinder's available in bulk so that patients do not suffer.

"The next oxygen plant would be made functional within days. We wanted to see how this hospital is running," he said.

The director during the inspection interacted with patients and healthcare staff on duty. He appreciated the role of health care workers.

"We are committed to provide treatment to the patients. We will continue to provide quality healthcare services until this pandemic is over," the director said.

## COVID-19: LG Orders Hiring Of More Paramedics

Directs Principal GMC Jammu To Operationalise Additional 100-Bedded Covid Ward



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Sunday visited Government Medical College, Jammu to review Covid clinical management measures being undertaken by the Hospital administration.

Emphasizing on strengthening the healthcare workforce, the Lt Governor directed for hiring additional Paramedical staff, besides rational utilization of existing resources to ensure effective patient care management.

The Lt Governor directed that at all times, Senior Doctors, Nurses, and Paramedics' presence in clinical areas to be ensured by Hospital Administration. He also stressed upon optimized supportive care for Covid patients and round-the-clock care by the hospital staff.

Dr. Shashi Sudhan Sharma, Principal & Dean GMC & AH's Jammu informed the Lt Governor that as many as 250 nurses would join GMC Jammu within three days, substantially adding to the available healthcare workforce.

Laying special emphasis on providing better facilities to the patients, the Lt Governor directed the senior doctors to ensure proper availability of all medicines, nutritious

meals, round-the-clock care of patients, food and water for attendants of the patients, and proper entry passes to the attendants.

"Senior doctors should also take the front line in informing people to adopt safe practices and Covid protocol. Seniors must leverage their role as both a doctor, caring & treating patients and a public health advocate containing Covid pandemic", observed the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor sought the status of two new Oxygen plants which are being set up by the J&K UT administration at GMC Jammu to augment its oxygen capacity.

While reviewing the progress being made for establishing additional 100-bedded Covid ward, the Lt Governor directed the Principal and senior doctors of GMC Jammu to ensure the operationalization of the said facility at the earliest.

The Lt Governor also enquired about Covid care facilities, availability of oxygen support beds, functionality of Oxygen Generation Plants, besides compliance of earlier directions including regular rounds of HoDs and senior doctors in the wards to examine the patients.

## J&K Calibrates Covid Mitigation Strategy CS For Ramping Up Vaccination And Covid Care Facilities

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Reviewing the public health response to COVID-19 amidst the surging COVID cases, the Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam Sunday directed ramping up of COVID care facilities and speedy vaccination of target groups. He also directed district administrations to utilise full testing quotas for early detection, isolation, and medical treatment of COVID patients.

Administrative Secretaries of the departments of Health & Medical Education, Housing & Urban Development, and Information besides Divisional Commissioners, Kashmir and Jammu, Deputy Commissioners of all districts Commissioner JMC, Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM), and Director, Family Welfare participated in the meeting.

Emphasising the instrumental role of vaccination in checking COVID-induced fatality, the Chief Secretary informed that according to an analysis of COVID deaths in



the Union territory, 93% of the reported fatalities occurred in unvaccinated people, whereas all fully vaccinated people recovered after hospitalisation.

He directed the concerned to ramp up vaccination centres to the maximum capacities for achieving universal vaccination in 45 years and above age group. Regarding 18 to 45 years of age group, it was informed that supplies are being reinforced and arrangements be immediately put in place for targeted vaccination of vulnerable population.

The Chief Secretary also

informed that 49.37% fatality was recorded in COVID patients who ignored initial symptoms, delayed taking the test, and reached hospitals in critical conditions at later stages. He directed the district administrations to utilize full testing quotas and identify COVID cases at early stages to be given appropriate COVID care.

Further, DCs were asked to strengthen COVID care centres in rural areas and enhance their facilities with sufficient provisions of isolation areas, healthy diet, adequate medical supplies/equipment, and professional medical supervision. These COVID care centres will be linked with level 1&2 hospitals to appropriately refer and shift patients in cases of emergency.

The Chief Secretary also directed promotion of COVID-appropriate behaviour in people through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities focusing on precautionary measures, health-related assistance, and helpline numbers.

## APHC Condemns Arrest Of Pro-Palestine Protesters

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Sunday condemned the arrest of Kashmiri artist Mudassir Gul and twenty other youth for social media posts in support of oppressed people of Palestine.

APHC in a statement said that the artist and others were only expressing their feelings. It said that nowhere in the world is expressing solidarity with a subjugated people a crime that warrants arrest under draconian laws.

APHC said that such policies reflect the same mindset that is displayed by Israel to persecute the Palestinians.

The statement said that it vehemently condemns the ethnic cleansing of aboriginal Palestinians by Israel and the way they are being evicted from their homes.

APHC said that people of Kashmir and the Hurriyat stands with the oppressed Palestinians and also supports their historic stance based on truth and justice.

It said that the amalgam expects that the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in their upcoming sessions, raise the issue of Israeli aggression, and rein in the apartheid Israeli regime and take concrete steps to safeguard the rights and properties of the people of Palestine.

## Freedom Of Expression Hijacked In The Name Of Peace: Ansari

Observer News Service

**J&K** Ittihadul Muslimeen (JKIM) chief patron Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari Sunday condemned the arrest of twenty Kashmiri youth from Moti Mohalla, Dal, religious preacher Sarjan Barkati and a professional artist Mudassir Gul, for expressing solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine.

In a statement issued here, Ansari who is an ex Hurriyat chairman said that they were only expressing their feelings and nowhere in the world is expressing solidarity with a subjugated people a crime that warrants arrest under draconian laws. "Freedom of expression is a basic human right, but it has been hijacked by the police in Kashmir in the name of peace," Maulana said. He further said that praying for the well-being of the oppressed nations in the valley has become a crime which is against human, moral and democratic principles.

## FIR Registered Against School Principal, Her Deputy For Covid-related Death

**JAMMU:** A principal and her deputy of a private missionary school were booked in connection with the death of a teacher due to COVID-19 here last week, officials said on Sunday.

The FIR was registered at police station Gandhi Nagar after a magisterial inquiry into the death of music teacher Neelu Varinder on May 9 held them responsible for violating government guidelines on the closure of schools, the officials said.

They said principal Sister Hema and vice principal Sister Leema of St Mary's Presentation Convent Secondary School were booked under section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life), 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code besides relevant sections of the Epidemic Disease Act and the Disaster Management Act.

District Magistrate, Jammu, Anshul Garg ordered the inquiry by an executive magistrate after the family and colleagues of the deceased questioned the violation of the government guidelines by the school management by calling the teachers to attend online classes from the premises.

Meanwhile, former legislator Gagan Bhagat lodged a complaint for registration of an FIR against J-K BJP president Ravinder Raina and several of his colleagues for violating 'corona' curfew which is in force across Jammu and Kashmir. In his complaint to police station R S Pura, the expelled BJP MLA accused Raina and his colleagues, including former minister Sham Lal, of violating curfew by visiting a community health centre and different wards last week.

"They are taking undue benefit of the fact that the BJP is ruling party at the Centre and the Lt Governor of J-K was a member and former union minister from the BJP. The law of the land is the same for everyone, Bhagat said.

He said they have openly violated the SOPs of the corona curfew" and an FIR should be registered against them under various sections of IPC, CrP C, Disaster Management Act and Epidemic Diseases Act to set an example that everyone is equal before law.

## Police Arrest 19, Fine 907 For Violating Covid SOPs

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir police Sunday said that it arrested 19 persons, lodged 10 FIRs and also realized fine of 144,270/- from 907 people for violating the guidelines/rules throughout Kashmir valley during the last 24 hours.

In a statement police said that the 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.

The statement said that police requests people to cooperate in containing the spread of Coronavirus by following the SOPs/ guidelines/ protocols for the safety of the people.

## Airtel Announces Benefits For Low Income Customers

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Bharti Airtel ("Airtel"), India's premier communications solutions provider, Sunday announced special benefits for low-income customers on its network to help them stay connected during the ongoing pandemic, the company said in a statement.

As a one-time gesture, Airtel will give the Rs 49 pack free of cost to over 55 million low income customers. The pack offers a talktime of Rs 38 and 100 MB data with a validity of 28 days. Through this gesture Airtel will empower over 55 million customers, mostly in rural areas, to stay connected and have access to critical information when needed.

Double the benefits. At this time, customers have an increased requirement of staying connected. Keeping this in mind, Airtel prepaid customers buying the Rs 79 Recharge Coupon will now get double the benefit. This will make it easier for them to stay connected at a difficult time.

These benefits will be available to Airtel customers in the coming week.

## North End Enterprises Supplying Oxygen To Govt Hospitals, NGOs

**SRINAGAR:** While most of Oxygen Concentration Plants in Jammu & Kashmir supply medical oxygen to Government owned hospitals, North End Enterprises (NEE) running an oxygen concentration plant at Sanat Nagar Industrial Estate Srinagar is catering to both Government hospitals and Non Government Organizations (NGOs), working tirelessly alongside the administration in its fight against the prevailing pandemic. It is also providing oxygen cylinders to Covid positive patients isolated in home and are in need of oxygen, said Yasir Shafi, in charge of the plant.

Earlier the NEE was catering to both Industrial and Medical demand oxygen, but, "since the outbreak of second wave, our plant entirely has shifted hundred per cent focus to the medical oxygen



production as demanded by the government and current situation also demand so", he said.

The capacity of the Oxygen Concentration Plant, NEE, peaks at 60 cubic meters per hour and is functioning round the clock for a month now, Yasir informed and added that the oxygen is supplied to Government Hospitals including Govt Medical College, Doda, NGOs and persons having proper permission and approval from the district

administration. "Before second wave the plant was working only for 16 hours", he said

As oxygen supply has become rudimentary lifeline during this covid pandemic, "it is our moral responsibility to help Government in maintaining the smooth supply of oxygen to hospitals and concerned organizations to avert tragedies due to disruption in oxygen supply chain", he said. He praised and commended

the employees working in his plant for 24/7 during the current crisis to ensure plant functions to its optimum capacity.

Industries & Commerce department in a statement reiterated that there are four oxygen manufacturing plants in Kashmir Division having an overall production capacity of 17400 cubic metre which equals to a total production of roughly 2483 oxygen cylinders in 24 hours.

The Industries & Commerce department is closely monitoring the functioning of the oxygen plants and has deployed Industrial promotion Officers (IPOs) to maintain oversight of the whole production and distribution process which has helped streamline the oxygen distribution to a large extent.

NO: PR/DDI/SGR/21/1594/

## South Kashmir Resident Injured In Scuffle Succumbs At SKIMS

Observer News Service

**ANANTNAG:** An elderly man who was injured in a scuffle between two families in Dupathyar area of Bijbehara in south Kashmir's Anantnag district five days ago succumbed to his injuries at SKIMS hospital on Sunday.

An official said that the man identified as Abdul Gani (50) son of Sidiq Mir, a resident of Dupathyar Bijbehara who was admitted at SKIMS Soura on May 12 after being seriously injured in a scuffle between two families at Dupathyar Bijbehara, has succumbed to injuries.

The body of elderly man was handed over to his relatives for burial, he said.

He said that an FIR was already registered in this connection and investigating has been taken up already. (KDC)



## Indian Journalist Bodies Condemn Israeli Airstrike On Gaza Building Housing AP, Al Jazeera Offices



Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Indian journalist bodies including the Editors Guild of India (EGI) on Sunday strongly condemned the "brazen" Israeli airstrikes on a building in Gaza that housed the offices of the Associated Press, Al Jazeera and other news media outlets.

The EGI said in a statement that given the recent background of the "escalating conflict" in this region, it sees this airstrike as "a de facto attack on the news media by the Israeli government" that can disrupt the flow of news from this highly volatile region and have global security implications.

"The Editors Guild of India strongly condemns the brazen airstrikes on a building in Gaza that housed the editorial offices of Al Jazeera and the Associated Press," the EGI said.

It also demanded that the Israeli government give "a detailed justification" of the decision-making behind this attack "along with evidentiary proof".

"The Guild also calls for the Israeli government to facilitate an UN-monitored investigation into this bombing raid," it added.

"Further, the Guild urges the Indian government to take up this issue with the Israeli government, demanding an independent inquiry and reiterating the need for ensuring the safety of journalists in any conflict situation," the statement said.

The EGI noted that the bombing raid on May 15 demolished the 12-storey building, destroying much of the camera and editing equipment and severely affecting the news reporting and broadcasting capabilities of the two organisations.

"Besides the loss of hardware and office space, the bombing destroyed what was described as 'home' by some of the journalists," it said.

Indian Women's Press Corps, Press Association and Press Club of India also criticised the action of the Israeli military in a joint statement. They said there can be no justification for bombing media houses and targeting their personnel and resources.

"It appears as a clear attempt to prevent media houses from reporting excesses that have become a routine affair in Gaza and the occupied parts of Palestine," they said, and demanded that targeting of media persons working in violence-hit conflict zones "be completely stopped immediately".

## Already Booked Online Appointments For Second Covishield Dose To Remain Valid: Govt



Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** The Union health ministry on Sunday clarified that already booked online appointments for second dose of Covishield vaccine will remain valid and the same will not be cancelled on Co-WIN platform.

It, however, said requisite changes have now been done in the Co-WIN digital portal, as a result of which further online or on-site appointments will not be possible if the period after first dose date for a beneficiary is less than 84 days.

The Centre had on May 13 extended the gap between the first and second doses of Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks based on the recommendations by the Covid Working Group chaired by N K Arora.

"The Government of India has communicated this change to states and UTs. The Co-WIN digital portal has also been reconfigured to reflect this extension of interval for two doses of Covishield, manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII) to 12-16 weeks," the ministry said.

"However, there have been reports in a section of the media suggesting

that people who had pre-booked their appointments for the second dose in less than 84 days on Co-WIN are being turned back from vaccination centres without getting the second dose of Covishield," it said.

"Additionally, already booked online appointments for second dose of Covishield will remain valid and are not being cancelled by Co-WIN. Further, the beneficiaries are advised to reschedule their appointments for a later date beyond the 84th day from the date of first dose of vaccination," the ministry added.

The Union government has reiterated to the states/UTs that online appointments booked for second dose of Covishield prior to this change of the interval between the two doses of Covishield, must be honoured.

It advised the states/UTs that the field staff may be instructed that, if such beneficiaries do come for vaccination, "the second Covishield dose must be administered and they must not be turned away".

They have also been asked to undertake awareness activities to inform the beneficiaries about this change. PTI

# Rescuers Dig For Survivors As Gaza Suffers 'Most Intense' Bombing

Agenceis

Rescue workers frantically searched for survivors under the rubble on Sunday as Israel's bombardment of the besieged Gaza Strip entered its seventh consecutive day.

An hour-long rain of 150 rockets pounded the territory overnight on Sunday in what a Palestinian security source said was the "most intense" shelling since the second intifada, or uprising, that began in 2000.

Emergency teams worked to pull out bodies from vast piles of smoking rubble and toppled buildings as relatives wailed in horror and grief. Nearly half of the rockets targeted the Gaza City district of al-Wehda where residential houses, infrastructure and roads were destroyed or partially damaged.

The ministry of health confirmed 33 people were killed overnight – including Dr Ayman Abu al-Ouf, head of internal medicine at Shifa hospital – following Israeli bombardment on their homes. Five children were found alive under the debris.

"We can still hear people shouting from under the rubble," said Medhat Hamdan, a civil defence worker who came from Khan Younis to Gaza City and worked non-stop for 11 hours to save lives.

"For me, working in this field has numbed me to any fear. I'm no longer shocked by what I see, but one can't help get emotional when we reach the bodies of children and remove them," said Hamdan, adding he pulled three dead children from under the rubble.

Translation: Rescue team still searching for missing persons at the scene of the massacre that took place on al-Wehda Strip in Gaza City.

"Our entire neighbourhood – from Tel Shubeir to Palmera intersection – was bombed," said Ramzi Eshkuntana, who was at home when



he said 40 successive air raids fell on the area in just a few minutes.

"We ran out of the house and saw the destruction of most the buildings around us, including my brother's house. His wife and four children were killed as they were sleeping," said Eshkuntana.

"My brother's wife was pulled out with her arms around her children," he added. "These weren't F-16 missiles; these were bombs from F-35 warplanes."

"These are children" A rescue worker gave his account as he was trying to rescue people from under the debris.

"We heard the screams of a young girl. We also heard the ringing of a mobile phone. We followed the sound and for hours, using a bulldozer and other light devices, we got to the girl, who is alive," he said.

"The woman, along with her children – two boys and two girls – are dead. Were these children firing rockets? Isn't it enough they were denied the joy of Eid? These are children! The oldest one was in the fourth grade."

Mirjam Mueller, head of the ICRC in Gaza said the last few days

were marked by a "dramatic" increase in violence.

"Our teams have rarely been able to move. A de-escalation is really needed so that we can assess the humanitarian situation on the ground and deliver much-needed aid," said Mueller.

"I have been here only a couple of days ... and it has been heart-breaking to see how the situation has been unfolding."

Another resident, Khalil al-Kolak, said both of his family's buildings were destroyed.

"We woke up in the middle of the night to the sound of the bombardment," he said.

"Only two from our family are alive," he continued. "The rest – 14 members including women, children and men – are all gone. There are still six under the rubble."

Raji al-Sourani, head of Palestine centre for human rights, told Al Jazeera that Israel is intentionally targeting civilians.

"What happened here in al-Wehda is clear evidence that Israel is carrying out crimes against humanity and purposely targeting civilians," he said.

## 'Victims Of Aggression': Gaza Hospital Overwhelmed With Wounded

Agenceis

Medical workers are overwhelmed by the number of wounded at Gaza's biggest hospital after a night of ferocious air raids killed and injured dozens of Palestinians.

Shaima Ahmed Qwaider, 23, a nurse at al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, described on Sunday horrific scenes of severely injured people arriving, some of them bombing victims missing limbs.

"I have never seen anything like this in my life," she told Al Jazeera. "There were body parts collected on hospital beds and unbearable scenes."

As rescuers struggled to pull victims from the debris of destroyed buildings, many of those rescued could not reach the hospital as the main road leading to al-Shifa – the largest medical centre in the Gaza Strip – had been hit as well.

Dr Midhat Abbas from the Gaza health ministry said 1,200 Palestinians had been wounded during the seven days of attacks, about half of whom were women and children.

He accused the Israeli military of deliberately targeting health facilities with air strikes and bombing the roads surrounding al-Shifa.

"They are targeting mainly civilians, these are the victims of this aggression," said Dr Abbas. "[Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu wants to save himself from jail and so he decided to kill Palestinian children."

Israeli air raids killed 33 Palestinians, including 13 children, in Gaza on Sunday, Gaza health offi-



cials said. The attacks brought the death toll in Gaza to 181, including 52 children. Israel has reported 10 dead, including two children.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the raids.

'Capacity very limited' Dr Abbas said staff were setting up beds in reception areas as the hospital filled up, adding that there were shortages of medicine and equipment as a result of the 15-year siege of Gaza by Israel and the coronavirus pandemic.

"We hope patients will be going to Egypt [for medical care] because our capacity is very limited," Dr Abbas told Al Jazeera.

Nurse Amal Badawi described the overcrowding as more wounded were brought in.

"The hospital is filled with people and relatives. It was difficult to work and conduct the needed treatment in light of this overcrowding. The number of injured or killed is huge and they just keep arriving," Badawi told Al Jazeera.

Among those killed in Sunday's air raids was Dr Ayman Abu Auf, a physician at al-Shifa, the health ministry said.

Fahad al-Haddad, an emergency medicine specialist at al-Shifa, said most of the dead brought to the hospital showed no external signs of injuries, meaning they were killed by the rubble that collapsed on them while they were still alive.

Egypt has opened the Rafah border crossing a day earlier than planned to allow the passage of students, people needing medical treatment and other humanitarian cases, two sources at the border told Reuters on Sunday.

The border had been closed for the Eid al-Fitr holiday and was due to reopen on Monday.

Egypt has so far sent 16 ambulances into Gaza to pick up casualties of Israeli bombardments for treatment in Egyptian hospitals, a medical source said.

The source said a bus with 95 people on board had arrived from Gaza on Sunday morning.

## India's Covid Active Caseload Drops To 36,18,458; Positivity Rate Below 16.98%

**NEW DELHI:** India's COVID-19 active cases count has decreased to 36,18,458 with a net decline of 55,344 cases being recorded in the active caseload in a span of 24 hours, while the daily positivity rate dropped to 16.98 per cent, the Union health ministry said on Sunday.

The total active caseload now comprises 14.66 per cent of the country's total infections, it said.

Ten states—Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh—cumulatively account for 74.69 per cent of the country's total active cases, the ministry said.

A declining trend in the positivity rate is also observed which has dropped to 16.98 per cent (May 16) from 24.47 per cent recorded on May 3, it said.

lows with 349 daily deaths.

Meanwhile, the cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country exceeded 18.22 crore on Sunday under phase 3 of the nationwide vaccination drive.

A total of 18,22,20,164 vaccine doses have been administered through 26,55,003 sessions, as per the provisional report till 7 am on Sunday.

These include 96,42,278 healthcare workers (HCWs) who have taken the first dose and 66,41,047 HCWs who have taken the second dose; 1,44,25,044 FLWs who have received the first dose and 81,86,568 FLWs who have taken the second dose; and 48,25,799 beneficiaries in the 18-44 years age group who have received the first dose.

Besides, 5,71,61,076 and



India's cumulative recoveries have reached 2,07,95,335 with 3,62,437 patients recuperating in a span of 24 hours. It outnumbers the country's daily COVID-19 cases for the fifth time in the last six days, the ministry said.

Ten states account for 70.94 per cent of the new recoveries.

The ministry noted that Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Haryana reported 74.7 per cent of the 3,11,170 new cases registered in a span of 24 hours.

Karnataka has reported the highest daily new cases at 41,664 followed by Maharashtra with 34,848 cases and Tamil Nadu with 33,658 new cases.

The national mortality rate currently stands at 1.09 per cent.

A total of 4,077 deaths were reported in a day in the country, the ministry said.

Ten states/UTs, namely, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Haryana, account for 75.55 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (960). Karnataka fol-

90,66,862 beneficiaries aged 45 to 60 years have been administered the first and second doses, respectively, while 5,44,69,599 and 1,78,01,891 beneficiaries more than 60 years old have taken the first and second dose.

The health ministry said 10 states—Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra—account for 66.76 per cent of the cumulative doses given so far in the country.

A total of 5,62,130 beneficiaries in the age group of 18-44 years received their first dose of COVID vaccine in the last 24 hours and cumulatively 48,25,799 people across 32 states and UTs got the jabs since the start of the phase 3 of vaccination drive.

More than 17 lakh vaccination doses were administered in the last 24 hours. As on Day-120 of the vaccination drive (May 15), 17,33,232 vaccine doses were given. Across 16,027 sessions, 11,30,928 beneficiaries were vaccinated for first dose and 6,02,304 beneficiaries received their second dose of the vaccine, the ministry added.

## COVID-19: Centre Asks States To Keep Ration Shops Open On All Days And For Longer Duration



Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** The Centre on Sunday asked the state governments to keep ration shops, also called fair price shops, open for a longer duration and on all days to ensure timely and safe distribution of both subsidised and free foodgrains to the poor.

An advisory in this regard has been issued by the Union Food Ministry following representations that during the current lockdown in some states/UTs, ration shops' timings have been curtailed due to which the intended beneficiaries might not be getting adequate time to lift their entitled foodgrains.

"In view of ongoing lockdown in some States/UTs, that may curtail the functioning hours of Fair Price Shop (FPS), an advisory has been issued on 15th May, 2021...to keep the FPSs open, preferably on all days of the month," the ministry said in a statement.

The Centre is distributing highly monthly subsidised foodgrains of 5 kg per person at Rs 1-3 per kg via ration shops to over 80 crore poor under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Over and above this, additional 5kg of free grains are being distributed to the same beneficiaries under the PMGKAY (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana) scheme for two months -- May-June in order to minimise economic hardships being faced by the NFSA beneficiaries during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the advisory, the Centre has asked states to keep the ration shops open for distribution of foodgrains under the NFSA as well as PMGKAY scheme in a staggered manner throughout the day, maintaining proper social distancing and adhering to all COVID-19 protocols, it said.

To facilitate this, states have been requested to ensure that FPSs are exempted from the restricted hours of opening of regular markets as foodgrains are covered under essential items, it added.

Further, the Centre has asked states to take necessary steps for timely distribution of foodgrains at their FPSs without causing hardships to the beneficiaries, and to give wide publicity to the measures undertaken in this regard.

## NEWS MAKERS

## Iran Unveils Its Strongest Domestic Supercomputer

Agenceis

**TEHRAN:** Iran has unveiled a supercomputer – its strongest till date – developed domestically by Tehran's Amirkabir University of Technology (AUT), according to the state-run news website IRNA.

The supercomputer is said to be wholly designed and built by a team of Iranian engineers, who developed the country's first supercomputer a decade ago, but some of its hardware has been imported.

The supercomputer will offer large-scale data analysis services for a variety of state-run and private scientific research, according to its developers. Among other things, it will be used in analysing artificial intelligence, crunching traffic and weather data, and image processing.

Amirkabir President Ahmad Motamedi said in addition to servicing the government, the supercomputer aims to provide a reliable infrastructure to companies with a focus on private firms.

"At the moment, knowledge-based companies have offered good platforms but they don't have good infrastructures inside the country, which leads them to use infrastructures outside the country," he said during a press conference in the capital Tehran on Sunday. The supercomputer is said to comprise 42 racks in an area of approximately 250sq metres (2,690 sq feet) based on the TIA-942 standard and is projected to be upgraded to 84 racks laid out in an area of 400sq metres (4,305 square feet).

According to the IRNA, the infrastructure put in place at Tehran's AUT will allow the supercomputer to

reach a capacity of 10 petaflops in its next stages of development, which will put it in the ranks of some of the strongest international peers.

The university worked in cooperation with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), which provided half of its 1 trillion rial (\$4.5m) budget, and the scientific division of the presidential office and the ministry of science bore the rest of the cost. ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi said that work on the next supercomputer has already started, and it will have 100 times the capacity of Simorgh.

He said in a tweet the supercomputer will be named Maryam, after the late world-class Iranian mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani, to "thank the efforts of our Iran's girls in the ICT field".

## 'Will Not Be Silenced': Qatari Broadcaster Al Jazeera After Gaza Office Destroyed

Agenceis

**DOHA:** Al Jazeera said Saturday it would not be silenced, after an Israeli air strike on Gaza demolished the building housing the Qatar-based broadcaster as well as US news agency The Associated Press.

"It is clear that those who are waging this war do not only want to spread destruction and death in Gaza, but also to silence media that are witnessing, documenting and reporting the truth of what is happening in Gaza," said Walid al-Omari, Al Jazeera's Jerusalem bureau chief.

"But this is impossible," he said

on air shortly after the 13-storey Jala Tower in Gaza was obliterated.

"This is a crime among a series of crimes perpetrated by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip."

Al Jazeera broadcast footage showing the building collapsing to the ground after the Israeli air strike, sending up a huge mushroom cloud of dust and debris. Jawad Mehdi, the owner of the Jala Tower, said an Israeli intelligence officer warned him he had just one hour to ensure the evacuation of the building.

Al Jazeera's correspondent in Gaza, Safwat al-Kahlout, tweeted his despair over the destruction.