

Covid Appropriate Behaviour Mask Etiquettes

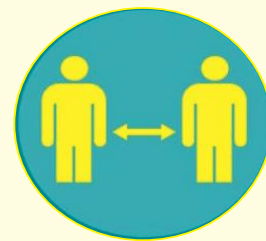
Protect Yourself & Others from Coronavirus



Wear a Mask



Sanitise
and
Wash Your Hands



Maintain 6 ft.
(2 Gaz)
Physical Distance



Shri Manoj Sinha
Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor



Make sure your mask fits
properly against your face



Use a triple layered
medical mask or N95 mask



Tie the top string
first while wearing it



Ensure mouth and nose
are fully covered



Ensure you do not have
any difficulty in breathing
while mask is on



Do not touch the front
of your mask with hands



Untie bottom string
first while taking it off



Knotting the ear loops of the surgical mask
and tucking in and flattening the material
close to the face



Double masking (a cloth mask on
top of a medical mask)

Wear Double Mask Properly to Improve Protection from Corona



#Get Vaccinated

Safai, Dawai, Kadai, Jeetenge Corona se Ladai



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Jammu:

0191-2549676 / 2520982 / 2674444 / 2674115 / 2674908

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Issued in Public Interest by:

HEALTH AND MEDICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, J&K

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

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**KASHMIR
OBSERVER**

Thursday| 20-05-2021

2

52% of students want to opt for tech as career: Report

New Delhi: As India recently celebrated the National Technology Day on May 11, a new survey released on Wednesday indicates that 52 per cent of Indian students are interested in building a career in technology. According to the online learning platform Brainly, an overwhelming majority of students (72 per cent) said that tech-based subjects such as product engineering, data analytics and coding should be a part of the school curriculum. Another 47 per cent of students decisively said that studying technologies has become critical irrespective of anyone's stream.

"Technology can be learned the best if it is taught with real-world examples in a fun-learning manner. It's good to see that so many students in India have developed a keen interest in learning technological concepts," Rajesh Bysani, Chief Product Officer, Brainly, said in a statement.

"Students are heading towards a digital future and must be provided with a favorable environment to explore technology. Hence, it is important to encourage them to follow a skill-oriented learning approach," he added. More than half of the students (54 per cent) said that they had enrolled themselves in tech-related courses during the lockdown, the survey indicates, which included over 1,500 participants. Brainly has a community of more than 350 million students, parents and teachers who drive collaborative learning. While the platform has more than 55 million users from India, a large portion of its user base is also spread across the US, Russia, Indonesia, Brazil and Poland among others.

Agencies

Concern Over Nature Loss Surging In Developing Nations, Online Trends Show

Agencies

An awareness of nature loss and calls to address it are growing in developing nations, not just richer parts of the world, researchers said on Tuesday, urging governments and businesses to speed up efforts to make economies more eco-friendly.

Research by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) analysed the popularity of nature loss and biodiversity terms and topics in Google search trends, social media mentions and news coverage in 54 countries covering about 80% of the world's population. The study, which covered the period from 2016 to 2020, showed that Google searches on nature loss and biodiversity increased by 16% worldwide, driven by growth in Asia, with searches up 190% in India, Pakistan 88% and Indonesia 53%.

Marco Lambertini, director-general of green group WWF International, which commissioned the research, said understanding of the problem had evolved.

"It is no longer an issue related to care about nature but about the concern that nature loss is having an impact on people's livelihoods," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

One million animal and plant species are at risk of extinction due to humankind's relentless pursuit of economic growth,



scientists warned in a 2019 landmark report on the devastating impact of modern civilisation on the natural world.

The world lost tropical forest equivalent to the size of California over a 13-year period, largely due to commercial farming, WWF said earlier this year, calling for COVID-19 recovery plans to revitalise conservation efforts.

"Until now, climate has been really dominating the news and the

public debate, and nature not so much," said Lambertini.

That is now changing as harm to nature - whether extinction, deforestation or over-fishing - rises as a concern, he noted.

The EIU research showed that nature-loss conversations on social media had grown, with annual nature-related posts on Twitter rising from 30 million in 2016 to 50 million in 2020.

The trend was strongest in Latin

America, where the number of Twitter messages soared by 136% between 2016 and 2019.

Major influencers - including political figures, celebrities and religious leaders - are using their platforms to amplify nature issues, with messages reaching a combined audience of almost 1 billion people worldwide.

With that jump in concern, demand for change is increasing - and it is becoming an issue

not just for consumers in high-income countries, as commonly thought, Lambertini said.

More than 159 million signatures for biodiversity-related campaigns have been collected since 2016, the study found.

Lambertini pointed to an expansion of media coverage, social media and internet access as key drivers of the overall trend.

News coverage of the links between the coronavirus pandemic, wildlife and nature destruction, as well as reporting on forest fires, had highlighted how humans are impacting the planet, he added.

Other studies have found that people have developed a deeper appreciation for nature due to COVID-19 lockdowns, said Antonia Kerle, the EIU's manager for public policy consulting.

Ahead of October's delayed U.N. biodiversity summit, Lambertini urged policymakers there to set new ambitious global goals on nature protection, similar to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate. Fixing the ways the world supplies and consumes food to make them more sustainable will also be vital for businesses at July's U.N. Food Systems Summit, he added.

"Nature is the other side of the ecological crisis of today - climate and nature are interconnected but nature is far behind in terms of clarity on direction and targets," said Lambertini.

**ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**
AWANTIPORA, KASHMIR.
Tele: 01933-247954/247955. Website: www.iust.ac.in

CONDOLENCE

The whole fraternity of Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) condoles the sad demise of Prof. G M Bhat (Head, Department of Electronics & Instrumentation Technology, University of Kashmir) and Dr. Mustahson Fazili (Associate Professor, Department of Zoology, University of Kashmir). Prof. G M Bhat was serving as the Supervisor of some of the faculty members of IUST pursuing doctoral degree at University of Kashmir. Meanwhile Deans of Schools, Registrar, Finance Officer, Islamic University Faculty Association (IUFA), Islamic University Non-Teaching Employees Association (IUNTEA) and other Staff Members of the University also expressed their heartfelt condolences and prayed Almighty Allah for giving eternal peace to the departed souls and courage to the bereaved families to bear the irreparable losses.

Issued Through, Public Relations

Office of the Deputy General Manager, JKPCC Ltd. Mechanical Unit Srinagar.

Brick & Tile Factory Premises, Opposite SRTC Yard, Pampore, Kashmir-192121

Fax No: | Email:-dgmmechSrinagar@jkpcc.com

No: Mech/K/

DATED:

Extension Notice of e-Nit 03 of 2021-22

Due to poor response the critical dates for this office e-Nit No:- JKPCC/MU/K/03 of 2021-22, dated: 15-04-2021 issued under endorsement No:- Mech/K/212-17 dated:- 15-04-2021 for Supply of Crawler Crane 50 Ton capacity on hire charges bases with length of boom minimum 40 mtrs, having heavy duty bucket Grab of capacity 1.25 cubic yard/1.5 cubic yard/2 cubic yard suitable for well dia of 80 mtrs at Brazulla Bridge District Kulgam is hereby extended as under:-

S.No	Description	Date and Time
1.	Last date of submission of online bid	27-05-2021 upto 12 Noon
2.	Date and place of opening of online technical bid.	Deputy General Manager Mechanical unit JKPCC Ltd. Srinagar on 27-05-2021 AT 2.00 PM

All other Terms and Conditions of e-Nit shall remain unchanged.

-sd-

Deputy General Manager,
Mechanical Unit JKPCC Ltd.
Srinagar.

DIPK-NB-755/21

Office Of The Chief Executive Officer SRINAGAR SMART CITY LTD

(A J&K GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING)
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

No.:	EOI 01-SSCL of 2021
Title	DESIGNING, DEVELOPING, IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING PUBLIC BICYCLE SHARING SYSTEM ON PPP BASIS FOR SRINAGAR SMART CITY LIMITED

IMPORTANT DATES

S.No.	Description	Date
1	Date of issue of EOI Notice	15-05-2021
2	Period for down loading of EOI documents	15-05-2021 at 14:00 Hrs. to 14-06-2021 up to 16:00 Hrs.
3	Last Date of Submission of queries by Prospective Applicants	26-05-2021
4	Date of pre-proposal meeting	28-05-2021 at 14:00 Hrs.
5	Response from SSCL on queries raised by Prospective Applicants	01-06-2021
6	Last Date of Online Submission of EOI	14-06-2021 up to 16:00 Hrs.
7	Date of Opening of EOI	15-06-2021 at 14:00 Hrs.
8	Presentation by Prospective Applicants	To be intimated later

NOTE: - FOR DETAILS, APPLICANTS ARE REQUESTED TO REFER TO EOI DOCUMENT PUBLISHED ON WEBSITE: [HTTP://WWW.JKTENDERS.GOV.IN](http://WWW.JKTENDERS.GOV.IN)

Sd/-

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SRINAGAR SMART CITY LTD.

DIPK-NB-776/21

No: SSCL/CEO/4269-70

DT: - 15/05/2021

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B ELECTRIC DIVISION SGR

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

II-FRESH NIT No: 20/e-tendering of 2021-22/R&B DATED: - 17.05.2021

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

S. No.	Name of Work	Est. Cost (In Rs/ lacs)	Cost of T/ Doc. (In Rs)	Time of completion	T&D of Opening of Bid	Class	M. H. of Account
1	Shifting of power cables /LT network coming in the construction site of Multi facility Centre (LHS) for economically weaker section (EWS) at Govt. Medical College Srinagar	6.57 lacs	300.00	15 days	24.05.2021	"A " Class Electrical	4210-Med

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

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	18-05-2021
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	18/05/2021 10.00 A.M
3.	Bid submission Start Date	18/05/2021 from 10.00 A.M
4.	Bid Submission End Date	24/05/2021 up to 4.00 P.M
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	24/05/2021 at 6.00 P.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Electric Division Srinagar

02. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Electric Division, Srinagar (tender inviting authority) (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date) pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Electric Division, Srinagar (tender receiving authority).

03. All Bidders has to submit Bid Security Declaration Form instead of Earnest money as per the circular of Finance Department (Bid Security Declaration Form is as per Annexure "A" below) . The 1st lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of contract as performance security in shape of CDR/FDR/ within 02 Days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of work.

04. Bidder must read term/condition in tender document carefully.

AAA/TS = Accorded
Position of Funds = Available

DIPK-1756/21

NIT No. 20/e-tendering/ERB/ 344-51

Executive Engineer,
(R&B) Electric Division
Srinagar



P4 CITY

LOCKDOWN HELPED CONTROL SPREAD OF COVID IN SRINAGAR: DC

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammed Aijaz Asad Wednesday said that district administration is taking all possible measures to break the chain of coronavirus infection in Srinagar.

P6 THINK

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

There is no gainsaying that the pandemic and the lockdowns have affected the blue-collared class more than anyone else. We, of the white-collared class, retain our monthly salaries even as we work from home. But can an auto driver work from home...



P5 NEWS

ONLY TWO PERCENT OF PRISONERS VACCINATED SO FAR IN J&K

A mere two percent of jail population in J&K has been inoculated against COVID-19 so far. The details reveal that only 91 prisoners have been administered...



Wanting to be someone else is a waste of the person you are.

- Marilyn Monroe

NEWS DIGEST**Magnitude 3.2 Quake Hits Doda**

SRINAGAR: An earthquake of magnitude 3.2 on the Richter scale hit Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district on Wednesday afternoon, officials said. However, there were no reports of any damage, they said. The earthquake occurred at 2.34 pm and its epicentre was Doda, according to the officials.

BSF Nabs Pak 'Intruder' Along IB

JAMMU: A Pakistani national was arrested in injured condition on Tuesday night after the BSF foiled an infiltration bid along the International Border (IB) in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir Tuesday night, officials said Wednesday. This is the second infiltration attempt in the Samba sector in the past fortnight. Earlier, an intruder was shot dead by BSF along the IB in the same sector on May 5. "A Pakistani national was noticed attempting to sneak" **More On P10**

Woman Dies Of Heart Attack

SRINAGAR: A woman died on Wednesday after suffering a massive heart attack in Bandipora district of north Kashmir. 43-year-old Saleema, wife of Mohammad Maqbool of Ajas area of the district complained of chest pain on Wednesday afternoon following which she was removed by her family to the nearby community health centre (CHC) Hajin, reports said. However, on reaching the health facility, the doctors there declared her brought dead. **More On P10**

Police Officer Dies Of 'Poisoning'

SRINAGAR: A police officer, who had allegedly consumed some poisonous substance on duty in south Kashmir's Kulgam district a fortnight ago, died at the SK institute of medical sciences (SKIMS) Soura here on Wednesday. Assistant Sub-Inspector Ghulam Nabi (106/Kgm Exk 891249) posted at police station Qoimoh had felt conscious after he had allegedly consumed some poisonous substance on May 5 this month, news agency KNT reported **More On P10**

Rape Accused Held After 5 Years

JAMMU: A rape accused was arrested from Srinagar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday after a five-year hunt, police said. Sartaj Aziz, a resident of Bagga village of Mahore in Reasi district, was on the run for the last five years after jumping bail in a case related to the abduction and rape of a woman in 2012, a police official said. He said the charge sheet against the accused was filed in the court of law in Reasi on **More On P10**

Arrangements In Place To Deal With Covid Situation: Govt

Ajaz Ali

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has put adequate arrangements in place to deal with any kind of situation that may arise due to the second wave of Covid-19 in Kashmir division, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole said Wednesday.

Pole made these remarks during his visit to Bandipora where he took stock of Covid containment measures and made on spot and detailed inspection of various medical and healthcare facilities associated with Covid management in the district, an official spokesperson said.

He said that the Div Com described the situation "fully under control" in the district as adequate measures have been taken for strengthening the system to fight the war against Covid-19 and in this regard bed capacity has been augmented at various health facilities and Covid care centers in the district besides making High Flow Oxygen Plant functional at Covid Level-III Hospital.

"He said there have been very few referrals from Bandipora to Srinagar



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

Hospital that speaks volumes about the robust mechanism put in place in the district," he added.

As per the official spokesperson, Pole said that patients in home isolation are also taken care of and Covid-19

care kits are being provided to positive patients for their better treatment.

"He said the administration is providing intensive care to the patients in Home isolation so that they are provided treatment at their **More On P10**

Covid-II Wave Highly Contagious, Transmission Quick: Expert

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Terming the second wave of coronavirus as highly contagious that transmits from infected person to others at a fast pace, a senior medical practitioner on Wednesday said that if

standard operating procedures (SOPs) are not followed and vaccination not done to achieve herd community, the virus may come again in a different form and have more dangerous consequences.

Dr Hardeep Singh, Professor of Medicine, Government

Medical College (GMC) Srinagar said Wednesday that during the first wave it was observed that the affected person could infect only a few persons around him, but now (in the second wave) the same person affects almost all persons around **More On P10**

40 Oxygen Cylinders Go Missing From Kupwara Hospital 3 Staffers Suspended, Probe Ordered

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: The authorities in north Kashmir's Kupwara on Wednesday suspended three hospital employees and ordered a probe after it surfaced

that at least forty oxygen cylinders have gone missing.

According to the reports, the authorities at the Sub-district hospital Kupwara were taken back after it surfaced during the counting of **More On P10**

PIL Against PSA: HC Grants Govt Month's Time

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has granted the government a month's more time to file response to a Public Interest Litigation, challenging certain provisions of the J&K Public Safety Act.

A division bench of Chief

Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul granted the time after D. C. Raina, Advocate General, prayed for the same.

Thereafter, the court said the petitioner, a senior counsel, shall file a rejoinder to the same within two weeks.

In a Public Interest Litigation petition filed in 2019, the senior **More On P10**



Cows Inside Hospital, Case Filed

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district have registered a case against miscreants after an inquiry revealed that the cows inside a hospital were deliberately huddled inside to malign the image of the administration, officials said on Wednesday. A 20-second video purportedly of Out Patient Department of district hospital Ramban was circulated on the social media on May 16, showing cattle inside the building. Deputy Commissioner, Ramban **More On P10**

J&K's Financial System Most Transparent In Country: LG

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Asserting that the promotion of good governance in financial management is one of the core objectives of the government, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said the financial system in Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most transparent systems.

Sinha on Wednesday released Annual report - Promoting Good Governance compiled by the finance department to showcase major initiatives undertaken by it in 2020-21 to bring transparency and accountability in the execution of the public works.

"Promoting good governance in financial management has been one of the core objectives of the Government. The financial system in the union territory of J&K is one of the most transparent systems anywhere



and is amongst the key changes that have taken roots in the UT, the Lt Governor said.

The report in the form of an e-book provides insight into reforms, steps implemented by the Finance Department to institutionalise prudence in financial management in J&K, which has truly transformed the Union Territory.

The Lt Governor also highlighted major reforms taken by the government to bring

transparency to the financial system and making it more robust.

Sinha said implementation of transformative reforms such as BEAMS (Budget Estimation and Allocation Monitoring System) that enables online budgetary process and timely release of funds against approved works, online submission of bills through J&K PaySys, and mandatory administrative approvals, among others, have brought financial **More On P10**

**Dr. Faheem Younus**

VP/ COO/ Chief of Infectious Diseases University of MD UCH

Vaccine After COVID

Four female healthcare workers developed reinfection with the SAME strain of COVID (not a variant) 2-6 months later.

Lesson: Even if you've had COVID, get vaccinated within 2-MONTHS for durable, better lasting immunity.

**Dr. Simal Soin**

Dermatologist

The good news is that the ICMR has dropped plasma therapy from its COVID treatment guidelines

The bad news is that it happened after LAKHS have been treated with plasma without any evidence that it works

**Dr. Muzaffar Maqbool**

Researcher and Associate Professor, Internal Medicine, GMC

Receiving lot of queries regarding Black Fungus (MUCORMYCOSIS). Please do not panic. We can prevent it. Remember

1. Avoid injudicious and self use of steroids and antibiotics.
2. Fill flowmeters with sterile water and change frequently.
3. Identify warning symptoms early.

And last but not the least proper management of diabetes and effective blood glucose control is pivotal.

Please do not continue steroids and antibiotics for a prolonged period of time especially post discharge. Remain in touch with your treating physician after discharge

IAS Officer Shahid Choudhary Hospitalized

JAMMU: Senior IAS officer Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, who was recently deployed to oversee COVID containment measures in Jammu zone, was hospitalised here early on Wednesday following a minor heart attack, officials said.

Choudhary, a 2009 batch IAS officer, is presently **More On P10**

'ANGELS IN APRON': Guiding Light In Kashmir's Gloom

Auqib Javed

Before trying some sleep at night, Sheeraza Akhtar, 24, takes an anxiety-allaying pill called Petril.

The mind-altering medicine became a new normal for this jovial nurse when her workplace, a hospital ward, became a "madhouse", stormed by swarms for an emergency oxygen treatment.

As the crisis-manager of a hospital ward, she had never seen Kashmir as breathless as the unseen bug made it in its second coming.

"I'm suffering from hysteria," Sheeraza says in a PPE-gear heaved voice. "I feel suffocated to attend this crisis and often lose peace of mind due to frequent deaths in my ward. I crave



to see my family but can't while doing this grueling duty."

Working as junior staff nurse at government tertiary care hospital, SMHS, Sheeraza is witnessing an "unspeakable" crisis in the ward.

She may be leading from the front and hailed as "the guiding light in the gloom" for the lockdown-plagued society, but Sheeraza says, it's a daily razor-walk for her tribe.

"The doctors at the hospital told me lately that I'm mentally disturbed and need psychiatrist help," she says.

"Whatever I witness in my ward, be it the death of young people, or the terrible conditions of Covid patients, ends up haunting my sleep.

I get up in the middle of the

night— panting and with sweat beads on my forehead. This is not normal. None of us had signed for this!"

But this challenging task and perils involved in it hardly discourage these frontliners from performing their task.

Honouring their role, this year's International Nurse Day, observed on May 12, was celebrated with the telling theme: "Nurses: A Voice to Lead - A vision for future healthcare".

Mindful of this medical wall's importance in the current health crisis, Delhi on May 3 surged their ranks by recruiting the final-year nursing students for the Covid combat.

But those holding the fort during the "unprecedented situation" are decrying disparity and apathy. **More On P10**



COVID-19 LOCKDOWN REMAINED STRICTLY IMPOSED across the capital city Srinagar and elsewhere on Wednesday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Lockdown Helped Control Spread Of Covid In Srinagar: DC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammed Aijaz Asad Wednesday said that district administration is taking all possible measures to break the chain of coronavirus infection in Srinagar.

The DC said this while giving a brief regarding the Covid-19 management and control measures undertaken by the district administration Srinagar.

Divulging the details, the DC said that the district administration is making all out efforts to ensure strict adherence to Covid-19 SOPs. He said Corona lockdown has yielded good results so far and decline in Covid positive cases have been seen.



He sought further support from general public in fight against the Covid-19 to overcome the situation evolved due to 2nd wave of Covid-19.

The DC said various measures have been taken to strengthen the system to fight the war against Covid-19 and in this regard bed capacity is being augmented at various health facilities and Covid care centers in the city.

Besides these, sufficient availability of oxygen supply has been made by commissioning medical oxygen plants at various health facilities, while more oxygen plants would be added soon to further strengthen the oxygen support system.

He also informed that district Administration Srinagar has started Community Triaging for effective Covid-19 management and in this regard Community Triaging teams are going door to door for better supervision of Covid-19 management at zone-level.

The DC also said that under DRDO a 500 bed hospital is being constructed at Khonmoh in Srinagar which shall be made operational by the end of this month to further increase the bed capacity in district.

NC Pays Tributes To Mirwaiz Farooq, Abdul Gani Lone

Party MPs Demand Release Of Mirwaiz

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference National Party President, Member of Parliament from Srinagar Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Wednesday paid tributes to Shaheed-e-Millat Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, on his 31st martyrdom anniversary.

In a statement, while paying rich tributes to Mirwaiz, Dr Farooq said that Shaheed Mirwaiz was a persuasive, forceful, and well versed orator with unparalleled depth of insight, profundity of scholarship and ease of illuminating exposition. "On his martyrdom anniversary, I pay tributes to him, and pray to Almighty to elevate his station in Jannat," he said.

While recalling his immense contribution in the field of Islamic learning, theology and contemporary education, he said, "One of the standouts among the social-political and religious leaders, he will be remembered for rendering his responsibilities towards historic Jamia Masjid with devotion. On his martyrdom anniversary, I pay my earnest tributes to him. May Almighty elevate his station in Jannat."

Dr Farooq also paid glowing tributes to the Founder of People's Conference and Former MLA Khawaja Abdul Gani Lone on his 20th martyrdom anniversary. While paying rich tributes to Lone, the duo said that Lone



was an accomplished political leader and a distinguished legislator, who despite rubbing shoulders with his contemporaries on no account lost his distinctiveness. His service to people in various capacities in his capacity as a legislature and a minister will remain memorable, the duo added.

Among others Party General Secretary, Additional General Secretary Dr. Sheikh Mustafa Kamal have also paid glowing tributes to Shaheed e Millat Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq and Shaheed Khawaja Abdul Gani Lone on their martyrdom anniversaries, praying for peace to them in the highest echelons of Jannat.

Meanwhile Party Members of Parliament Muhammad Akbar Lone and Hassnain Masoodi have sought immediate release of all political detainees in view of the ravaging COVID crises. The duo also sought release of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. (GNS)

Singh Reviews Deployment Of SDRF, NDRF Personnel At Covid Care Centre In Hazratbal

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Director General of Police, Commandant General Home Guards/ Civil Defence and State Disaster Response Force J&K, V.K. Singh, today chaired a meeting regarding deployment of SDRF and NDRF personnel to assist in functioning of 200 bedded Covid Care Centre (including 50 beds with Oxygen Concentrators).

Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole, Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz, Director Health Services Kashmir, Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Rather, Commanding Officer, First Battalion, SDRF, Srinagar, Haseeb Ur Rehman, Epidemiologist, Kashmir, Dr. Talat Jabeen, State Surveillance Officer IDSP, Dr. Jameel Mir and other senior officers and officials attended the meeting.

During the meeting, it was decided that SKIMS Soura will arrange a 3-day training from 19th to 21st May, 2021 in batches of 30 personnel (20 SDRF and 10 NDRF) for performing supporting duties. The training will include components of Covid-19 pa-



tient care, nursing care of Covid positive patients, Covid-19 Rapid Antigen Testing, infection control and personal protection, Oxygen Support- Practical issues, visit to Manifold (hands on training) and Donning and doffing of PPE (hands on training). A total of 100 SDRF and 40 NDRF personnel shall be trained and deployed at NIT.

Meanwhile, the meeting had a detailed deliberation on several issues relating to facilities, logistic support including oxygen concentrator and other assistance to make the 200-bedded Covid Care Centre at NIT Complex Naseem Bagh, Hazratbal, Srinagar fully functional.

This Covid Care Center is expected to commence its functioning with effect from June 1, 2021 under close supervision and guidance of SKIMS Soura administration.

SMC To Launch Drive Against Illegal Constructions

Observer News Service

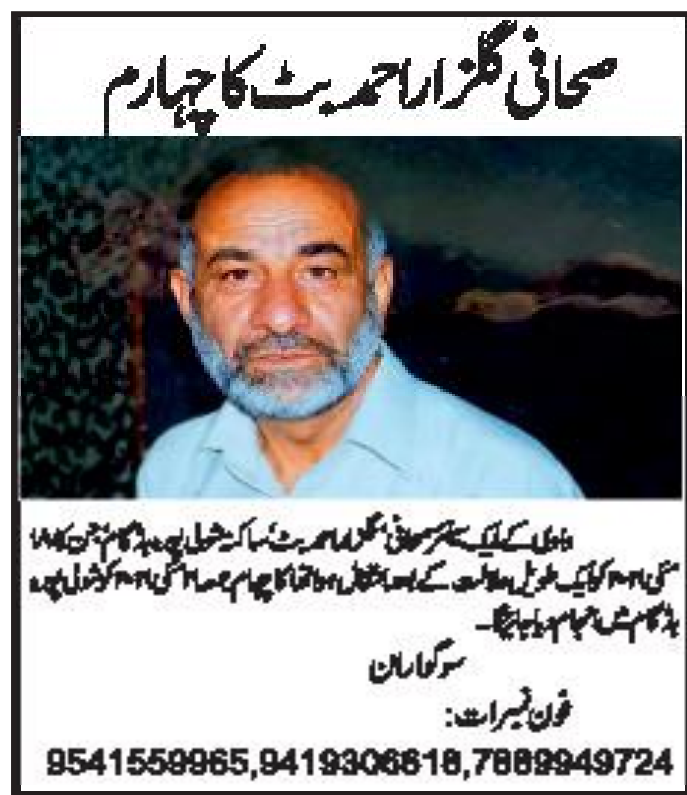
SRINAGAR: Srinagar Municipal Corporation Wednesday ordered a special drive against illegal and unauthorised constructions being attempted in the garb of COVID 19 lockdown.

The drive will be conducted from 21st May. 'Commissioner SMC constituted a special task force led by Joint Commissioner Planning to look into the constructions in the different wards of the city, identify the illegal and unauthorised constructions, initiate action including sealing & demolition

in accordance with the Municipal Corporation Act,' an SMC statement said.

The task force has been directed to recommend action in cases where connivance or involvement of officials is found. A detailed ward wise schedule for the drive has been issued. Chief Enforcement Officer, Chief Anti-Encroachment Officer, Estates Officer, Antipolythene Officer, Zonal Officers are also the members of the task force.

"SMC is monitoring the construction activity on daily basis. Directions for strict action against violators have been passed.



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

- 325- First Council of Nicaea - 1st ecumenical council of Christian bishops at Nicaea, Asia Minor
- 685- Battle of Nechtansmere/Dun Nechtain: Picts led by Brude MacBeli beat Northumbrians led by their king Egfrith in Scotland
- 1293- Earthquake strikes Kamakura Japan, 30,000 killed
- 1498- Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama arrives at Calicut, India becoming the first European to reach India by sea
- 1571 - Venice, Spain & Pope Pius form anti-Turkish Saint League
- 1775 - Citizens of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina declare independence from Great Britain
- 1784 - Britain & Netherlands sign peace treaty (Peace of Paris)
- 1830 - 1st railroad timetable published in newspaper (Baltimore American)
- 1830 - D Hyde patents fountain pen
- 1835 - Otto is named the first modern king of Greece
- 1861 - Kentucky proclaims its neutrality in Civil War
- 1875 - International Bureau of Weights & Measures forms by treaty
- 1882 - Gotthard rail tunnel between Switzerland & Italy opens
- 1892- George Sampson patents clothes dryer
- 1902 - United States withdraws its troops from Cuba as the first Cuban president, Tomas Estrada Palma takes power
- 1910 - Funeral for Britain's King Edward VII held in Westminster Abbey, has one of the largest assemblages of European royalty
- 1916 Saturday Evening Post cover features Norman Rockwell painting
- 1918 - 1st electrically propelled warship (New Mexico)
- 1927 - Saudi Arabia becomes independent of Great Britain in the Treaty of Jeddah
- 1943 - French, British and US victory parade in Tunis, Tunisia
- 1944 - US Communist Party dissolves
- 1954 - Chiang Kai-shek becomes president of Nationalist China
- 1955 - Argentine parliament accepts separation of church and state
- 1956 - Atomic fusion (thermonuclear) bomb dropped from plane at Bikini Atoll
- 1956 - Jordan government of Samir resigns
- 1959 - Japanese-Americans regain their citizenship
- 1963 - Sukarno appointed president of Indonesia
- 1965 - Pakistani Boeing 720-B crashes at Cairo Egypt, killing 121
- 1967 - 10,000 demonstrate against war in Vietnam
- 1974 - Soyuz 14 returns to Earth
- 1976 - USSR performs nuclear test at Sary Shagan USSR
- 1978 - US launches Pioneer Venus 1; produces 1st global radar map of Venus
- 1991 - Soviet parliament approves law allowing citizens to travel abroad
- 1992 - India launches its 1st satellite independently
- 1993 - 10m meteor comes within 150,000 km of Earth (1993KA)
- 1997 - Cosmos Zenit-2 Launch (Russia), Failed
- 2002 - The independence of East Timor is recognized by Portugal, formally ending 23 years of Indonesian rule and 3 years of provisional UN administration (Portugal itself was the former colonizer of East Timor until 1976)
- 2013 - 133 people are killed and 283 are injured in a continued wave of insurgency in Iraq



HIJRI
CALENDAR

08

SHAWWAL
-UL-
MUKARRAM

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR
3: 49
ZUHR
12: 27
ASR
5:24
MAGRIB
7:32
ISHA
9:07

Advisor Basheer Khan Reviews Covid Management In Srinagar

'Fight Against Covid A Collective Effort'

SRINAGAR: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan, Wednesday had a detailed meeting with various stakeholders to review the management of Covid-19 in Jammu and Kashmir at SKICC here.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Tourism, Director SKIMS, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Managing Director JK-PDC, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation, Director Industries Kashmir, Director Tourism Kashmir, Director Urban Local Bodies Kashmir, Director Health and Medical Education Kashmir, Regional Transport Officer Kashmir, Chairman Traders Association Kashmir, President Chambers of Commerce Kashmir, President FCIK Kashmir, President Hoteliers Association, houseboat owners, Shikarawalas and President Transporters Kashmir.

Advisor said that the fight against COVID is a collective effort and sought cooperation from all stakeholders to tackle the pandemic effectively. He said that the government is working unrelentingly to deal with the situation in the best possible way. However, the efforts of the government need to be complemented with the cooperation of the community and in this endeavour the role of the stakeholders like Chamber of Commerce, Traders, Hoteliers, transporters, religious leaders have become more important. He said that the last time during first wave of Covid-19 there were no tried and tested method but during the second wave the Covid appropriate behaviour is known to everyone and response to it is well established. While complimenting the efforts of the government, he reiterated that the administration is completely focused in tackling COVID by initiating slew of measures.

Emphasising the need to disseminate the right information, Advisor said that right education to be percolated among the



masses about dealing with the pandemic is very important. He said that people should be made aware about the situation in a right perspective and they should be advised not to lend ear to the rumour mongers. He said that there is no shortage of oxygen, vaccines, drugs or other medical infrastructure. The huge consignment of vaccines has already arrived and vaccination drive as per the micro-plans, already prepared, shall go unabated. Referring to the oxygen supply, he said it has been further augmented by way of additional oxygen plants that have been received from Frankfurt, Germany.

Advisor said that the Lieutenant Governor is taking day to day review of the COVID situation and is personally monitoring the performance of each department. He further stressed upon the importance of tele-medication and said that this is being provided to the patients through Tele-consultations. He said that 32 dedicated lines are established in Srinagar only with the proper roster of doctor attending to the calls.

All the HoDs of their respective departments informed that they are taking periodical reviews to upgrade the Covid management protocol as per the daily needs and requirements.

Secretary Tourism, Sarmad Hafeez, while speaking on the

occasion, gave a detailed review of the measures being taken up in the tourism sector.

Director SKIMS briefed the participants about the measures being taken and the need for dissemination of awareness in a right manner.

Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz, briefed about the augmentation of oxygen plants and bed-ding capacity in hospitals. He informed that the government has increased the oxygen capacity by 4200 LPM in the last two weeks and additional 3500 LPM oxygen capacity is being added in the coming days.

Various stakeholders from the Industrial sector and other economic sectors submitted their memoranda highlighting their problems due to the prevailing circumstances and sought government's intervention. They lauded the efforts of the government and thanked the Lieutenant Governor for his unrelenting support during these testing times.

Advisor assured them that the government shall extend all kind of support wherever required in the wake of the prevailing global pandemic. He also assured them that the feedback taken during the course of the meeting shall be taken up with the Lieutenant Governor and the respective departments for consideration.

ADVISOR SAID THAT THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR IS TAKING day to day review of the COVID situation and is personally monitoring the performance of each department. He further stressed upon the importance of tele-medication and said that this is being provided to the patients through Tele-consultations.

From KO Archives

'Colourful Weapons' To Quell Protests Now

SRINAGAR - All protesters welcome to Srinagar. For moving away from batons and bullets, the police here Tuesday introduced cannons that spray coloured water on mobs and leave the stain-on clothes as "criminal" evidence.

The first to face this new weapon against violent demonstrations were hundreds of local traders who staged a protest against value added tax (VAT) in the state.

Police turned the cannons on as the group marched, shouting slogans against the Mufti Muhammad Saeed government. "The cannon throws water of various colours at the protesters. It is not easy to remove the stains from the clothes," said a senior police officer laying down the advantages of the new weapon.

"There is no chance of pro-testers' death unless there is a subsequent stampede. And once the colours stain the clothes they cannot claim they didn't participate in the demonstration" he told IANS.

Police had to think of the cannons as unruly mobs on streets have become a daily routine here.

"Under section 144 of the criminal procedure code (CrPC), an assembly of five or more people is unlawful. Thus dealing with demonstrations is something the local police have to live with," another police officer said.

For over 1 years now because of insurgency, magisterial orders under section 144 of CrPC have been in force in all cities and towns of Kashmir.

Police firing at crowds has often stepped up public anger and created political controversies.

Now, the cannons purchased for Rs 2.1 million are expected to come in handy.

Spraying cold water, these will be specially effective in the winters when temperatures drop below zero.

"A cannon can easily disperse a crowd of up to 4,000 people. There is an additional facility of throwing rubber bullets if the water fails to do the trick." Javid Mukhdooni, inspector general of Kashmir said.

(Kashmir Observer, 20 May, 2005)

J&K Admin Inordinately Delaying Our Regularisation: CIC Operators Seek LG's Intervention

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The CIC Operators working in Rural Development Department, on contractual basis since 2004 on Wednesday rued that they are living a miserable life as they are working on Rs 10K per month (Rs 333/= per day).

In a statement, they said appointments of the CIC Operators has been made by open competition and through District Level Appointment Committee constituted by the Government of J&K headed by Deputy Commissioner's of concerned District in the year 2003-04.

"All the CIC Operators are well qualified having MCA, M Tech, MSc.IT, B.E & B.Tech Degrees and are technically very sound. They are handling efficiently all the online work of departmental portals viz E-gram-swaraj, SBM, PMAY, Peoples Plan Campaign (Sabki Yojna Sabka Vikaas), GDPD, Mission Antyodaya, PFMS etc and other e-Governance related activities. Besides all other office assignments viz-a-viz elections, Establishment, Accounts, works etc. at Block/District/Directorate/Secretariat level," they said.

The Jammu & Kashmir Government in the year 2014 passed a Cabinet order to formulate a proposal for the regularisations of 172 CIC Operators in the Rural Development Department J&K and 172 Data entry operators

were created for regularisation of services of 172 CIC Operators vide Govt. Order No. 320-RD & PR of 2016 dated 14.12.2016.

Subsequently in the year 2017, the high level Empowered Committee of J&K Government vide its 58th meeting held on 22.03.2017 and 60th meeting held on 12-10-2017 headed by Principal Secretary, Finance Department J&K cleared their cases for regularisation under Special Provision Act 2010.

The recommendations have also been communicated to the Department of Rural Development and PR by the Finance Department of J&K for issuing regularisation orders as Data Entry Operators vide vide O.M No. PS/DC/Misc-353/14 dated 22-05-2017, O.M. No. PS/SC/Misc-374/14 dated 24-01-2018 and O.M.No.PS/DC/Misc-353/14 dated 01-06-2014.

President of CIC Operators Association Nayeem Siddique said that they have provided their 17 years service for the betterment of Rural Development Department and despite completion of all codal formalities, still Administration of Jammu & Kashmir is inordinately delaying issuance of formal orders by playing drakes and ducks.

He sought personal intervention of Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir in the matter on merit basis and provide justice to 172 families as early as possible.

Only Two Percent Of Prisoners Vaccinated So Far In J&K

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A mere two percent of jail population in J&K has been inoculated against COVID-19 so far.

The details reveal that only 91 prisoners have been administered doses of COVID-19 vaccine in different prisons of the UT till date.

Of them 38 were inoculated in central jail Srinagar and 53 in Rajouri, the details further reveal. Not a single prisoner has been vaccinated against the deadly pandemic in remaining 11 jails of the UT.

After the outbreak of second wave of COVID-19, nearly 90 prisoners have tested positive for the pandemic in J&K.

As per figures revealed by the Prisons department on May 10, 4572 persons- convicts, under-trials and detainees- were lodged in 13 jails of the UT.

The disclosure that only 2 percent of prisoners have been inoculated till date has come to fore at a time when a high-level committee headed by Justice Ali Muhammad Magrey has directed the DGP Prisons to coordinate with the Health department to ensure vaccination of jail inmates as well as staff on priority.

The committee, also comprising Principal Secretary, Home



Shaleen Kabra and DGP Prisons B.Srinivas, was constituted last year to decide on release of convicts/ under-trials to decongest prisons in the wake of outbreak of first wave of COVID-19.

It is pertinent to mention that J&K High Court has dismissed a petition that sought Covid-19 vaccination of prisoners lodged in different jails of the UT.

The Court had said that petitioners were at liberty submit a comprehensive representation regarding the registration and vaccination of the prisoners to the Director General of Prisons, UT of J&K.

"In the event any such representation is submitted, the Director General of Prisons, would consider it and take all possible and immediate steps for the registration and the vaccination of the prisoners or may formulate a policy or a scheme so that no inmate of the jail remains unvaccinated," the Court said. (KNO)

J&K Govt Sanctions 1366 Posts For 500-Bedded DRDO Hospitals

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The government of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday sanctioned 1366 posts for 500 COVID-19 bed Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) hospitals to be made functional here.

In this regard, an order has been issued by the Financial Commissioner Health and Medical Education Department (H&ME), Atal Dullo.

The order reads that 683 posts have been kept for DRDO hospitals in Jammu and Srinagar respectively, expenditure on account of salary and maintenance of these hospitals which shall be borne out of the UT budget.

"The Administrative Control of these Hospitals shall lie respectively with the Principals of Government Medical Colleges, Jammu and Srinagar", reads the order.

The government also said that the selection of the contractual posts for the COVID-19 hospitals shall be conducted by the five member committee set up each in Jammu and Srinagar.

In Jammu the committee includes Principal, Government Medical College Jammu as

chairperson. Administrator Associated Hospital, Jammu will be the secretary and member of the committee. Director Health Services Department Jammu, Mission Director, National Health Mission and Representative of Health and Medical Education Department will be the members of the Committee.

Similarly in Srinagar, Principal, Government Medical College Srinagar has been Hospital, Srinagar will be the secretary and member of the committee set up for the COVID-19 hospitals. Director Health Services Department Srinagar, Representative of MD, NHM and Representative of Health and Medical Education Department will be the members of the Committee.

"The contractual appointees shall have to furnish an affidavit to the extent that they will not claim regular appointment at any future date on the strength of this contractual appointment", it reads.

It also reads the posts were created for a period of three years and initially, posts shall be filled for a period of one year and will be extended to another year, one year at the time if the requirement persists—(KNO)



A HEALTHCARE WORKER ADMINISTERS a covid vaccine jab to an elderly in Srinagar on Wednesday. KO Phot Abid Bhat

...DOCTOR SPEAKS

Covid-Positive Mother Can Feed Baby With Precaution

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Dr Sachit Sharma, Senior Resident Pediatric Doctor at Shri Maharaja Gulab Singh (SMGS) Hospital today said that Covid-positive mother can feed her milk to baby, by taking certain precautions.

Dr Sachit said that if a lactating mother is Covid-positive, she can feed her milk to child. 'She should wear a mask and collect the milk in a bowl. The same milk can be fed to the child with a spoon, by another healthy member of the family', he advised. He also advised that such a mother should keep distance between her bed and the baby's cot.

However, he warned that the Covid infection may cause Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) which is usually fatal but curable with timely intervention.

Dr Sachit requested parents to teach hand-wash and wearing mask to all children above the age of 2. He also suggested that the parents need to refrain from entertaining guests and relatives during the pandemic.



'If a child displays symptoms of Covid, immediately consult a doctor, through phone or eSanjeevani telemedicine facility. Get the child tested for Covid and treated accordingly', advised Dr Sachit.

Dr Pallavi Sharma, Lecturer SMGS Hospital Jammu said that multiple members among families are being tested Covid positive. 'Due to carelessness and nonchalance towards Covid appropriate behaviour, many such patients are infecting young children in their families', she said with concern. 'It is disheartening to see some families ignoring Covid symptoms in their young ones. In kids, the symptoms usually appear as fever, redness of eyes and loose stools'.

Dr Pallavi requested parents

and other adult family members to keep close eye on children and immediately get them tested for Covid, if they show any symptoms. 'Fever, redness of eyes and passage of loose stools are among the major symptoms being observed in kids', she says.

'Families must adopt Covid appropriate behaviour wholeheartedly so that the young generation is saved. It is usually the adults who venture out of the house and it is them who could bring home the infection', informs Dr Pallavi. She also warned that the suspected third wave of Covid is expected to attack the young age group and said, 'since they are the ones not-vaccinated, they could be an easy prey to the pandemic'.

She further requested parents to inculcate the habit of frequent hand wash and wearing of mask in their children. 'We have to teach our kids Covid appropriate behaviour and ensure that it becomes their habit. The fight against Covid has to be a united effort of all age groups and sections of the society', she concluded.

One Dead, Six Go Missing In Ramban Road Accident

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A 22-year-old non-local resident was killed while two others were injured after a vehicle they were travelling in met with an accident at Chanderkot area in Ramban district.

Six persons who were also travelling in the vehicle are still missing.

Traffic department officials said that a passenger vehicle bearing registration number HR55J-1678 met with an accident at Duggi Pulli in Chanderkot.

They said a rescue operation was launched by Police and QRT at the spot, saying that one person died

while two were injured in the incident.

The deceased has been identified as Rashid Ahmad, 22, while injured Muhammad Asif, 28 and Bilal Ahmad, 25 all residents of Binore Uttar Pradesh.

They said six travellers are still missing and rescue operation is on to trace them. (CNS)

while two were injured in the incident.

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They said six travellers are still missing and rescue operation is on to trace them. (CNS)

NC Seeks Easing Off Loan Worries Of Marginal Borrowers

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on Tuesday sought support to people implicated with COVID-19 spurred meltdown asking the government to ease their loan worries through a massive bailout and COVID sustenance package.

Expressing concern over the crises chain activated by the COVID-19 spread, party spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said the pandemic has not only incapacitated large businesses, small and marginal traders alone but has also hit the individual incomes of daily wagers as well, rendering them incapable of paying EMIs on various vehicle, housing and other small business loans.

"On that account the government is expected to provide relief to the borrowers from the interest accrued by them during the ongoing COVID crises by putting the loans availed by them under moratorium. The pandemic and the resultant lock down have had a negative impact on the income of all such borrowers, who had availed loans to buy vehicles and build houses. The beneficiaries of YSLS (Youth Start-Up loan scheme) PMEGP and KCC are also not able to deal with the debt. Hence the incumbent government should without any delay gauge the impact of the ongoing lockdown on the borrowers income and recast and restructure the repayment of loans, reclassifying norms for NPA's accordingly," he said.

Alluding to the insipid response of the government to the woes of local tourism players, transporters, artisans, hoteliers previously, Imran said the mountain of in-

terest on them is growing as ever before and that the way out for them from the quandary continues to hook on debt. "There is a great need to yank local; traders, tourism players, artisans, transporters, marginal agriculturalists and individual borrowers out of the gloom. I hope the incumbent government would shore up a major recovery and sustenance plan by considering waiving off the impending amount of loans, putting a moratorium on EMIs. The middle and lower classes associated with marginal trade, Agriculture, Horticulture, poultry, dairy, Transport sectors are already tottering due to the shutting up of the business, heaping of interests on the wretched lot is cruelty. I hope the incumbent administration will take a holistic view of the situation and come up with genuine both long and term packages to revive the economy," he said.

Drawing the attention of the incumbent JK government towards the problems laid bare by the debilitating assault of COVID-19 pandemic, Imran asked the government to increase its public expenditure on the agriculture, rural sanitation and health, irrigation and flood management, fishers, drinking water, sustenance allowances to hawkers, bus conductors and enhancement of money allocated to social schemes saying the measure will help keep the markets afloat in the absence of money flow from the tourism sector. He impressed upon the government to consider MGNREGA as a tool for post COVID recovery, saying the measure besides boosting development in the rural areas will also provide employment to scores of people.

Ajay Kumar Sharma Posted MD J&K Financial Corporation

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The government on Wednesday posted Ajay Kumar Sharma (JKAS) as Managing Director, J&K Financial Corporation, against an available vacancy.

According to an order Sharma, who was awaiting orders of adjustment in the General Admin-

istration Department, has been ordered to assume new posting immediately.

As per a separate order, Sanjeev Rana (KAS), Additional Secretary to the Government, Higher Education Department, has been transferred and posted as Additional Secretary in the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

Police Arrest 232, Fine 1041 For Violating Covid SOPs

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday said that it arrested 232 persons, lodged 98 FIRs and also realized fine of 1,49,280/- from 1041 people for violating the guidelines/rules throughout Kashmir valley during the last 24 hours. Besides, 111 vehicles were also

seized in Shopian, Kulgam, Budgam and Bandipora for violating guidelines/restrictions, police said in a statement.

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

پرنسپل سراج عقیدت

آج ایک بار پھر شہید ملت میر واعظ کشمیر مولوی محمد فاروق صاحبؒ اور شہدائے حول کی 31 ویں برسی اور شہید حریت خواجہ عبدالغنی لون کی 19 ویں برسی پر نیز جملہ شہدائے جموں و کشمیر کو ان کی عظیم قربانیوں کیلئے بلا امتیاز کشمیری عوام شایان شان طریقے پر خراج عقیدت پیش کرتے ہوئے ان کے عظیم نصب العین دیرینہ متنازع مسئلہ کشمیر کو حل کرنے تک اپنی منصفانہ اور پر امن جدوجہد جاری رکھنے کیلئے تجدید عہد کرتے ہیں۔

نوٹ Covid-19 کی تازہ قہر انگیز لہر، لاک ڈاؤن اور حریت چیرمین جناب میر واعظ ڈاکٹر مولوی محمد عرفان فاروق کی مسلسل نظر بندی کے سبب 21 مئی کی جملہ تقریبات ملتوی کردی گئی ہیں تاہم عوام الناس سے گزارش ہے کہ وہ فیچ وقت نمازوں کے دوران بارگاہ خداوندی میں شہید ملت، شہید حریت، شہدائے حول سمیت جملہ شہدائے جموں و کشمیر کے درجات کی بلندی کے ساتھ ساتھ موجودہ متعذری اور خطرناک وبا COVID-19 سے پوری دینائے انسانیت کی نجات کیلئے بارگاہ رب بے نیاز میں خصوصی دعاؤں کا اہتمام کریں۔

کل جماعتی حریت کانفرنس

THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL of these Hospitals shall lie respectively with the Principals of Government Medical Colleges, Jammu and Srinagar",

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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

Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001

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

RNI Registration No: 69503/98

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

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K O V I E W

Covid-hit tourism

With second Covid-19 wave wreaking havoc across the country, the tourism in Kashmir is one of the sectors that has been hit the hardest. Already reeling from over two years of constant disruption, the resurgence of the pandemic has made the prospect of revival of the sector even more bleak.

One of the factors that led to surge in Covid-19 cases in the Valley is the tourism itself. In the absence of the permission for international travel, a large number of domestic tourists came to Kashmir. In the process the administration also overlooked the Standard Operating Procedures in case of incoming holiday makers which, in part, led to the second wave spreading through the Valley. And this, in turn, has killed one more season of tourism.

This has prompted the administration to announce a Rs 3 crore relief package for people employed in the industry. According to the package, Rs 2,000 financial assistance will be provided to registered 'shikara' owners, tourist guides, ponywalas and others, including those who rent palanquins for yatris. The money will be paid for the next two months to tide over the peak of the ongoing wave.

But as is apparent this money is peanuts and will hardly compensate for the massive loss due to loss of tourists. And that too during the spring and the most probably during the upcoming summer season. Given its ferocity, the second wave is likely to last until early autumn. And until then the Covid-19 related restrictions would not only have impacted the tourism but also crushed the other businesses, leaving once again thousands of people unemployed.

This is why the government needs to think for the longer and prepare in advance for the coming three months. One question to ask would be if continuing the lockdown would be in the interest of the already battered economy. And whether denying people a chance to earn livelihood wouldn't be a cure worse than the disease? There is a large section of people living at the bottom of pyramid who have largely been jobless over the last two years. Their savings have already been depleted. For example, the transporters: the drivers and conductors have now very little to survive on. This includes also the people associated with tourism.

So, while the government plans ahead, it has to take this reality on board. If the lockdown can't be done without, the administration has to come up with a reasonable economic package that at least takes a modest care of the people rendered without livelihood as a result.

OTHER OPINION

RBI's reading of the economy

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said, in its monthly bulletin released on May 17, that "the biggest toll" of the ongoing second wave of Covid-19 is "demand shock". It listed other negatives — "loss of mobility, discretionary spending and employment, besides inventory accumulation" — but emphasised that "aggregate supply is less impacted". Perhaps because of this, RBI concluded that "the resurgence of Covid-19 has dented but not debilitated economic activity in the first half of 2021-22" and that the economy hasn't been as badly hit as it was last year (the central bank has added the caveat that this is a tentative assessment).

RBI is partly right. Last year, during the first wave, the 68-day lockdown and the subsequent graded (and gradual) easing of more restrictions meant a significant disruption in supply. This year, the Union government, burnt from its experience last year, has steered clear of announcing a national lockdown, leaving it to the states to impose localised lockdowns. Many states did resort to these measures in April as the second wave threatened to overwhelm their health systems, but ensured that there would not be too much of a disruption in industrial activities. The Nomura India Business Resumption Index for the week ended May 16 was 61.9 (100 indicates a pre-pandemic level of activity), a sharp fall from February, when it almost reached pre-pandemic levels. This level was last seen in June 2020, after the hard lockdown ended and industrial activities started resuming. It may fall again this week and next, with many states expected to extend lockdowns as the second wave shows the first signs of ebbing, but it is unlikely it will go down to the levels of around 45 seen last April.

Hindustan Times



R. Raj Rao

Can an auto driver work from home? Can a printer work from home? Can a barber work from home? In the circumstances, they will do anything to earn a few rupees to feed their families. Even put up posters on walls. The posters were right in referring to children. But it isn't just vaccines that the children of the poor are deprived of. They are deprived of food, the very means of sustenance

There is no gainsaying that the pandemic and the lockdowns have affected the blue-collared class more than anyone else. We, of the white-collared class, retain our monthly salaries even as we work from home. But can an auto driver work from home? Can a printer work from home? Can a barber work from home? In the circumstances, they will do anything to earn a few rupees to feed their families. Even put up posters on walls. The posters were right in referring to children. But it isn't just vaccines that the children of the poor are deprived of. They are deprived of food, the very means of sustenance.

Though Article 19 of the Constitution of India grants our citizens freedom of speech, this is observed more in its breach than in its adherence. Not just the present dispensation, but even governments in the past have arrested citizens who have been critical of it. India, which prides itself on being the world's largest democracy, hasn't learned lessons from other major democracies in the world, such as the USA, the UK and Canada; where citizens are not generally arrested for expressing views that are unflattering to the government.

The latest group of people in India to be arrested are neither CAA, NRC and farm law protesters; nor JNU students; nor urban Naxals. No, they are blue-collared workers in Delhi who put up posters in the city in Hindi and English, asking the Prime Minister why he had exported vaccines meant for their kids to countries like Iran, Iraq and Bangladesh. The arrests this time round are not under the infamous sedition law, but are under other sections of the Indian Penal Code that deal with disobedience to orders promulgated by a public servant; negligent acts dangerous to life; defacement to property; and the Epidemic Act.

The irony, however, is that the men who put up the posters have nothing to do with writing them. They are poor printers, auto-rickshaw drivers, daily wage earners, and other such working class people, whom Covid, and the lockdowns associated with it have rendered jobless. They agreed to put up the posters only because

they were offered a paltry sum of Rs. 600 for every poster that they pasted. And not all of them were young. One of them was a 61-year-old frame maker. Forget his children, it is doubtful whether he, entitled to the vaccine as a senior citizen, got it in the first place.

Even if the government intended to make arrests, shouldn't they have attempted to find out the brains behind the posters, rather than arresting the have-nots who put them up? As it turns out, opposition parties like the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party are so outraged by the arrests, that they have taken the blame for the posters, and dared the government to arrest them, instead of arresting dispossessed subaltern people.

Let me deconstruct the posters. To my mind, the wording of the posters is faulty. The government may be guilty of exporting vaccines, when there aren't enough vaccines available for our own 100 crore adult population; to fully vaccinate whom the government would need 200 doses. But the vaccines weren't meant for the children of those who printed the posters. Children haven't as yet been brought under the government's vaccination drive, though they may be later this year, with doctors warning that the third Covid wave might be detrimental to children.

The government at the centre seems to overlook the fact that the proletarian people whom they arrested may have been the very people who voted for them in 2014 and 2019, giving them an absolute majority in Parliament. They fail to realize that the men they have arrested belong to the very class of people who are so poor that they cannot even afford wood to cremate their dead; as a result of which hundreds of unburned, decomposed dead bodies have been found floating in the Ganges in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The arrested men are probably the kin of migrant workers who trekked all the way home from Bombay, Delhi and Bangalore last summer.

"We eat just once a day," Kailash, the gardener who looks after my Lonavla home, and has two school-going sons, said to me. The plight of the working class confirms my view that communism is better than capitalism.

I may be a writer and a professor, but I have friends who are drivers, motor mechanics, technicians, barbers, delivery boys, waiters, and so on. I have had many conversations with them. And the refrain of all of them is that they are on the verge of starvation. Yet, unlike us, the bourgeoisie, they are civil enough not to bear a grudge against the government. "What can the government do?" they say. "It's not their fault." They don't hold the government responsible for election rallies, religious gatherings, and strict lockdowns during the time of the pandemic. They are more apt to blame themselves, and people like them, for being careless and not following the rules. And it is such kind and considerate people who have now been arrested in Delhi.

The government would do well, however, not to tax the patience of the common man. They must not drive the common man to use the John Heywood phrase 'Enough is enough'. They must see the writing on the wall, symbolised by the posters put up on the walls of Delhi's streets. The phrase 'writing on the wall', incidentally, for those who do not know, means something that will fail, or cease to exist. A news magazine has already called India 'The failed state'.

My friend Makarand Paranjape, Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, writing in the Hindustan Times, quoted a labourer on his campus who said to him: "Six years of the goodwill [gained by the Modi government] will be lost in six months."

The government should reflect on the warning implicit in the labourer's words.

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

Dr. R. Raj Rao is an internationally known Indian English novelist, poet and critic. He was Professor and Head of the Department of English at the University of Pune in Maharashtra. He has also been a Visiting Professor at universities in Canada and Germany



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If the Lockdown is Lifted

Jammu and Kashmir is well into weeks of the covid-19 lockdown due to an increase in the number of cases. Although the number of cases haven't seen an evident decline, the numbers do show a ray of hope. However, this is where we need to be cautious.

The lockdown may be working and the cases might drop. However, we're out of vaccines and haven't had

the opportunity to use the lockdown to our advantage. This means that should the lockdown be lifted after the cases fall, we cannot become complacent at any cost.

Many whatsapp forwards are suggesting that Kashmir is well on its way of recovery. Let's hope so. However, we cannot afford to get lousy and throw caution to the wind again. It is not only important to save lives

but to ensure that people can get back to their businesses.

We cannot afford a third wave and another lockdown. This means that as a community we need to stay put at following SOPs and to ensure that cases keep dropping. This is cardinal for our economic health as well.

Covid appropriate behaviour is a life saver. Just as you wouldn't go without food for a day to survive,

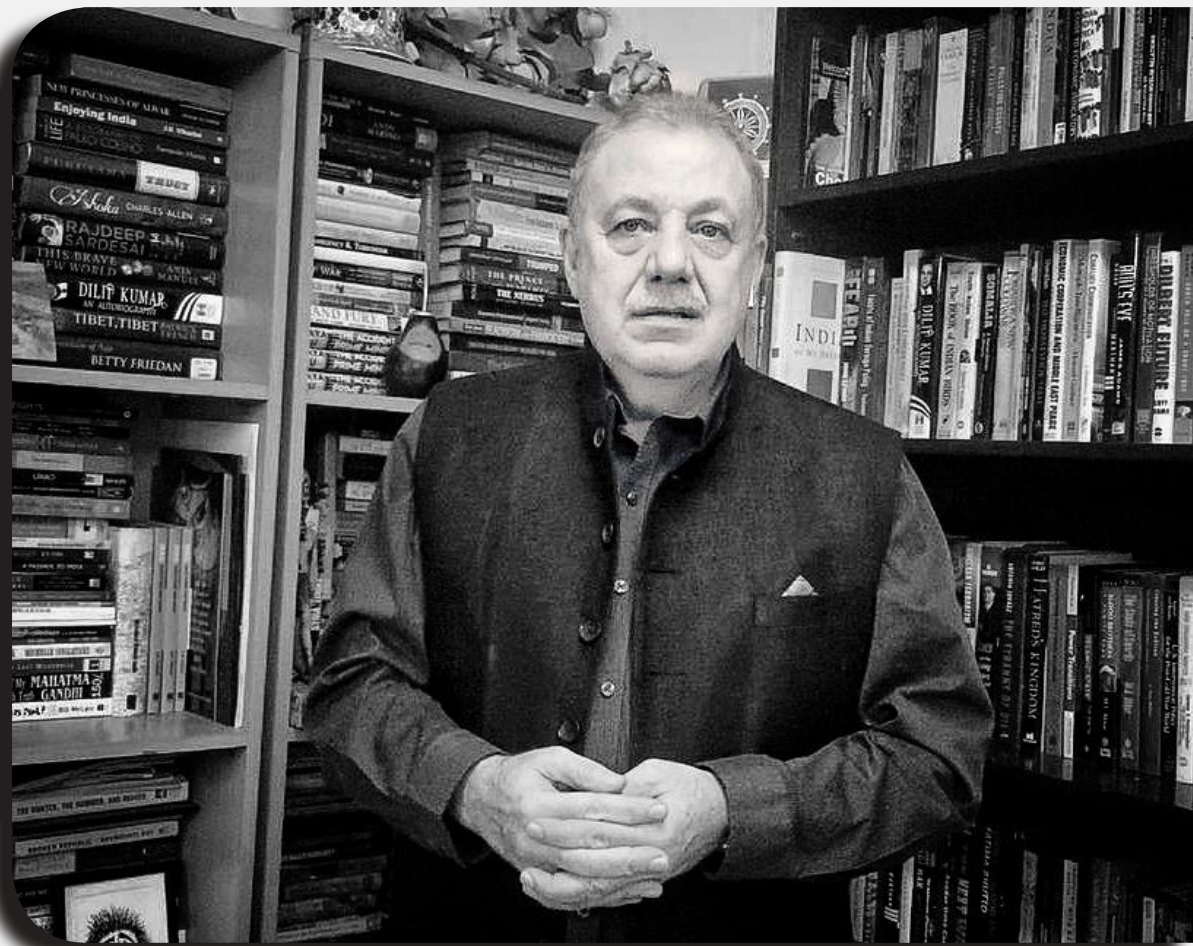
you shouldn't go without a mask. Vaccine or not, we need to follow SOPs in any case.

For a small place like Kashmir, containing the virus may not be that difficult. But it is going to be challenging to survive it.

Tania Shafi
Tania@rediffmail

'It's not a War in Palestine. It's a Genocide'

In Conversation with
Political Analyst Dr Wael Awwad



KO WEBDESK

To understand the trick of terminologies, the tyranny of narratives and the possibility of resolution around the ongoing situation in Palestine, Kashmir Observer interviewed senior Arab journalist, writer and political analyst Dr Wael Awwad.

How did the current hostilities begin? The dominant narrative has been that Palestinians fighters firing rockets inside Israel triggered it.

The problem started in the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah which Israeli's have tried to occupy since 1948 without any success. Ever since East Jerusalem and West Bank were annexed by Israel in the 1967 war, Jewish settlers increased ten fold. So, building activities of settlements never stopped with a sole aim of engineering a demographic change and Judaizing the holy city in clear violation of International law that considers it an Israeli occupied territory and any changes of its demography illegal.

So Sheikh Jarrah enclave has been a main target for the Jewish settlers who are calling for extermination of Arab populations and confiscation of Palestinian houses. Israel's draconian laws give only the Jews the right of citizenship, ownership of housing and other civic rights. Palestinians, especially in the old quarter of Jerusalem are forced to leave their ancestral homes. Some cases are in the court and difficult to be solved by any law since there is no historical evidence except in the Torah as they claim.

Moreover Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, stirred the fresh trouble by resorting to provocations in order to get a new lease of life since he is indicted by the court on corruption charges and is facing an imminent jail term.

Besieging Al -Aqsa Mosque on the holiest night of Al-Qadr and then shooting and tear gassing worshippers was a grave provocation. Following this, Hamas issued a warning to Israeli government to end the siege. Israeli Defense Forces were waiting for the other side to get provoked and no sooner did Hamas fire a rocket, the doors of hell were opened on Palestinians and continues without a break.

The Jerusalem Post says "Israel is winning battles, Hamas is winning the war". How do you see the emerging situation after relentless Israeli bombings on Gaza and other provocations elsewhere?

It is tragic. There is no winner in war and the death of innocent people must be stopped by all means. There is no justification for a war on people under occupation. As per International law Israelis cannot call it a defensive war. It's not a war in Palestine. It's a genocide. This is not a war but continued massacres of defenceless Palestinians.

killing machine to continue crimes against humanity. Trampling international law by blocking UN Security Council resolutions against Israel is a main job of the US at the world body. The former president Donald Trump went a step further and recognized Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel and gifted him the occupied Syrian territory of Golan disregarding all international laws. So Netanyahu is using US support to the full advantage of right wing Israeli settlers who reject even a two state solution.

Do you agree that the blatant approval or complicity voiced or signaled either through silence or lukewarm 'neutral' statements by much of the international community like the US, EU and UN has emboldened Israeli regime to carry on with its expansionist policies?

Palestine is a victim of colonialism, and Britain is chiefly responsible for creating the state of Israel through the Balfour Declaration of 1918. During the British mandate on Palestine from 1918-1947, a number of Jews migrated from Europe where they were persecuted. Colonial Britain had promised a homeland for the Jews in Palestine and so it helped ensure Jewish domination, started arming European Jewish settlers, shielded their crimes and turned blind eye to the massacres they committed of local peoples to facilitate the influx of settlers from all across the world.

The sufferings of Palestinians have never ended ever since. War after war has led to Israel capturing more Palestinian territories and using truce and peace deals to swallow and annihilate the whole of Palestine. The world is watching this horror — the second Nakba happening now after 73 years of the first exodus of Palestinians.

I will not be surprised if another massacre is committed in Sheikh Jarrah as a collective punishment for its residents or resisting the forcible eviction from their homes.

It is a shame that the International community has failed to find a peaceful solution even after dividing Palestine into two states in 1948.

The whole world understands that Palestine is under Israel's occupation and people under occupation must be protected under international laws at all costs.

Has the recent rapprochement between Arab states and Israel led to despair in Palestine or is their resolve to resist occupation still intact?

Yes Palestinians feel betrayed once again. Having said that the Arab rapprochement with Israel was never there for the Palestinian cause. Arab's signed the 'Abraham Accord', also called 'Deal of the Century', under pressure from former president Donald Trump, his son in law Kushner and Benjamin Netanyahu. The current crisis has proved that the Abraham Accord is dead.

The Arab Peace Initiative which was agreed upon during Beirut Arab Summit in 2002 was presented to the world as the Arabs were ready to accept Israel and recognize it provided a Palestinian state was established side by side a Jewish state with the borders of 4th June 1967 and East

“History has taught us that “Right is Might” and not the vice versa. There is no loss of right as long as you strive for it. The Palestinians will never succumb to atrocities and pressures. The Israelis know that there is no military solution to the problem and they are unable to erase Palestine from the map despite all the support they have had all these years”.

occupation of Palestine will be resisted and freedom will be achieved by Palestinians one day. The Israelis know that there is no military solution to the problem and they are unable to erase Palestine from the map despite all the support they have had.

The spirit of resistance is growing stronger and Palestinians are never alone and will never be. The holy city will be the main rallying point for Muslims and Christians alike to fight back Zionist supremacy and control of the city and thwart any attempt to demolish Al-Aqsa Mosque and Christian ancient churches.

What would you say about the 'conflict of two sides' narrative pushed by the media about Israel's aggression in Gaza?

Israel's propaganda machinery is strong and very professional. They knew the value of image and media to achieve their political objectives unlike Arabs who have all the resources at their disposal. Zionists are masters of deception and have a strong control on global media. For the last 73 years, they made the world believe that they are the victims and Arabs are the aggressors. Infact, the Arabs foolishly adopted David Ben Gurion's statement that the "Arabs wanted to throw us into the sea".

Now with the IT revolution and proliferation of social media, it is very difficult to hide the truth. The horrors of war on Gaza and the tragedy unfolding in the Palestinian lands is now there for all of us to see. In spite of all pressures and inducements to media houses to change the narratives and justify the retaliation against Gaza, they have failed to a large extent. They can no more hide the powerful and horrendous images of the dead bodies of children and old people and the assault on people's homes. They are failing to hide the truth and large demonstrations calling on world to stop the genocide is manifestation of that.

But let me also say it is sad to see some reporters and media houses looking into the issue from a narrow prism to deny the reality on ground. But they do it at the peril of losing their credibility.

To know little is very dangerous and it is more so when the media is biased in projecting only one side of the story. We need to know the root of the problem and why there is violence and not merely report symptoms without focusing on the cause. The propaganda machine is trying to show the aggressor as a victim and condemn the victim for resisting the aggression. Balanced reporting is a challenge but the truth shall prevail.

The terminology used by mainstream media has come under sharp scrutiny lately. We usually hear the redundant platitudes of describing the killing of Palestinian civilians as "clashes". It has been the norm with most of the main-

stream media. How are people across the Arab and wider world taking it?

If you are following the events in occupied Palestine, you will notice the gradual changes of terminology dictated to media personnel by the Israeli authority — from "occupied territory" to "disputed" and now to "legitimate Jewish state" where the Palestinians are not welcome!

The challenge for Israel now will be to change public opinion that there's no two-state solution, it is a Jewish state surrounded by radical Islamic elements. Through this narrative they will justify the possession of nuclear weapons and shift their focus on Jordan as an alternative to a Palestinian state temporarily, before creating a Palestine in Iraq as per the first Zionist organization plan in their meeting a century ago where they set up the objectives of greater Israel from Euphrates to Nile.

Is there any credible alternative media available in the Arab world? If yes, what is their reach?

Unfortunately, most of the Arabic channels are least independent in their reporting and mostly reflect the opinion of the country where these channels are based. However, it is getting more transparent in telecasting from the ground and disseminating news all over. It is up to the media houses whether to use it or not. Many strategic study centers have conducted lots of studies in English. Credibility is relative, and you can rely on local reporters, bloggers, and others available on social media. We need to diversify our sources and make our own assessment and judgment based on facts and reliability.

How much support is there for a two-state solution in Palestine? Do Hamas and like minded parties, who do not recognize Israel's right to exist, offer any realistic solution?

We all know that no one can eliminate the other, and war is the last option. When peace becomes a strategic option for all stakeholders, then peace is possible. No one will throw the other in the sea. Therefore, we need to find a common ground for a permanent solution by implementing the UN Security Council resolutions in this regard. The right of Palestinian state is eternal and will be achieved. The Palestinians and Arabs are interested in comprehensive peace with Israel. A significant number of Israelis were interested in peace with the Arabs after the Madrid Peace Conference 1991, the accord with Palestinian authority (Oslo accord 1993) and the Wadi Araba Treaty with Jordan in 1994. But for the last 15 years the number of Israeli willing to have peace with Arabs is declining.

The conflict in Palestine has been a recurrent tragedy. Does the latest escalation bring us any closer to its end?

I think this latest tragedy reminded the international community of its moral responsibility to end the suffering and reach a settlement once and for all. The people of the region have been suffering for decades. The ongoing attacks and counter attacks bring more misery and may go out of hand if the assault is not stopped and other resistance forces will join and trigger a long war in West Asia. The world community has to wake up and end the oldest war in the world.

It is up to the Israeli's to make peace with the Palestinians and not force Arab countries to normalize relations by applying US pressure without finding a solution to the Palestine cause.

The Palestinians love their homeland and will never abandon it as they are sacrificing their lives to protect it and get their freedom. The world is changing; the regional changes after this assault no longer favor the right-wing government. We must join hands with the minority in Israel who are interested in peace with the Arabs, otherwise, it is an all-out war. This will be a lucrative opportunity for terrorist organizations and certain regional leaders to ride the wave and aggravate the situation and make it impossible to reconcile and live in peace and harmony.

The region is full of natural resources and more discoveries in the Mediterranean Sea of oil and gas that can be shared equally among neighbors. This is merely a wish in a greedy world. Denying the Palestinians their share of wealth is also part of the objectives to control the Gaza strip once again and re-occupy it at the cost of its long suffering people.

“To know little is very dangerous and it is more so when the media is biased in projecting only one side of the story. We need to know the root of the problem and why there is violence and not merely report symptoms without focusing on the cause. The propaganda machine is trying to show the aggressor as a victim and condemn the victim for resisting the aggression. Balanced reporting is a challenge but the truth shall prevail.”

Despite growing international outrage against Israeli actions in Palestine, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged that the offensive against the Gaza Strip will continue. What in your view makes him disregard international laws and public opinions with such contempt?

It is nothing but an aggression on people by a politician who doesn't believe in peace and has never recognized Palestinian's right of existence in the holy land. Benjamin Netanyahu is not a man of peace nor is he helping Israelis to live in peace and co-exist with Palestinians and Arab neighbors.

Why Netanyahu disregards International law is because Israel enjoys total backing of the United States. Its wars on innocent people are fought with sophisticated arms and arsenal provided by the US and its allies. It won't be wrong to say the US is solely responsible for allowing the Israeli

Jerusalem as its capital. But the peace initiative was then rejected by Israel.

Yes, you are right. It did give more incentives to the Prime Minister of Israel to take on the 1948 Palestinians and continue with ethnic cleansing policy and by extension, complete the project of turning historical Palestine into an Israeli Jewish state and expel remaining Palestinians.

Some experts say the resistance front's capability in not only withstanding but also confronting the Israeli war machine has exposed the regime's fragility. Do you agree?

History taught us that "Right is Might" and not the vice versa. There is no loss of right as long as you strive for it. The Palestinians will never succumb to atrocities and pressures. Killing and terrorizing acts by the Israeli army and Israel's

Study finds people are persuaded by social media messages, not view numbers

“People focused more on self-related factors - how they felt about the video - when considering how much influence it would have on others”

Agencies

People are more persuaded by the actual messages contained in social media posts than they are by how many others viewed the posts, a new study suggests.

Researchers found that when people watched YouTube videos either for or against e-cigarette use, their level of persuasion wasn't directly affected by whether the video said it was viewed by more than a million people versus by fewer than 20.

What mattered for persuasion was viewers' perception of the message as truthful and believable.

"There wasn't a bandwagon effect in which people were persuaded by a video just because a lot of other people watched it," said Hyunyi Cho, lead author of the study and professor of communication at The Ohio State University.

"The message itself was most important for persuasion."

The study will appear in the June 2021 issue of the journal *Media Psychology*.

The study involved 819 demographically diverse American adults aged 18-35.

Most of them were shown two YouTube videos either for or against vaping. The pro-vaping videos were commercials for e-cigarette brands. The anti-vaping videos were public service announcements produced by anti-smoking nonprofit organizations.

The researchers, though, manipulated the view numbers that participants saw for the videos. Participants saw view numbers either around 10, 100, 100,000 or 1,000,000.

Participants rated how persuasive the videos were to them: whether they affected their curiosity about e-cigarettes, positive attitude toward e-cigarette use, and susceptibility to using e-cigarettes in the future.

Results showed that participants were more persuaded when

they rated them as more truthful and believable. The number of views that the video had did not have a direct impact on how much they were persuaded.

Participants were also asked how much they thought the videos they watched would influence other young adults, Cho said.

Results showed that how participants themselves viewed the videos - whether they thought the videos were believable and truthful - was directly related to their estimation of the videos' impact on other people.

"People focused more on self-related factors - how they felt about the video - when considering how much influence it would have on others," Cho said.

"They concentrated less on other-focused factors - such as view numbers - as a reason why a video might be persuasive."

In addition, participants in the study didn't think that mass media would have as far of a reach as

social media would.

Some participants saw the videos in a mock TV condition rather than in the YouTube condition. Overall, participants in the TV condition estimated the videos would have fewer views than did the participants in the YouTube condition.

"Social media may be seen as more pervasive than mass media like television because sites like YouTube do not have the same geographic boundaries as mass media may have," Cho said.

Overall, the results suggest that people should not equate the popularity of YouTube videos and other social media posts with how many people find their messages persuasive or are persuaded by them, Cho said.

"We may choose to watch a YouTube video because it has a lot of views, but that is different from whether we are persuaded by the message," she said.

Researchers reveal where memories of familiar places are stored in brain

Agencies

A new study from Dartmouth College reveals that three regions of the brain in the posterior cerebral cortex, which the researchers call 'place-memory areas', form a link between the brain's perceptual and memory systems, which helps the brain to store in memories of familiar places.

The findings are published in *Nature Communications*.

"As we navigate our surroundings, information enters the visual cortex and somehow ends up as knowledge of where we are—the question is where this transformation into spatial knowledge occurs. We think that the place-memory areas might be where this happens," explains lead author Adam Steel, a Neukom Fellow with the department of psychology and brain sciences in the Robertson Lab at Dartmouth.

"When you look at the location of the brain areas that process visual scenes and those that process spatial memories, these place-memory areas literally form a bridge between the two systems. Each of the brain areas involved in visual processing is paired with a place-memory counterpart," Adam said.

For the study, an innovative methodology was employed. Participants were asked to perceive and recall places that they had been to in the real world during functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which produced high-resolution, subject-specific maps of brain activity.

Past studies on scene perception and memory have often used stimuli that participants knew of but had never visited, like famous landmarks, and have pooled data across many subjects. By mapping the brain activity of individual participants using real-world places that they had been to, researchers were able to untangle the brain's fine-grained organization.

In one experiment, 14 participants provided a list of people that they knew personally and places that they have visited in real life (e.g., their father or their childhood home).

Then, while in the fMRI scanner, the participants imagined that they were seeing those people or visiting those places. Comparing the brain activity between people and places revealed the place-memory areas. Importantly, when the researchers compared these newly identified regions to the brain areas that process visual scenes, the new regions were overlapping but distinct.



tinct.

"We were surprised," says Steel, "because the classic understanding is that the brain areas that perceive should be the same areas that are engaged during memory recall."

In another experiment, the team in-

vestigated whether the place-memory areas were involved in the recognition of familiar places. During fMRI scanning, participants were presented with panning images of familiar and unfamiliar real-world locations downloaded from Google Street View.

When the researchers looked at the neu-

ral activity, they found that the place-memory areas were more active when images of familiar places were shown. The scene-perception areas did not show the same enhancement when viewing familiar places. This suggests that the place-memory areas play an important role in recognizing familiar locations.

"Our findings help explain how a generic image of a clock tower becomes one that we recognize, such as Baker-Berry Library's tower here on Dartmouth's campus," says Steel.

"It's thrilling to discover a new set of brain areas," says senior author Caroline Robertson, an assistant professor of psychological and brain sciences at Dartmouth. "Learning how the mind is organized is at the heart of the quest of understanding what makes us human."

"The place-memory network provides a new framework for understanding the neural processes that drive memory-guided visual behaviours, including navigation," explains Robertson.

The research team is currently using virtual reality technology to explore how representations in the place-memory areas evolve as people become more familiar with new environments.

Claims Linking Covid With 5G Baseless, Say Telecom Operators



NEW DELHI: Telecom industry body COAI has approached the information technology ministry for removal of fake and misleading messages from social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter linking spread of Covid to 5G technology.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), whose members include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, said the claims linking 5G with coronavirus are baseless as 5G networks have not yet been installed in the country and even 5G trials are yet to be started by the telecom operators.

In a letter dated May 15 to MeitY Additional Secretary Rajendra Kumar, COAI Director General SP Kochhar said: "To safeguard the national interest, we request your good office to kindly instruct all the

social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc, to remove all such posts and misleading campaigns from their platforms on an urgent basis."

People have been sharing audio and video messages on social media platforms in which 5G towers are being blamed for rise in casualties across the country even though none of the companies have installed 5G technology anywhere in India. Video messages show that people convinced with the claim want to bring down mobile towers.

"We would hereby like to highlight that these types of rumours have spread over the past two weeks, mainly in semi-urban and rural areas.

"There has been a rise in such misinformation mainly in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab. We are concerned that this misleading and false claim/ information might spread to other parts of the country as well," Kochhar said.

The DoT has also denied the claim of linking the Covid to the 5G technology as false, and said it has no scientific basis. — PTI

Royal Enfield To Recall Around 2.37 Lakh Units To Fix Faulty Ignition Coil



NEW DELHI: Mid-sized motorcycle maker Royal Enfield on Wednesday said it is recalling around 2,36,966 units of Classic, Bullet, and Meteor models in India and various international markets to replace defective ignition coil.

The company has discovered a defect in one of the parts used across some of the motorcycle models it manufactures and sells, Royal Enfield said in a statement.

The defect is in the ignition coil that can cause misfiring, reduced vehicle performance, and in rare cases, an electric short circuit, it added. The company will be calling in close to 2,36,966 motorcycles of the Classic, Bullet, and Meteor models, Royal Enfield noted.

Of these, the company will call in Meteor motorcycles manufactured and sold between December 2020 and April 2021, and the Classic and Bullet manufactured and sold between January and April 2021, it added.

"These motorcycles will undergo inspection and replacement of the said defective part if required. We estimate that less than 10 per cent of these motorcycles will require replacement of the part," the

company, which is a part of Eicher Motors, noted.

The proactive recall action will be applicable to Meteor, Classic, and Bullet model motorcycles sold in India, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia between the respective time periods mentioned above, it added.

The company said the defect was discovered during routine internal testing and the issue has been clearly identified and isolated to specific batches of material sourced from its external supplier between December 2020 and April 2021.

While the issue is rare and does not impact all motorcycles manufactured during the above-mentioned period, in keeping with safety regulations and as a precautionary measure, the company has decided to undertake a proactive, company-initiated recall of select motorcycles models produced in the above mentioned time period, it added.

Royal Enfield service teams, and/or local dealerships will reach out to consumers whose motorcycle vehicle identification number (VIN) number falls within the manufacturing period mentioned above, it said. PTI

LG Releases Finance Dept's Annual Report

GST Revenue Collections in FY 2020-21 Shows Positive Growth



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today released "Annual Report- Promoting Good Governance" compiled by the Finance Department showcasing major initiatives undertaken by the said Department during 2020-21 to bring transparency and accountability in the execution of the public works.

Sh. Arun Kumar Mehta, Financial Commissioner, Finance Department; and Sh. Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Lt Governor were present on the occasion.

The report in the form of e-Book provides insight into reforms, steps implemented by the Finance Department to institutionalize prudence in financial management in J&K which has truly transformed the Union Territory.

The document captures the essence of reforms such as online processing of bills through PaySys, streamlining of GST, e-stamping, e-GRAS, e-auction of Liquor licences for retail outlets, digital payments, implementation of GeM, path-breaking reforms in J&K Bank, publication of important manuals relating to Budget and Audit, Back to Village and

My Town My Pride initiatives and 100% physical verification which is most vital initiative to ensure implementation of projects without cost and time over-runs.

"Promoting good governance in the financial management has been one of the core objectives of the Government. Financial system in the Union Territory of J&K is one of the most transparent systems anywhere and is amongst the key changes that have taken roots in the Union Territory", observed the Lt Governor.

Highlighting major reforms taken by the Government to bring transparency in the financial system and making it more robust, the Lt Governor said that implementation of transformative reforms such as BEAMS (Budget Estimation and Allocation Monitoring System), which enables online budgetary process and timely release of funds against approved works, online submission of bills through J&K PaySys, Mandatory Administrative Approvals, Technical Sanctions and e-Tendering, digital payments, GFR, GeM etc have brought financial systems in J&K at par with any other progressive system in the country.

Unprecedented levels of transparency have been achieved through EMPOWERMENT (Enabling Monitoring and Public Overview of Works Being Executed & Resources for Meaningful Transparency) which is a web portal hosting all the works being executed in the UT of J&K and allows public oversight of all works under execution, observed the Lt Governor.

Publication of pictorial e-compendiums related to projects completed under Back to Village, District Capex, UT Capex and JKIDFC is a symbol of desire of the Government to engage with the Citizens. This is the first time in the Union Territory of J&K that people are able to oversee works being executed in their areas and progress monitored on real-time basis. During 2020-21, more than 18,000 works were available on the EMPOWERMENT portal for the first time in J&K for public viewing to bring real grass root empowerment, he added.

"Our Government believes in the mantra of four P's - Peace, Progress, Prosperity, and People-first, for the holistic development and to make Jammu and Kashmir AatmaNirbhar", said the Lt Governor.

Four-Fifths Of Income Losses During First Covid Wave Incurred By Private Sector: Report

MUMBAI: Almost 80 per cent of all income losses during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020 were incurred by the private sector in India, while in many other countries the entire loss was on respective governments, a report said on Wednesday.

While the Centre had announced a Rs 21 lakh crore Covid-19 relief package, comprising 10 per cent of the GDP, the actual financial support was only about 2 per cent of GDP, as the rest was all credit-driven.

"Almost four-fifths of all income losses during the pandemic in 2020 were incurred by the private sector in the country, while the government sector bore only about a fifth of the losses.

"This is in stark contrast to Australia, Canada, and the US, where the government sector incurred all the losses and eventually ended up transferring net resources to the private sector," Motilal Oswal Financial Services analysts Nikhil Gupta and Yaswi



Agarwal said in the report.

However, the private sector faced losses between 20 per cent and 60 per cent in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Britain, they added.

The income losses incurred by the Indian government by far was the least at only about 20 per cent, while it was 100 per cent in the US and Canada. In Australia, the public sector loss according to the report was 200 per cent.

Even in South Africa, the only other emerging nation included in the study, the government suffered all income losses, while private sector income was broadly unchanged, the report said.

Within the private sector, while the fiscal support made up for more than lost household (disposable) income in Australia, Canada and the US, households in India and South Africa incurred 61-68 per cent of economic losses during the year.

The corporate sector suffered higher income losses in France and Spain to the tune of 30-35 per cent and gained massively in Australia and South Africa due to the fiscal support. The corporate sector in other nations, including India, saw moderate losses in the range of 12-16 per cent, while it was broadly balanced in Germany.

"This clearly reveals that due to extremely low fiscal support in India, the income losses for the private sector (especially households) were much higher compared to other major nations. And with India's private sector bearing such a large share of income losses, we are skeptical of a strong rebound in growth, as and when it happens," it said. — PTI

Govt Hikes Subsidy On DAP Fertiliser By 140%; A Historic Decision, Says PMO

In a major pro-farmer decision, the Centre on Wednesday hiked the subsidy on DAP fertiliser by 140 per cent, costing the exchequer an additional Rs 14,775 crore, in a bid to ensure the soil nutrient is available to farmers at old rates despite a sharp rise in global prices.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to a PMO statement. "Government is committed to improving the lives of farmers. Therefore, despite increase in global prices, we have decided to make available the fertiliser at old rate," Modi tweeted in Hindi.

After urea, Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is the most widely used used fertiliser in the country.

"A historic decision was taken to increase the subsidy for

should get fertilisers at old rates despite the international rise in prices", the statement said.

The PM also said his government is committed to the welfare of farmers and will take all efforts to ensure that they do not have to face the brunt of price rise, the PMO added.

According to the statement, the high-level meeting discussed in detail the increase in domestic fertiliser rates due to the rising global prices of raw materials such as phosphoric acid and ammonia used in the making of DAP fertiliser.

Recently, global prices of phosphoric acid and ammonia have gone up by 60-70 per cent. So the actual price of DAP is now Rs 2,400 per bag, which was to be sold by fertiliser companies at Rs 1,900 after considering a subsidy of Rs 500, it said.

Last year, the actual price of



DAP fertiliser from Rs 500 per bag to Rs 1200 per bag, which is an increase of 140 per cent.With today's decision, farmers will continue to get a DAP bag for Rs 1200," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Despite the rise in international market prices of DAP, it has been decided to continue selling it at the old price of Rs 1,200 per bag, it said.

"The central government has decided to bear all the burden of price hike. The amount of subsidy per bag has never been increased so much at once," it added.

The government spends about Rs 80,000 crore on subsidies for chemical fertilisers every year. With the increase in subsidy for DAP, the government will spend an additional Rs 14,775 crore as subsidy in the Kharif season of this year, it said.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister "stressed that farmers

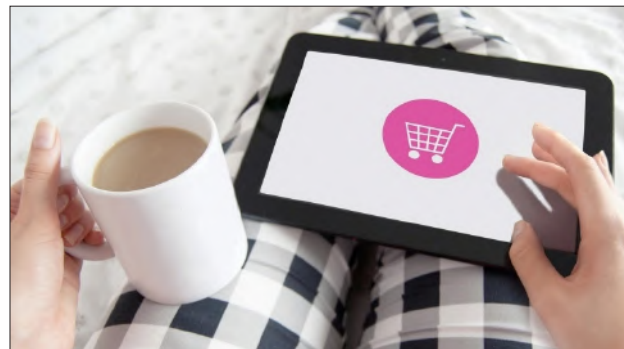
DAP was Rs 1,700 per bag, on which the central government was giving a subsidy of Rs 500. The companies were, therefore, selling the fertiliser to farmers for Rs 1,200 per bag, it added.

This is the second major decision in the farmers' interest, after directly transferring Rs 20,667 crore to farmers' accounts under the PM-KISAN scheme on the day of Akshay Tritiya, the statement added.

Retail prices of non-urea fertilisers such as DAP, Muriate of Potash (MoP) and NPK are decontrolled and determined by manufacturers, while the Centre gives them fixed subsidies each year.

Recently, the government had requested fertiliser companies to sell old stock of non-urea fertilisers at old rates in the interest of farmers. However, some companies had hiked the rates of DAP, taking cues from the global market.

Government Asks E-Commerce Companies To Appoint Nodal Officer For Compliance With Consumer Protection Rules



Agencies

The government has asked e-commerce companies to appoint a nodal officer to ensure compliance with the new rules on consumer protection.

The rules are applicable to e-commerce entities registered in India, as well as those registered abroad but offering goods and services to Indian consumers.

This new sub-rule, which has been included in the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, has come into effect from May 17, according to a notification issued by the consumer affairs ministry.

These rules were made under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

"...it (e-commerce entity) shall appoint a nodal officer or

an alternate senior designated functionary who is resident in India, to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Act or the rules made thereunder," the notification said.

The rules apply to all e-commerce entities incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 or under the Companies Act, 2013 or a foreign company covered under clause (42) of section 2 of the Companies Act, 2013 or an office, branch or agency outside India owned or controlled by a person resident in India as provided in the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, it added.

The new rules for e-commerce entities were first notified in July 2020. Their violations attract penal action under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

SHORT TAKES

Hybrid Seed Varieties Augment Vegetable Cultivation In Green House



SHOPIAN: The Incharge Hi-Tech, Department of Agriculture, Shopian, Mohammad Hussain today said that the hybrid seed varieties have shown a major boost in vegetable cultivation leading the common people, especially the cultivators, to amass various benefits from the same.

He said, since the time people started to use hybrid seeds, both quality and quantity of the vegetables have been on an increase at a large. Major benefit of these varieties stands highlighted at producing maximum vegetables within a limited space of land, he said adding consequently, instead of using traditional seeds, people are opting for hybrid seed varieties for their vegetable nurseries and gardens.

Hussain said that owing to the evident population growth, these seeds have become essential for the farmers who aim to enhance their 'good quality' vegetable production. The hybrid varieties are projected to be the best available option to fulfill the vegetable demand of the district.

He further exhorted the farmers of the district to come forward and make use of hybrid varieties in your farms for doubling the income.

Google Announces New Privacy Settings, Ai Tools And Android 12 Beta

Google has announced a slew of new features including new privacy settings, AI tools and release of the first beta of Android 12 that will become part of its products over the course of the year. Kicking off Google I/O 2021 in a virtual format from the Mountain View campus, Google CEO Sundar Pichai also announced additions to Google Workspace that will enable richer collaboration, especially in view of the pandemic that has driven enterprises across the globe to embrace remote working solutions.

Pichai said that COVID-19 has deeply affected every community over the past year, and "places like Brazil, and my home country of India, are now going through their most difficult moments yet".

"COVID-19 has deeply affected every community, it's also inspired coordination between public and private sectors, and across



international borders. At Google, we launched products and initiatives to help one another through this time - to help students and teachers continue their learning from anywhere, to help small businesses adapt and grow, and to get emergency relief and vaccines to communities in need," he said on

late Tuesday night.

Pichai and other Google executives laid out the roadmap for tools and features that will be rolled out through the year across products like Search, Lens, Photos, Maps and Shopping among others.

For enhanced privacy, Google is introducing a new "quick delete" option that will help delete the last 15 minutes of Search history with a single tap from the Google Account Menu. It is also introducing Location History reminders in Maps Timeline.

"Locked Folder" is a new passcode-protection feature in Google Photos where select photos can be saved separately and these photos won't show up as users scroll through their grid or in shared albums. The feature will be introduced to Google Pixel phones first, and more Android devices throughout the year.

Police Gets Hi-End Command Vehicles For Anti-militancy Ops

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir police on Wednesday inducted hi-end command vehicles to its fleet which will be used as a communication and operational hub during emergency situations, particularly in anti-militancy operation.

The command vehicles are bullet proof and fully air conditioned and are equipped with high resolution CCTV/PTZ cameras providing 360° view of the area to the cops and officers while sitting inside the vehicle. The vehicle can also provide a comfortable stay of officers during the time of operations.

The vehicle comes with a three-level power supply system which can sustain for a long duration. Another feature of the vehicle is an additional powerhouse (Genset).

"It shall be used as a communication/operational hub during any emergency particularly in anti-militancy operations," a police spokesperson said Wednesday.

He said that the Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh on Wednesday dedicated operations command vehicles, equipped with modern technology to Jammu and Kashmir Police in a function held at Police Headquarters Jammu.

According to the police spokesperson, the DGP on this occasion inspected the command vehicles and appreciated the suggestions made by officers for further upgrading of these vehicles.

"He said that command vehicles are equipped with all modern gadgets



which will be extremely useful during different anti-insurgency operations," he said.

"He said that safety of our officers and jawans is on our top priority and added that providing additional secure mobility and safety gears would surely increase the efficiency and capabilities of our dedicated force, working on anti-militancy front," he added.

Singh, as per police spokesperson also chaired a meeting of top officers wherein he reviewed the response of police to the 2nd wave of COVID-19.

"He directed the officers to take all the necessary measures in assisting the administration and implementing the government directives on ground to prevent its spread. He expressed his satisfaction over the ongoing vaccination drive. He also directed the officers to provide COVID care facilities to the family members of the personnel who get infected by COVID," he said.

On this occasion, the ADGSP, Mukesh Singh and M.K Sinha briefed the DGP regarding various measures taken to restrict the spread of COVID. He also apprised the DGP about the security scenario of Jammu Zone, the police spokesperson said.

Adv Bhatnagar Suggests Door-To-Door Survey In Kashmir To Trace Symptomatic Patients

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar today stressed that it is important to efficiently manage the monitoring and treatment of COVID patients from home isolation through the public healthcare system right up to the tertiary care stage.

The Advisor stated this while chairing a meeting of senior officers and doctors through video conferencing to review COVID-19 Containment and treatment Management in urban, semi urban, rural and tribal populated areas of Jammu and Kashmir and future strategies for management of the Pandemic including preparation required for the future.

"There should be clear responsibility, accountability and follow up at each stage and we must improve contact tracing, identification of symptomatic patients so that there is targeted testing and timely isolation and treatment", Advisor Bhatnagar said.

The Advisor also emphasized on effectively enforcing the Corona curfew to reduce spread.

Advisor Bhatnagar while highlighting that door-to-door survey is being conducted in Jammu division to trace symptomatic patients, asked the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir to consider a similar exercise.

He also directed all Deputy Commissioners and Chief Medical Officers to improve the functioning of Covid control rooms in their respective districts so that home isolated COVID positive patients are contacted regularly and can be monitored and given medical care as well as teleconsultation.

Advisor Bhatnagar further

directed the officers that the facilities at District Hospitals Community Health Centers (CHCs), triage centers and PHCs should be upgraded and made effective so that appropriate level of patient care is provided depending on the severity of the disease there itself and referrals to tertiary hospitals be done on need basis.

He also called upon all the Principals of GMCs, Directors of Health Services Jammu/Kashmir to ensure that treatment protocols are followed with proper delineation of responsibility and accountability so that best outcomes are achieved.

He complimented them for the outstanding work being done by them during the pandemic and said that the second wave has presented new challenges.

Earlier, Financial Commissioner Health and Medical Education, Atal Dulloo gave a detailed presentation over COVID-19 Containment and Management in peri-urban, rural and tribal population across the Union Territory.

He informed the meeting that a gradual ingress of Covid-19 infection is now being seen in peri-urban, rural and tribal Population, so it is important to ensure that community-based services and primary level health infrastructure in these areas are well-equipped to manage the situation.

He proposed a two way strategy for the containment of the Corona Virus in these areas which include: Surveillance, screening, isolation & referral and Monitoring of Active Cases in Home Isolation.

He informed that symptomatic cases could be triaged at village level by tele-consultation with Medical officer in charge or Mid Level Health Provider (MLHP) besides MLHPs and ANMs to be trained in performing RAT. It was

given out that RAT should be made available at all public health facilities including Sub-Centres (SCs)/ Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs).

He said that contact tracing of cases in community settings should be done while all those persons who have a travel history should be followed up after 5 days for any symptoms and tested if suspected.

Mobile Testing Vans can be utilized for covering 3-4 villages a day; active monitoring of Home isolation cases in rural areas; home Isolation kit including required medicines (as prescribed) and detailed pamphlet should be provided along with oximeter to all COVID Positive cases.

He said that a regular follow-up of home isolation patients through visits and telephone by frontline worker/ volunteers/ teachers duly following IPC practices should be done with immediate referral of patients to higher centers if there is difficulty in breathing, SpO2 <90%, chest pain or mental confusion.

FC also informed that rural areas may plan a minimum of 30-bedded Covid Care Centre (CCC) with make-shift facilities under supervision of PHCs/CHCs in schools, community halls or Panchayat buildings.

With regard to training of staff, he informed that training of the nodal officers, support staff and volunteers on basics of COVID, infection prevention control, use of PPEs, Medical waste management, use of infrared thermo-meters etc should be imparted on regular basis for better management of Covid.

On Clinical Management front, Dulloo said that people at CCC should be given basic advice of management of fever, cough and running nose besides warm gargle and steam

inhalation should also be advised twice a day and consult PHC doctor for treatment with low dose oral steroid if symptoms persist beyond 7 days.

"In case of oxygen saturation level less than 90% or shortness of breath, patient should be put on oxygen support immediately and transport for referral should be arranged", he maintained in the meeting.

The FC further said that Telemedicine services may also be utilized for providing post-covid follow-up care and mental health support.

On Community mobilization and Behavior Change communication, he added that the key stakeholders within the village community be mobilized for COVID-19 management and a checklist for community preparedness for COVID-19 response can be referred to, which is shared by MOHFW, GOI and health department.

He added that Block Development Officers (BDO) will identify mentors from health, ICDS to mentor the team at Gram Panchayat level, mobilization and involvement of SHGs for creating awareness for COVID appropriate behaviors and for providing essential services in their respective blocks.

Preparations for rapid COVID vaccination were also discussed during the meeting and it was highlighted that high coverage of vaccination is a pivotal strategy for preventing future surge. It was also said that appropriate strategies for achieving high coverage with COVID vaccination in rural areas need to be devised.

The meeting was informed that ASHA / AWW along with community leaders can mobilize beneficiaries for vaccination and proper IEC efforts to be made to address vaccine hesitancy of public.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Arrangements In Place

home and only critical patients are referred to triage centre when needed," he added.

He further said that the Div Com urged people to adhere to Covid related SOPs and guidelines in letter and spirit terming it an imperative and effective way to stop the spread of the virus.

He further appealed people to remain watchful and comply with all government "instructions religiously for containment of Covid-19 during the ongoing second wave," the official spokesperson said.

Earlier, the Div Com inspected District Hospital Bandipora that has been designated at Covid Level-III Hospital, Triage Centre, Oxygen Plant, Dialysis Centre and District Control Room and took a detailed stock of medical infrastructure besides the augmentations being made for effective mitigation of the pandemic here. At District Hospital Bandipora, he inspected the newly commissioned 1000 LPM oxygen plant and reviewed its functioning briefly.

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Dr. Owais Ahmad, Chief Medical Officer Dr Bashir Ahmad, Medical Superintendent, Nodal Officer COVID Hospital Kashmir, Deputy Director Health, Nodal Officer COVID Bandipora, District Epidemiologist and other concerned Officers accompanied the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, the official spokesperson said.

62 More Corona

59-year-old woman died at CD hospital here, nine days after she was admitted to facility, they said.

The officials said that a 70-year-old man from Wadwan Budgam died at SKIMS Bemina, four days after admitted to the facility.

A 45-year-old man from Litter Pulwama and an 80-year-old man from Inder died at District Hospital Pulwama while a man from NS Pora died ten days after he was admitted to District hospital Kulgam, they said.

Regarding the fresh cases detected on Wednesday, officials said that 1375 were reported from Jammu division and 2594 from Kashmir Valley, taking the total number of people infected by the virus across J&K to 255888.

Giving district-wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 675, Baramulla 371, Budgam 411, Pulwama 171, Kupwara 190, Anantnag 311, Bandipora 113, Ganderbal 118, Kulgam 149, Shopian 85, Jammu 493, Udhampur 154, Rajouri 142, Doda 64, Kathua 158, Samba 112, Kishtwar 25, Poonch 106, Ramban 68 and Reasi 53 new cases of coronavirus.

Moreover, they said, 4338 people have recovered in the last 24 hours and now the number of active cases stands at 50494 in J&K—20972 in Jammu and 29522 in Kashmir.

J&K To Have

and panchayat representatives.

In a series of tweets, Sinha directed the deputy commissioners and health department to ensure a COVID care centre in every panchayat of Jammu and Kashmir as many households may not have the option for isolation of COVID positive patients.

"Each Centre has one oxygen-supported bed for immediate patient care. Rs 1 Lakh approved from District Capex Budget for creation of facilities in School, Community hall or Panchayat ghar in consultation with nearest Health Centre and Panchayat representatives," Sinha said in the tweets.

The centres would be equipped with necessary medical kits and linked to the nearest health centre. People needing isolation would be identified by the panchayats and concerned medical staff besides ASHA workers, Sinha said.

"Mobile testing vans to be utilised to cover villages for testing with the help of PRIs and volunteers. Medical officers to establish

referral linkage with dedicated Covid Health Centres and dedicated Covid Hospitals," Sinha tweeted.

He said ambulance services in rural areas have oxygen support for safely transporting the patients to COVID-dedicated hospitals. PTI

Covid-II Wave Highly

him which is cause of great concern.

Speaking about the Covid infected people, Dr Singh said they need not to worry, rather it is wise if they consult a doctor over phone through helplines soon after developing symptoms besides isolating themselves from the rest of the family to prevent its spread.

"They should immediately get their RAT done, and if it turns negative despite being symptomatic they should then go for the RT-PCR test. Till the time results are out, they should undertake medication, check temperature after every six hours and also check saturation levels after four hours and keep themselves hydrated besides taking a protein rich diet" he said.

He also said that if any of a patient's family members develops symptoms, they too should get tested.

"Otherwise if they develop no symptoms, they should undergo testing after a gap of five days and till that period even if they are asymptomatic their test can come as positive," Dr Singh said.

Talking over the isolation period and its protocols, the senior doctor said that the patients should isolate themselves for 10 days to two weeks and till that period remain in touch with the concerned doctor and apprise him of the recorded temperature and saturation levels.

He said in case the saturation levels decrease below 90, the doctor's advice will be to visit a triage centre where after proper check-up and testing (in case required) the patient shall be discharged or referred to hospital (as per health status) for further treatment.

"The people suffering from decreased saturation levels and having the facility of Oxygen Concentrator and Cylinder at home, upon consultation with a doctor can maintain saturation level in between 93 and 94 for stable saturation levels," he said.

Dr Singh further said that the Coronavirus is a biphasic disease, the first phase comes in the first week after contracting the virus and during this period some of the patients develop fever and other related symptoms.

"While in second phase that commences with the beginning of second week, fever recurs in most of the patients and some of the patients also develop hyper inflammation (inflammation or swelling in veins) and there remains risk of blood clots and lung injury," he said, adding that in such case if saturation levels also drop in patients the patients are advised to visit hospitals where X-ray/ CT Scan is conducted and accordingly treatment is started.

"The patients that are discharged after their Oxygen saturation levels are normal and no longer have fever should still wear double masks at home and avoid direct contact with family members till they recuperate fully," Dr Singh said.

He also advised that people should adhere to three basic protocols of Covid-19 viz. hand washing, maintaining social distance and wearing masks to avoid transmission/ contracting of virus.

"Wearing double surgical masks or N95 masks is more effective to prevent contracting of virus besides using a face shield while in crowded places is also very important to prevent contracting virus through eyes" he added.

Strongly advocating for early vaccination, Dr Singh said that the last course of action through which we can control this pandemic is vaccination and everybody above 18 years of

age should undergo vaccination.

Regarding the third wave, he said if we do not adhere to SOPs, undergo vaccination and achieve herd immunity through vaccination, the virus may come again in a different form which can have more dangerous consequences.

40 Oxygen Cylinders

total cylinders that forty cylinders which were to be back to Srinagar have gone missing.

"The absence of cylinders was brought to the notice of Chief Medical Officer, who accordingly intimidated the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara," an official said.

"After a consensus, the CMO concerned immediately suspended three staffers – Storekeepers – besides ordering a full-fledged probe to fix the responsibility against the erring employees," he added.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara Imam-ud-Din said that the matter pertaining to the missing of oxygen cylinders from the SDH has been brought to his notice.

"It has tentatively been learnt that forty oxygen cylinders have gone missing from the hospital following which an enquiry has been launched to fix the responsibility," he said, adding that three employees in charge of stores for oxygen cylinders have been placed under suspension.

"The things will be more clear once the enquiry is completed," he said, adding "If it happens that the suspended staffers are indicted post enquiry, due recoveries will be made from them."

He also asked the employees to properly discharge their duties and utilize the government assets properly for the larger benefits of society. (GNS)

PIL Against

counsel, Syed Tassaduq Hussain, has challenged the "legality" of the PSA and seeks its scraping. "PSA is illegal because it contravenes 44th (1979) amendment to the constitution of India. Union of India was bound to bring this amendment into force," the PIL highlights.

While the PIL points out that for last 48 years amendment to Article 22 has not been brought into force, it seeks direction from the court to the Union of India for bringing into force the same.

"Section 8 of the PSA should be declared illegal because the government has to approve the detention but it cannot approve without hearing the (detainee)," the petitioner pleads.

Underscoring that "power to detain is power of the state" the petition says that a "divisional commissioner or district magistrate cannot detain a person".

Moreover the senior lawyer submits that the detainee cannot be moved from one place of detention without show cause. The petitioner is relying on a judgment of the House of Lords in England which, he submits, still holds good.

The petitioner has also raised the issue of legal aid and according to him the state is bound to provide it to a detainee booked under PSA.

"Where the state detains a person under PSA, it has a duty under article 22 of the constitution read with articles 20 and 21 to provide legal aid to the (detainee)," the senior advocate says. (GNS)

Cows Inside

Mussarat Islam immediately ordered an inquiry by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) who, in his report on Tuesday, revealed that the video has been surreptitiously shot.

As per the report, the cows were deliberately huddled inside the OPD after breaking the lock of the gate as it was a Sunday to malign the image of the hospital administration.

The video has been stage-managed by taking advantage of the open main gate in view of the

ongoing construction work with the sole objective to mislead the general public and falsely showcase a Covid Care Centre where the entry is totally restricted and manned by a police component round-the-clock, the CMO said in his report.

Taking note of the inquiry report, the officials said a complaint has been lodged with Ramban police station so that the miscreants who shot the video are booked under the relevant provisions of the law.

J&K's Financial

systems in J&K at par with any other progressive systems in the country.

Unprecedented levels of transparency have been achieved through EMPOWERMENT (enabling monitoring and public overview of works being executed & resources for meaningful Transparency), which is a web portal that hosts all the works being executed in the UT and allows public oversight of all works under execution, observed Sinha.

Our government believes in the mantra of four P's - Peace, Progress, Prosperity, and People-first, for holistic development and to make Jammu and Kashmir Atmanirbhar," he said.

IAS Officer Shahid

posted as the administrative secretary, Tribal Affairs Department.

In view of a surge in COVID-19 cases in Jammu, Choudhary was deployed with the Health and Medical Education Department and stationed at Jammu for overseeing the Jammu and Kashmir administration's efforts in containing the pandemic.

"Choudhary suffered a minor myocardial infarction overnight and has been admitted in the Government Medical College Hospital," an official said.

The doctors attending him stated that he is "out of danger".

Choudhary was the deputy commissioner of Srinagar till recently and was praised for his work in containing the pandemic in the district.

As soon as the news about his ailment came to light, people took to social media to pray for his speedy recovery. (PTI)

'Angels In Apron'

Most of the nurses working in different hospitals in Kashmir capital have been reportedly engaged on academic arrangement basis — many of them working for decades.

"Not that we're complaining about it when we're supposed to take care of our people, but working hard in these unprecedented times should be duly respected," says Sheikh Gowhera, another nurse catering a 'warlike situation' in Kashmir today.

"At the back of our distressed minds, job insecurity keeps haunting us. We remain at the forefront of this crisis and yet there's no basic facility like bus service for the nurses. It becomes very difficult to travel in the lockdown."

Most of these nurses, including males, work four days a week, and then go for isolation. They hardly visit home for the fear of infecting their family members.

"Last year, I infected my mother with my home visits," Gowhera says. "My mother gasped for breath for over 15 days in hospital. Those were the worst days of my life."

But despite these personal pains and perils, they stand strong to tackle another pandemic phase in the valley.

"Sometimes patients get stable and within no time their conditions get worse and they die before you," Gowhera continues to detail her daily duty.

"As a healthcare specialist, you get frustrated when you can't save lives!"

And what's equally adding to this mental breakdown situation is the packed wards of Kashmir hospital today where attendants are

getting desperate for beds for their breathless patients.

"Entire 52 beds in my ward are occupied," Gowhera says. "The attendees wait for the death of any patient so that they can occupy that bed."

At the end of this stressful shift, these nurses end up losing their sleep.

Like others, Insha keeps thinking about her patients and often spends sleepless nights.

Engaged on an academic arrangement, Insha says, her job is more difficult than other nurses.

"I work in the Cardiology Section of SMHS, which is being treated as non-Covid ward but we get the patients with heart-related diseases and you can't ask them to do Covid test first, because your first priority is to stabilise them," Insha says.

"It's difficult to wear PPE kits in the ward because you can't fret critical patients by making them assume that they've landed in a Covid ward."

However, people are duly recognizing these valiant nursing efforts in the current crisis situation.

"After seeing patients, doctors just prescribe medicines, but nurses execute the rest of the process and take care of them until they get stabilised completely," says Mushtaq Misgar, an attendant of a Covid patient in SMHS hospital.

"Even if a patient needs immediate attention or just a few encouraging words, nurses are there for them round-the-clock. They're saving breaths with their efforts in the hospitals today. For me, they're angels in apron and the backbone of the hospitals who remain at the service of the society at this crucial juncture."

Back in her ward, Sheeraza is feeling another anxiety attack with the demise of another patient. She takes Petril to stabilize her condition and carry on with her job.

"When you nurse patients, you naturally tend to develop bonds with them," the numb nurse says.

"And when some of them can't make it, they feel a personal loss to you and shake you beyond words."

BSF Nabs Pak

into this side from across the IB under the cover of darkness and was challenged by the Indian border guards," an official said.

He said BSF fired a few rounds, resulting in a bullet injury to the intruder in his back.

The intruder was arrested and was being treated for the bullet injury at a BSF hospital, the official said, adding further details are awaited. (PTI)

Woman Dies

Meanwhile, the body of the deceased woman was handed over to her family members for burial after completing necessary medico-legalities, reports added.

Police Officer Dies

Wednesday. He was shifted to Government Medical College Anantnag where from doctors referred him to SKIMS Soura.

Quoting sources, the report said that the police officer died in the hospital after 15 days.

The deceased ASI hails from Tangmarg area of Barmulla district.

Rape Accused

April 10, 2012, but the accused evaded trial to escape conviction by jumping the bail.

On June 2, the court issued non-bailable warrants to arrest him but he could not be traced for the last five years, the official said.

He said Reasi police developed a specific input and finally arrested him from Batmaloo area of Srinagar.

The official said the accused is the tenth absconder arrested by Reasi police in the last one month.



AFTER THE TRIALS WERE OVER AND SONAM HAD EARNED berth in the Indian team with a win over Sakshi Malik, Neta ji (WFI President BB Sharan) said, 'it would have been a big mistake if we had not agreed on Sonam's appearance in the trials',

WTC FINAL | What Happens In Case Of A Draw Or Wash-Out? Team India Awaits ICC Ruling

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: What happens if next month's World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand ends in a draw? Or a tie? Or worse, a washout?

The Indian cricket team is eagerly awaiting a response to this and other questions concerning the 'Playing Conditions' for the marquee clash in Southampton from June 18 to 22.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is expected to release the 'Playing Conditions' in the "coming days".

"Since this is not another bilateral series Test match, we need to know about the playing conditions. There are three basic pointers that we need to know," a senior BCCI official privy to the Indian team's requirements told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"What happens in case of a draw, tie or an eventual wash-out without at least one innings of both teams not being completed," he added.

"The ICC will be publishing the Playing Conditions in coming days. We can't put a date but I believe they will send it soon." Indian Team To Do Quarantine In Southampton During Eng vs NZ Test

The Indian team, after reaching London, early next month is expected to leave immediately for Southampton where it will be in quarantine during the England versus New Zealand Test match at the Ageas Bowl.

"Yes, India will be in Southampton only when New Zealand and England play the first of their two Tests. We expect ICC to give an idea of the duration of hard or soft quarantine in the next few days.

"Since it's an ICC event, the final notification needs to come from them," the source said.

The Indian team is hoping to train during its soft quarantine but negotiations are still on with regards to duration of quarantine.

Mumbai-Based Players To Join Local Bio-Bubble On May 24 While the likes of Mayank



SINCE THIS IS NOT ANOTHER BILATERAL SERIES TEST match, we need to know about the playing conditions. There are three basic pointers that we need to know," a senior BCCI official privy to the Indian team's requirements told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Agarwal, Ravichandran Ashwin, bowling coach Bharat Arun on Wednesday arrived in Mumbai on a charter flight from Chen-

nai, Mohammed Siraj, men's team fielding coach R Sridhar, women's Test and ODI captain Mithali Raj will all be boarding

from Hyderabad. However, all those living in Mumbai, Pune and adjoining areas can join the team bubble

on May 24 like men's team skipper Virat Kohli, his respective red and white ball deputies Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma, and women's team batter Jemimah Rodrigues.

Even KL Rahul, who is recovering from an appendicitis operation is in Mumbai and expected to join the bubble on May 24.

BCCI has deployed three charter flights -- from Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai -- for both male and female cricketers. All those who are not in these three metro cities are supposed to take a private car and reach the destinations for their respective flights.

A few who wanted to fly commercial with their negative reports have been allowed.

"Also the rule for boarding a charter flight is that even the driver of the private car needs to quarantine three days before the journey and have a negative RT-PCR report.

"There was no reason for this clarification but when former players, who have played at the

highest level, amplify rumours on social media, you are left with no choice," a senior official said.

"Each and every member of the men's and women's team are aware of travel details," he added.

All players, irrespective of whether they are entering on Wednesday or next Monday, are expected to carry three RT-PCR negative results and there will be three more tests on alternate days.

Before boarding the flight to London, every male and female member needs to carry six RT-PCR negative results.

"The BCCI has employed a central agency that is taking care of the RT-PCR tests for both men's and women's teams. Most players in big cities have had para-medics visiting their respective homes to carry out the test.

"For those living in slightly remote areas, where our designated agency doesn't have a branch, the BCCI has asked the players (male and female) to get their tests done with cost to be reimbursed immediately," another senior official said.

Australia To Host Afghanistan For One Test Match Before Ashes



Agencies

MELBOURNE: Australia is set to host Afghanistan in a cricket test match for the first time before taking on England in the Ashes series starting in December.

The Australian men's team starts its six-test southern summer in the one-off test against Afghanistan at Hobart from November 27.

The Australians will start their Ashes defense at the Gabba in Brisbane from Dec. 8-12 and, after a three-day break, continue with a day-night test in Adelaide.

The Ashes series will continue in Melbourne for the Boxing Day test and Sydney for the New Year's test and conclude with the fifth test in Perth from Jan. 14-18.

Australia's test captain Tim Paine said a lack of long-format cricket ahead of the Ashes was

not a concern for his team.

"That's part-and-parcel for us, you've got to be adaptable," Paine said, indicating that Australia would aim to field a full-strength team against Afghanistan.

"From my point of view, a preparation point of view, it's going to be a really important test match to set us up for the Ashes," he said.

The Afghans have had three wins and three losses in its six test matches since becoming a full member of the International Cricket Council in 2018.

The test series will come after the ICC's Twenty20 World Cup, which is scheduled to be played in India in October and November but is likely to be shifted to the United Arab Emirates because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tests will be followed by limited-overs series against New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

BCCI Calls Special General Meeting On May 29, T20 WC On Agenda

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The BCCI has called a Special General Meeting on May 29 to discuss the upcoming cricket season in India, including the T20 World Cup scheduled in October-November.

The notice sent by BCCI secretary Jay Shah for the meeting stated that there will be a "discussion on the upcoming cricket season in view of the pandemic situation prevailing in India".

Serious doubts have emerged over the hosting of the T20 World Cup in India with the second wave of COVID-19 sweeping through the country.

The SGM has been scheduled ahead of the ICC meeting on June 1 when the game's governing body is likely to decide on the staging of the competition.

The ICC is expected to take a call depending on the CO-



VID situation in India, which is grim at the moment.

The UAE has emerged as the back-up venue for the event after the IPL-14 had to be suspended halfway following multiple COVID-19 cases inside the bio-bubble. In its apex council meet-

ing last month, the BCCI had shortlisted nine venues for the showpiece event -- Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Dharamsala, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai. Domestic cricket will also be discussed in the SGM.

England-Bound Prasidh Krishna, Amit Mishra Recover From COVID-19

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Pacer Prasidh Krishna, who was named as a stand-by for India's tour of England, and veteran spinner Amit Mishra have recovered from COVID-19.

Both bowlers had contracted the dreaded virus during the currently-suspended Indian Premier League earlier this month.

While Mishra tested positive on May 4, the day the league was indefinitely suspended, Krishna joined the list of infected players on May 8.

"Prasidh Krishna has recovered from COVID-19," a BCCI source told PTI.

Delhi Capitals leg-spinner Mishra took to Twitter to give an update on his recovery and



express his gratitude towards the front-line health workers.

"The real heroes. Our Front-line workers. All I can say post my recovery is, You have my support and heartfelt appreciation for all you do," he tweeted.

"We are deeply grateful to you for all the sacrifices that you and your family are making...#grateful #coro-

nawarriors #bcci #DelhiCapitals," he added.

Krishna, who plays for the Kolkata Knight Riders, was the fourth player from the franchise to return a positive test after Varun Chakravarthy, Sandeep Warrier and Tim Seifert.

He had been in home isolation in Bengaluru.

The Indian squad is scheduled to assemble in Mumbai on Wednesday and, subsequently, undergo a hard quarantine before its departure to England in the first week of June.

Virat Kohli and his men are scheduled to take on New Zealand in the World Test Championship final from June 18 in Southampton.

The five-Test series against England is to be held in August.

Sonam Malik's Journey From Small Madina Village To Tokyo Olympics

Press Trust of India

MADINA: Many feared that letting a Cadet-level wrestler Sonam Malik compete against established stars in the senior category could result in a serious injury for the youngster or could even spell an early end to her fledgling career.

But the young gun from Madina Village in Haryana's Sonapat district has proved that the risk was worth taking.

It did not take the 19-year-old long to earn a reputation of being a slayer of Rio Olympic medalist Sakshi Malik as Sonam has made the 62kg category her own and is now gearing up to compete at the biggest sporting stage -- the Olympics.

It all started when Sonam's coach Ajmer Malik and her parents began to convince the national federation that the two-time World Cadet champion was ready for a plunge at the senior level.

It is rare that someone who has not had the exposure even at the junior level, is claimed to be ready for the competition at the highest level.

After much persuasion throughout the 2019, the WFI allowed Sonam to compete in trials for the Rome Ranking series event in January 2020.

"After the trials were over and Sonam had earned berth in the Indian team with a win over Sakshi Malik, Neta ji (WFI President BB Sharan) said, 'it would have been a big mistake if we had not agreed on Sonam's appearance in the trials'," Sonam's coach Ajmer told PTI.

"The WFI and many others had argued that she would get injured since she lacks experience. They said we will jeopardise her career by doing this, but we kept cajoling the federation."

The reason behind such assurance and confidence was Sonam's exceptional show at the local 'Dangals', where she was taken for mere assessment but came out triumphant while



competing in open category against big names.

Whether it was Ritu Malik, Sarita Mor or Nisha or Sudesh, Sonam did not care for reputations. She competed fiercely against the big names in Indian women wrestling.

"We just wanted to assess where she was against these girls but she kept pulling off big performances," said Ajmer.

The Delhi Dangal in 2018 won her a scooter and a prize purse of Rs one lakh and 10 thousand. Overall she won Bharat Kesri title five times.

The urge to make a name and earn fame was always there in Sonam's mind from the time she was just 10 years old.

"In 2012, we watched Sushil Kumar and Yogeshwar Dutt wrestle in Olympics after a training session in this academy. When I saw them on TV, I also made a promise to myself that one day I will also be on TV and people will watch my bouts," Sonam recollects one of those days at Netaji Subash Chander Bose Sports Academy in Madina.

"I wanted to win medals, those belts and see the Indian flag going up at the medal ceremony."

Her brother Mohit, who also pursued sport for some time before a shoulder injury ended his dream, said, Sonam was rough and tough and fearless but very obedient at the same time since her childhood.

2021 Asia Cup In Sri Lanka Called Off Due To Rising COVID-19 Cases



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The 2021 Asia Cup, which was shifted from Pakistan to Sri Lanka, was on Wednesday called off due to rising COVID-19 cases in the island nation.

The Asia Cup, which was last held in 2018, was scheduled to be held in June but Sri Lanka Cricket CEO Ashley de Silva announced that it will be difficult for them to conduct the tournament.

"Due to the prevailing situation, it will not be possible to play the tournament in June this year," De Silva told reporters.

The tournament was supposed to be hosted by Pakistan but since India were unlikely to

travel there due to political tension between the two nations, it was shifted to Sri Lanka.

With all the teams shifting for their FTPs for the next two years, the continental showpiece might only find a slot after the 2023 ICC 50-over World Cup. The Asian Cricket Council headed by BCCI secretary Jay Shah is yet to make a formal announcement.

Due to multiplying cases of COVID-19, Sri Lankan government has put a 10-day ban on international air travel.

Sri Lanka are touring Bangladesh for a limited overs series while they will host a second string India team for a six-match white ball series in July.

NEWS MAKERS

Home Is Where The Heart Is: Sunil Chhetri Relieved To Be Back

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Indian football talisman Sunil Chhetri on Wednesday likened the national team setup with his home and expressed his relief at returning to where he belongs after missing two international friendlies due to COVID-19 infection.

The 36-year-old Indian captain, international football's second-highest scorer among active players, is set to feature in the three upcoming joint 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Qualifiers in Qatar next month.

"It's such a relief to be back in the national team squad. After all, home is where the heart is," Chhetri was quoted as say-



ing by the All India Football Federation.

Chhetri missed the Indian team's international friendlies against Oman and UAE in Dubai on March 25 and 29 respectively as he had just recovered

from COVID-19 infection. Needless to say, he is looking forward to lead by example in the upcoming matches.

India are scheduled to play Asian champions Qatar on June 3, Bangladesh on June 7, and Af-

ghanistan on June 15 with all three matches to be played at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha.

"Personally, I am eagerly looking forward to being in Doha. The last time I was in Doha, I couldn't be a part of the match against Qatar owing to illness," Chhetri, who has 72 international goals to his name, said.

The team will have a preparatory camp inside a bio-bubble in Doha before its first match.

"The matches in June are extremely tough and we need to take them one at a time. Given the fact that we don't have much time, the preparatory camp will add immense value helping all to gel together, and strike that chord ahead of the first match," he added.

"Doha has always had an emo-

tional connection with me. It was there that I played in the 2011 Asian Cup, and also the AFC Cup final for my club Bengaluru FC."

National coach Igor Stimac said the training sessions in Doha will be intense.

"We understand the magnitude of the situation, and it will be intense sessions in Doha to raise the tempo and try to get ready for the matches which starts with the one against the Asian Champions Qatar in Doha," Stimac said.

The qualifying round matches are being played in Doha in view of the COVID-19 pandemic situation which doesn't allow the original format of home and away games. India are currently on three points from three matches in Group E.

Deaths Due To Covid-19 Increasing, Vaccines Reducing: Rahul Gandhi

Agenceis

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused the Centre of diverting attention and said while deaths due to COVID-19 are increasing the vaccines are reducing.

He also shared graphs showing a decline in COVID-19 vaccinations and the rise in number of daily deaths due to coronavirus.

"Vaccines are decreasing and Covid deaths are increasing.

The Central government policy - Divert attention, spread untruth, make noise by hiding facts," he charged in a tweet in Hindi.

India saw a record 4,529 fatalities due to coronavirus in a single day pushing the COVID-19 death



toll to 2,83,248, while 2,67 lakh fresh cases were recorded, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

With a total of 2,67,334 fresh infections, India's total tally of cases climbed to 2,54,96,330.

Tragedy At Sea: 22 Dead, 65 Missing From Barge; 186 Rescued



Agenceis

At least 22 personnel on board accommodation barge P305 that went adrift in Cyclone Tauktae fury before sinking in the Arabia Sea off Mumbai coast are dead and 65 still missing, a Navy official said on Wednesday.

The Navy said its personnel, battling extreme weather, have so far rescued 186 of the 273 people who were onboard barge P305 and also two from tugboat Varapada.

"Search and rescue operations are still on and we haven't lost hopes of bringing them ashore," an official said.

However, the chance of finding survivors is getting bleaker as the hours pass by, he added.

All personnel on board two other barges and an oil rig rendered adrift hours before the "very severe cyclonic storm" made landfall on the Gujarat coast are also safe, a Navy spokesperson said.

The 22 bodies, which the spokesperson called Brave Nature's Victims (BNV), were brought to Mumbai along with 125 of the barge P305 survivors, he said.

Navy warship INS Kochi reached Mumbai on Wednesday carrying the bodies and 125 of the 186 rescues from P305.

"As of Wednesday morning, 186 personnel of barge P305 have been rescued. INS Teg, INS Betwa, INS Beas, P81 aircraft and Seaking helicopters are continuing with

the search and rescue operations," a Navy spokesperson said.

All the 137 personnel on barge GAL Constructor were rescued on Tuesday by the Navy and Coast Guard. The 196 personnel on barge SS-3 and 101 personnel on board oil rig Sagar Bhushan are safe, the official said.

Offshore vessels hired by ONGC and SCI towing then to safety. INS Talwar is also in the area to assist in the SAR ops, he added.

The accommodation barge P305 which was servicing ONGC offshore operations sank on Monday evening, the official said, adding 184 of the 273 personnel on board have been rescued so far.

Three barges and an oil rig with 707 personnel on board went adrift on Monday. These included barge P305 with 273 persons, cargo barge GAL Constructor with 137 personnel on board, accommodation barge SS-3 with 196 personnel on board and the Sagar Bhushan oil rig with 101 personnel on board, the official said.

Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Murlidhar Sadashiv Pawar said the ongoing SAR is among the most challenging search and rescue operations in the last four decades.

Navy ships were deployed on Monday after receipt of a request for assistance for barge 'P305' adrift off Heera oil fields in Bombay high area with 273 personnel on board. The oil fields are around 70 km southwest of Mumbai.

SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS are still on and we haven't lost hopes of bringing them ashore."

NEWS MAKERS

Kanpur Groom Suddenly Disappears From Wedding Venue After Jaimala, Bride Marries A Baraati

Agenceis

In a bizarre incident, the bride got married to one of the 'baraatis' (member of the marriage party from the groom's side) after the groom disappeared mysteriously from the wedding venue.

The incident took place two days ago in Maharajpur area.

According to reports, the 'jaimala' (exchange of garlands) ceremony had taken place and the families were preparing for the main wedding ceremony when the groom suddenly disappeared.

Both the families began frantically searching for the groom and the bride was distraught at the turn of events.

After searching for a while, the bride's family members came to know that the groom was not missing, but had deliberately fled from the spot for reasons best-known to him.

Seeing the bride's family upset, one of the guests from the groom's side suggested that the



marriage should be solemnised with another suitable boy from the baraati.

The bride's family zeroed in on one of the boys and their respective families, after consultations, agreed on the alliance.

The marriage was solemnised at the venue.

Later, the bride's family lodged a complaint against the groom and his family members.

52 Israeli Jets Bomb Gaza Overnight; Palestinians Fire 50 Rockets



Ageceis

The Israeli military says its warplanes carried out 122 strikes on Gaza overnight, as the regime continues its bombardment of the besieged enclave, targeting residential buildings in total disregard for civilian lives.

Hidai Zilberman, the Israeli military spokesperson, said that around 10 p.m. on Tuesday night, 52 fighter jets carried out 122 air strikes on the Gaza Strip in 25 minutes, targeting what he claimed to be Hamas' network of tunnels, including weapons storage sites and a command center.

At least four Palestinians were killed during the raids, Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

One of the attacks killed a journalist named Yusef Abu Hussein and injured several others on Wednesday morning. Hussein, a presenter in a Palestinian Radio channel, lost his life during an air raid that targeted the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City.

Israeli airstrikes also hit homes and farmlands in the towns of Khan Younis and Jabalia on Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning, while a house in Beit Lahia and a truck in the Maghazi camp were bombed by the regime's jets.

According to the Israeli military, the resistance fighters also fired 50 rockets toward the Israeli occupied territories on Tuesday evening.

Israel tried in vain twice to kill Hamas military chief Muhammad Deif twice since the confrontations began on May 10.

It said Deif escaped the attacks both times, claiming that it has targeted at least seven other top Hamas members, but all of whom survived, some with injuries.

Palestinian resistance groups also continued firing rockets toward Israeli-occupied territories, with Hamas saying it targeted six Israeli air force bases in central and southern occupied territories in the course of its latest barrage.

"The bases that the al-Qassam Brigades targeted are Hatzor, Hatzirim, Nevatim, Tel Nof, Palmachim, and Ramon," Hamas said.

Rocket sirens sounded last night in central and southern occupied territories, including in Ashdod and Rehovot. Sirens also sounded in the western town of Sderot and Gaza border communities. After hours of silence, rocket sirens were set off in the Gaza border town of Ein HaShlosha in the morning, the Times of Israel reported.

Citing unnamed sources, Arabi 21 reported that Israeli settlers are leaving Tel Aviv en masse toward Israeli illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank over fears of the Palestinian resistance groups' rockets.

On Tuesday, Palestinians held protests in various parts of Israeli-occupied territories to condemn Israel's atrocities.

Protesters rallied in Haifa, Jaffa, Nazareth, Hebron, Acre, Tulkarm, Sakhnin, Salfit, Jenin, Qalqilya, Umm al-Fahm and Lod, as well as other areas, where they waved Palestinian flags and chanted anti-Israeli slogans. Israeli violence was reported in several areas.

Israeli troops targeted Palestinian protesters in the East Jerusalem al-Quds neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, where the regime has been trying to force Palestinian families out of their homes to build new illegal settlements.

Israeli occupation forces were deployed to the area to suppress the protesters, who came out to condemn the ongoing bombardment of Gaza, the Israeli regime's attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the land appropriation in Sheikh Jarrah.

According to the Palestinian Red Crescent, 16 people were injured in Israeli forces' violence near the Damascus Gate, with three requiring hospitalization.

Israeli forces kill two more Palestinians in West Bank

The Palestinian Health Ministry said two more Palestinians - 20-year-old Adham Fayez Musa Kashif and 15-year-old Islam Wael Bernat - were shot dead during demonstrations near the Beit El checkpoint in the occupied West Bank.

The ministry said Kashif was shot in the chest with several live bullets and Bernat was shot several times in the head.

Gaza health ministry said in its latest report that the Israeli airstrikes on Gaza have killed at least 219 Palestinians, including 63 children and 36 women, with over 1,500 others wounded. The ministry said around a third of the wounded are children.

The Israeli attacks have destroyed a number of buildings and roads as well, making it hard for emergency rescue crews to reach new targeted areas.

Mucormycosis: AIIMS Delhi Reporting Over 20 Cases Daily



Agenceis

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, is reporting more than 20 cases of 'Black Fungus' (Mucormycosis) disease on a daily basis, said Dr MV Padma Srivastava, Head, Department of Neurology, AIIMS.

"In Delhi's AIIMS, there are more than 20 cases of mucormycosis reported in emergency today. Mycormycosis was always there in those who are immunocompromised, diabetic, high steroid dose, but it was never in this number," Dr Padma, Head, Neurology Department, AIIMS, told ANI.

"She said that earlier the number was in single-digit. But, now we have crossed three-digit mark and are getting more than 20 cases of the infection every single day. We have made mucor wards separately at AIIMS Delhi, AIIMS Trauma Centre, and AIIMS Jhajjar," Dr Padma added.

She further informed that the index of suspicion of contracting Black Fungus is very high because of low immunity. If COVID happens to diabetic people, sugar should be strictly controlled and there should be rational use of steroids.

"Cases of mucormycosis began

being reported two months ago and states like Gujarat and Maharashtra have, so far, reported more than 1,800 cases. Now, Delhi is also reporting a high number of cases and a maximum of those are the ones who have taken high doses of steroids or are diabetic," she added.

Max hospitals across India have reported 50 cases of black fungus, and in Delhi alone, the numbers are 25.

"COVID-19 strain may also be the reason and we need to do genome sequencing to understand this disease more," Dr Padma said.

Dr DS Rana, Chairperson, Sri Gangaram Hospital, informed that the hospital has as many as 48 admitted Black Fungus patients and 16 are in the waiting list.

The rare fungal infection called 'mucormycosis' or 'black fungus' is on the rise in several parts of the country, including Delhi.

As per the Union Health Ministry, Mucormycosis or black fungus is a complication caused by a fungal infection.

People catch mucormycosis by coming in contact with the fungal spores in the environment. It can also develop on the skin after the fungus enters the skin through a cut, scrape, burn, or other type of skin trauma.

Single-Use Covid Face Masks Set New Global Recycling Challenge



AUSTRALIA: Researchers in Australia want to transform single-use Covid masks into road material. In the United States, the protective gear is recycled into benches. And in France, they are reborn as floor carpets for cars.

Used to curb the spread of Covid-19, masks are exacerbating another pandemic: plastic pollution.

Around 129 billion disposable masks are used every month around the world, according to the American Chemical Society.

Made out of polypropylene plastic material, elastic and metal, used masks are usually thrown out in garbage bins, destined for landfills, or incinerated. They are also littering streets, rivers and oceans, harming wildlife. But researchers and companies are looking for ways to put masks to good use, though it is not a very profitable venture at the moment.

In Britain, several hospitals have acquired a compactor made by Cardiff-based Thermal Compaction Group which melts protective gowns and surgical masks into blue slabs.

The material is then used to make garden chairs or tables.

In France, Tri-o et Greenwishes, a recycling company, picks up masks tossed in special bins used by some 30 customers, including Parisian hospitals, TV network TF1 and building materials giant Saint-Gobain.

"We had a lot of demand from our clients" to offer mask recycling services, said company president Matthieu de Chanaleilles.

The company charges fees starting at 250 euros (\$300) per month to collect the trash.

At its recycling plant, staff wearing protective gear stand behind plexiglass to sort through paper tissues, gloves and cups that are thrown in mask bins by accident. Afterwards, the workers are sprayed down with disinfectant.

The sorting area is sterilized with ultraviolet lamps. Masks are kept in quarantine for a week before being handled.

Two companies based in northern France then shred the masks, disinfect them and extract the polypropylene, which is transformed into pebbles that are used to make floor carpets or other plastic parts in a car.

Tri-o et Greenwishes has recycled one tonne of masks so far and hopes

to have processed 20 tonnes by the end of the year.

It's a drop in the ocean of masks.

Some 40,000 tonnes of masks were binned in France last year, without a recycling option, according to a January parliamentary report.

In Trenton, New Jersey, TerraCycle sells a "zero waste box" for disposable masks for \$88.

The masks are then sent to partner facilities to be recycled into plastic granules that are sold to manufacturers that make other products such as benches, flooring surfaces or shipping pallets. TerraCycle chief executive Tom Szaky said recycling personal protective equipment is costlier than aluminium.

"Why is, say for example, a dirty diaper, or PPE not recyclable? It's because it costs much more to collect and process and the results are worse. So no one would bother doing it because there's no money to be made," Szaky told AFP.

"So Terracycle's business says 'Well, if someone's willing to pay those actual costs, then we can perform such a service,'" he said.

In Australia, researchers at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology are experimenting with other solutions after being inspired by the sight of masks littering the streets.

Once disinfected and shredded, masks can be mixed with processed building rubble to create a flexible and robust material to help build roads, according to the scientists.

The researchers are now investigating their use in construction cement. Three million masks are needed to make one kilometre (half a mile) of road.

"The facemask have a good tensile strength; they can provide tensile strength to the concrete, which is very important," Mohammad Saberian, a post-doctoral research fellow at RMIT University, told AFP.

"We're currently looking for partners to use the face masks in real-world applications and to make kind of a pilot road," Saberian said.

Since publishing the research earlier this year, several industries have expressed interest, and the team was now applying for funding to further investigate the findings, which could take one to two years, he said.

Queen Elizabeth II "Devastated" By Puppy's Death: Report



Agenceis

Queen Elizabeth II is grieving the death of one of two puppies that she was given shortly before her husband Prince Philip died, according to a report Wednesday.

"The Queen is absolutely devastated," The Sun tabloid quoted a Windsor Castle source as saying. "Everyone concerned is upset as this comes so soon after she lost her husband."

The Queen lost her husband of 73 years in April and had found solace in walking five-month-old Fergus, who died unexpectedly, and Muick most days on the grounds of Windsor Castle, the newspaper said.

Prince Andrew reportedly gave his mother the two dorgi puppies -- a cross between dachshunds and the queen's beloved corgis breed -- in February as a surprise to cheer her up after 99-year-old Philip went into hospital that month. He died on April 9.

The 95-year-old Queen used to be a keen breeder of corgis, a short-legged Welsh breed. She has given that up, citing her advancing age, but The Sun said she was thrilled by the new puppies. Fergus was named after the Queen's uncle, Fergus Bowes-Lyon, who was killed in World War I, The Sun said.

Muick is the name of a loch on the Scottish royal estate at Balmoral. The Queen still has one older dorgi called Candy.