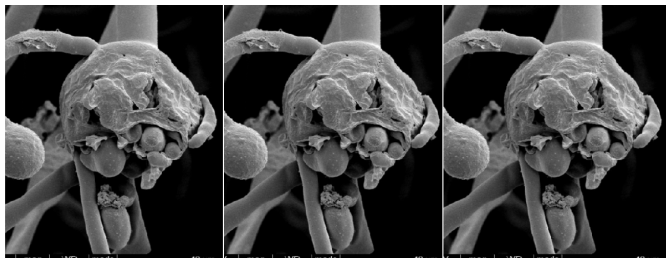


Experts Sound Alert In Kashmir As Jammu Sees First 'Black Fungus' Death

Auqib Javed

SRINAGAR: As Jammu and Kashmir records first death of patient with Mucormycosis commonly known as 'Black Fungus' at Government Medical College Jammu, the health experts in Kashmir have sounded an alert and asked the people to remain on



guard and follow the advisories. Principal GMC Jammu, Dr Shashi Sudan said that the person was under observation for the last two days and subsequently succumbed this afternoon at the health facility. "The patient had recently recovered from Covid-19 and was now suffering from" [More On P10](#)

Corona Claims 43 More Lives, 3848 Test Positive

As many as 43 more people, including a non-local, succumbed to coronavirus in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday while 3848 new cases of virus were detected across the Union Territory during the last 24 hours. In Jammu division, 27 more people died of coronavirus on Friday while in Kashmir Valley 16 people [More On P10](#)

Srinagar Under Siege On Mirwaiz, Lone Anniversary



KO Photo: Abid Bhat

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Restrictions were tightened in and around Srinagar city on Friday and state forces deployed in strength on the death anniversaries of

Mirwaiz Mohammad Farooq and Abdul Gani Lone.

The national highway connecting Srinagar to north Kashmir's Baramulla and Kupwara districts was sealed off, as were [More On P10](#)

PM Pitches For 'Doorstep Treatment' For Covid

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged bringing medical services closer to COVID-19 patients, coming up with [More On P10](#)

MOS Singh Holds Review Meeting With DCs

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Friday held a comprehensive COVID review meeting with all the 20 district [More On P10](#)

HC Seeks Report On Steps Taken By Govt On Pandemic

J&K High Court has asked the government to file a "comprehensive report" as regards steps so far taken by it on [More On P10](#)

LG Takes Note Of Low Vaccination Rate in J&K



Passes Strict Directions To DCs To Scale Up Vaccination Drive

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Taking serious note of low vaccination rate in some districts of Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday passed strict

directions to the Deputy Commissioner for scaling-up the vaccination drive in their respective districts.

The LG passed the directions while chairing a series of meetings with COVID Task Force, Deputy Commissioners and SPs from across the UT, in which important decisions were also taken to strengthen the Covid containment [More On P10](#)

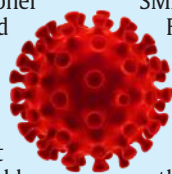
Peace Only Way To Progress, Prosperity: LG

Asserting that violence can never be an answer and peace is the only way towards prosperity and progress, the Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said Friday that it was high time to defeat [More On P10](#)

Effective Anti-Covid Therapy Not Available Yet: Expert

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As Jammu and Kashmir continues to grapple with deadly pandemic, a senior medical practitioner on Friday said that the effective anti-coronavirus therapy was not available yet and that the people should take Covid protocol seriously, which includes wearing of masks,



maintaining physical distance and disinfecting contaminated hands frequently.

Dr Rakesh Kumar Koul, Professor, Medicine, SMHS, Srinagar said

Friday that precautions and vaccination were the only defence line against infection and that the people should consult a physician soon after noticing Covid symptoms. [More On P10](#)

Covid-19 Could Become Like Common Cold In Future: Study

The novel coronavirus responsible for COVID-19 could cause no more than common cold-like coughs and sniffles within the next decade, according to a study. [More On P10](#)

GMC Sgr To Hire Paramedics For 500 Bed Covid Hospital, Invites Applications

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Bracing up for the launch of under-construction 500 bedded temporary Covid hospital, the government medical college (GMC) Srinagar on Friday advertised various vacancies of paramedics in Kashmir division.

According to the advertisement, GMC has invited online applications from eligible candidates belonging to Kashmir Division for the posts of Staff Nurse, Lab. Technician, Pharmacist and Anaesthesia Technician for the upcoming 500 bedded temporary Covid Hospital that is being set up in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO),

officials said Friday.

According to the advertisement notice issued by Principal Government Medical College Srinagar, the submission of online application forms will commence from 22 May, 2021 from 6 pm while the last date to close the application process has been fixed as 27 May, 2021 up to 4 pm. "The eligible candidates have been informed to check the full details of the posts including pay and qualification which have been uploaded on the website of Govt Medical College Srinagar (www.gmc.edu.in)," the officials said.

They further said that as per the advertisement notice, these contractual appointments [More On P10](#)

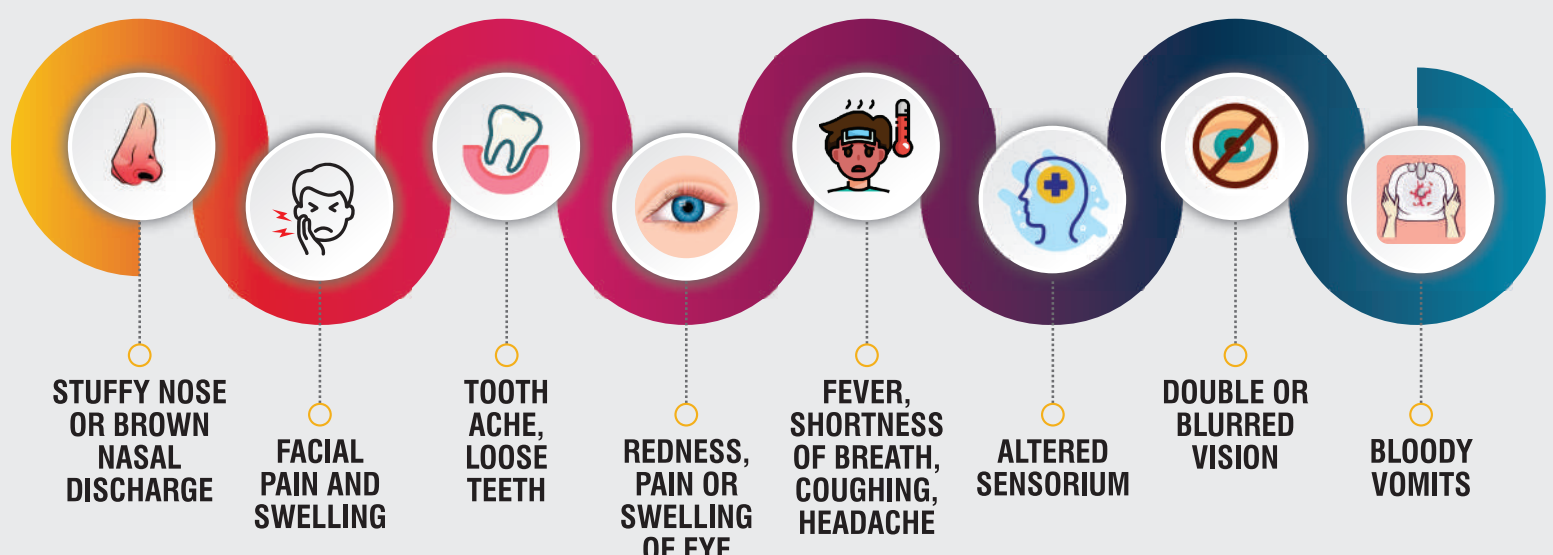


Shri Manoj Sinha
Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor

ADVISORY ON BLACK FUNGUS (MUCORMYCOSIS)

BLACK FUNGUS (MUCORMYCOSIS) IS A TYPE OF FUNGAL INFECTION, WHICH SPREADS RAPIDLY IN THE NOSE, SINUS, EYE AND BRAIN.

DO NOT NEGLECT IF YOU FIND THESE SYMPTOMS DURING/AFTER COVID



PEOPLE WHO ARE AT RISK

▶ WITH UNCONTROLLED DIABETES
▶ WITH CO-MORBIDITIES (POST TRANSPLANT/ MALIGNANCY)

▶ ON LONG STANDING OXYGEN THERAPY DURING COVID TREATMENT
▶ TREATED FOR COVID 19 WITH STEROIDS/IMMUNOMODULATORS

Dos

- Control hyperglycaemia
- Monitor blood glucose level post COVID-19 discharge in diabetic patients
- Use steroid judiciously
- Use clean, sterile water for humidifiers during oxygen therapy
- Use antibiotics/ anti fungal judiciously

IT COULD BE DANGEROUS

If you have symptoms, seek medical advice immediately



Don'ts

- Do not miss warning signs & symptoms
- Don't consider all cases of blocked nose as cases of bacterial sinusitis, especially in the cases of immunosuppression and/or COVID-19 patients on immunomodulators
- Don't hesitate in seeking aggressive investigations as appropriate for detecting fungal etiology
- Don't lose crucial time to initiate treatment for mucormycosis

FOR ANY SORT OF QUERY INCLUDING MEDICAL ADVICE CONTACT 24X7 DIVISIONAL CONTROL ROOM

Divisional Control Room-Kashmir:

0194-2440283/2430581/2452052/2457313/2457312

Divisional Control Room-Jammu:

0191-2549676/2520982/2674444/2674115/2674908



Issued in Public Interest by:

Health and Medical Education Department, J&K

FOR FREE AMBULANCE SERVICE PLEASE CALL TOLL FREE NO. 108

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



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No 5- Dal Lake Boulevard Srinagar, 190001, Kashmir

Study reveals a gentler strategy for avoiding childhood dental decay

Agencies

A new therapeutic strategy could help wash away the build-up while sparing oral tissues by targeting the bonds between bacteria and yeast that can form a sticky dental plaque, suggest the findings of a new study led by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania.

The combination of a carb-heavy diet and poor oral hygiene can leave children with early childhood caries (ECC), a severe form of dental decay that can have a lasting impact on their oral and overall health.

A few years ago, scientists from Penn's School of Dental Medicine found that the dental plaque that gives rise to ECC is composed of both a bacterial species, *Streptococcus mutans*, and a fungus, *Candida albicans*. The two form a sticky symbiosis, known scientifically as a biofilm, that becomes extremely virulent and difficult to displace from the tooth surface.

Now, a new study from the group offers a strategy for disrupting this biofilm by targeting the yeast-bacterial interactions that make ECC plaques so intractable. In contrast to some current treatments for ECC, which use antimicrobial agents that can have off-target effects, potentially harming healthy tissues, this treatment uses an enzyme specific to the bonds that exist between microbes.

"We thought this could be a new way of approaching the problem of



ECCs that would intervene in the synergistic interaction between bacteria and yeast," says Geelsu Hwang, an assistant professor in Penn Dental Medicine and senior author on the study, published in the journal *mBio*. "This offers us another tool for disrupting this virulent biofilm."

The work builds off findings from a 2017 paper by Hwang and colleagues, including Hyun (Michel) Koo of Penn Dental Medicine, which found that molecules call mannans on the *Candida* cell wall bound tightly to an enzyme secreted by *S. mutans*, glycosyltransferases (Gtfb). In addition to facilitating the cross-kingdom binding, Gtfb also contributes to the stubbornness of dental biofilms by manufacturing glue-like polymers called glucans in the presence of sugars.

While some cases of ECC are

treated with drugs that kill the microbes directly, potentially reducing the number of pathogens in the mouth, this doesn't always effectively break down the biofilm and can have off-target effects on "good" microbes as well as the soft tissues in the oral cavity.

Hwang and colleagues wanted to try a different approach that would directly target the insidious interaction between yeast and bacteria and opted to target the mannans in the *Candida* cell surface as a point of contact.

Using three different mannan-degrading enzymes, they applied each to a biofilm growing on a tooth-like surface in a human saliva medium and left it for five minutes. Following the treatment, they noted that the overall biofilm volume was reduced. Using powerful microscopy, they also observed

drastic reductions in the biofilm thickness and interactions between bacteria and yeast. The pH of the surrounding medium was higher when exposed to the enzymes, indicating an environment that is not as acidic and thus less conducive to tooth decay.

They also measured how easy it was to break up the biofilm after treatment, using a device that applies a stress, akin to tooth brushing.

"The biofilm structure was more fragile after the enzyme treatment," Hwang says. "We were able to see that the biofilms were more easily removed."

To confirm the mechanism of their approach—that the mannan-degrading enzymes were weakening the binding between yeast and bacteria—the team used atomic-force microscopy to measure the bonds between *Candida* and Gtfb. The therapy, they found, reduced this binding force by 15-fold.

Finally, they wanted to get a sense of how well-tolerated these enzymes would be when used in the oral cavity, especially since children would be the patient group targeted.

Applying the enzymes to human gingival cells in culture, they found no harmful impact, even when they used a concentrated form of the enzymes. In addition, they observed that the treatment didn't kill the bacteria or yeast, a sign that it could work even if the microbes developed mutations that would lend them resistance against other types of therapies.

Dementia risk factors similar for men and women, not high blood pressure: Study

While the link between several mid-life cardiovascular risk factors and dementia was similar for both sexes, for blood pressure it was not—find George Institute researchers—in a study of just over half a million people.

The study showed that both low and high blood pressure were associated with a greater risk of dementia in men, but for women, the risk of dementia increased as blood pressure went up.

Lead author Jessica Gong said that while more research was needed to verify these findings, they may point to better ways of managing risk.

"Our results suggest a more tailored approach to treating high blood pressure could be more effective at preventing future cases of dementia," she said.

Dementia is fast becoming a global epidemic, currently affecting an estimated 50 million people worldwide. This is projected to triple by 2050—mainly driven by aging populations. Rates of dementia and associated deaths are both known to be higher in women than men.

In 2016, it overtook heart disease as the leading cause of death in Australian women and it is the second leading cause of death for all Australians.

In the absence of significant treatment breakthroughs, the focus has been on reducing the risk of developing the disease and cardiovascular risk factors are increasingly recognised as contributors to different types of dementia.

To examine sex differences in major cardiovascular risk factors for dementia, George Institute researchers used the UK Biobank, a large-scale biomedical database that recruited 502,489 Britons aged 40-69 years (free from dementia at

study initiation) between 2006 and 2010. They found that current smoking status, diabetes, high levels of body fat, having had a prior stroke, and low socioeconomic status were all associated with a greater risk of dementia to a similar degree in women and men.

But when it came to blood pressure, the relationship with dementia risk between the sexes was different. Although the reason for this wasn't clear, the authors proposed some possible explanations.

"Biological differences between women and men may account for the sex differences we saw in the relationship between blood pressure and the risk of dementia," said Ms Gong.

"But there may also be differences in medical treatment for hypertension. For example, women are less likely to take medication as prescribed by their healthcare provider than men and may be taking more medications and experiencing more side effects."

While there are no effective treatments for dementia, trying to reduce the burden of the disease by encouraging healthier lifestyles is the priority, and the strongest evidence points to blood pressure management.

"Our study suggests that a more individualised approach to treating blood pressure in men compared to women may result in even greater protection against the development of dementia," said Professor Mark Woodward, study co-author.

"It also shows the importance of ensuring sufficient numbers of women and men are recruited into studies and that the data for women and men should be analysed separately," he added.

‘Researchers suggest using urban city design to promote heart health’

Agencies

Cities harbour a dangerous cocktail of environmental stressors which politicians must tackle to save lives and preserve health—says the conclusion of a new paper.

The paper was published in the *European Heart Journal*, a journal of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC).

"By 2050, three in four people will live in cities, where up to 80% of energy is consumed and 70% of greenhouse gases are emitted," said study author Professor Thomas Munzel of the University Medical Centre Mainz, Germany. "There are limited actions that individuals can take to protect themselves from pollutants so politicians and policymakers need to take on this responsibility." Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of mortality in Europe, accounting for 47% and 39% of all deaths in women and men, respectively. The World Health Organization (WHO) regional office for Europe has advocated urban planning which supports cycling and walking and improves air quality. The proposal, supported by the ESC, is a step towards meeting the WHO's target of a 25% relative reduction in premature mortality from cardiovascular disease by 2025 (compared to 2010).

"While cities have been an engine of innovation and wealth, they are also a source of pollution and disease,"



states today's paper. It sums up the evidence for the connections between bad air, noise, temperature, outdoor light and cardiovascular disease.

Air pollution is responsible for around 800,000 fatal illnesses per year in Europe, of which around half are heart attacks and strokes. Transport emissions are the largest contributor to air pollution in cities around the world. Similarly, the dominant source of noise is road traffic, which increases the risk for ischaemic heart disease. It has been estimated that long-term exposure to transportation noise is responsible for 48,000 new cases of ischaemic heart disease each year in the EU. Nocturnal light pollution has been linked with hospitalisation and death from coronary heart disease. Meanwhile, concrete urban areas absorb and re-emit the sun's heat, leading to rising temperatures.

These heat island effects have been connected with deaths during heatwaves, which can be mitigated with vegetation.

Environmental stressors cluster together and actions are needed which combat them all. "Transitioning to cities that promote local living and active and sustainable mobility is increasingly recognised as providing co-benefits for health and the environment by creating more sustainable and liveable cities," states the paper.

City planning is now recognised as one way to tackle adverse health outcomes. Designs include car-free areas and compact cities which shorten travel distances. Limiting car use while increasing public and active transportation (walking and cycling) would promote heart health by reducing air pollution, noise, and heat island effects and increasing physical activity.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Directorate of Information & Public Relations

Media Complex, Polo-ground, Srinagar / Rail Head, Jammu

Tele: 01942476816; 01942485175 (fax) Sgr / 01912479692; 01912479643 (fax) Jammu

Expression of Interest for providing PoL/fuel to the Departmental Vehicles of Directorate of Information & Public Relations, J&K, Srinagar/ Jammu

Fresh Sealed Expression of Interest (Eoi) are invited from the owners of reputed filling stations of HPCL/BPCL/IOCL located in the twin cities of Srinagar and Jammu for providing fuel (Diesel/Petrol/M. Oil POL) to departmental vehicles (LMVs) of the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, J&K. The Expression of Interest should reach to the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, J&K, Rail Head, Bahu Palaza, Jammu and Media Complex, Polo-ground Srinagar by or before 29/05/2021.

The interested filling station owners shall into an agreement of providing fuel (Diesel/Petrol/M. Oil POL) to departmental vehicles (LMVs) of the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, J&K for a period of one year to commence from the date of agreement as per the following terms and conditions:

The Filling Station Owner shall ensure proper and timely supply of fuel (Diesel/Petrol/M. Oil POL) to departmental vehicles (LMVs) of the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, J&K.

The billing of payment for supply of fuel on monthly shall be settled in the first week of the next month.

The prevailing market rates against the POL shall be final / unchanged and shall remain the same till the period of agreement.

Sd/-

(Rahul Pandey) IAS

Director Information & PR

No: INF/Tpt-29/2021/

Dated: -05-2021

DIPK-1855/21

GOVERNMENT OF UT JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

PCD (PHQ) J&K SRINAGAR

INVITING E-TENDER NOTICE

e-NIT No/EE-PCD/PHQ/13/2021-22 Dated:- 18-05-2021

Executive Engineer PCD PHQ J&K JAMMU/ SRINAGAR on behalf of The President of India invites tenders by e-tendering on item rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K Govt. / CPWD / Railways and other State / Central Governments for the following works.

S. No	Name of Work	Name of Division	Estimated Cost (Rs. In lacs)	Cost of document (In Rs)	Time Allowed for completion	Time and date of opening of tender	Class of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9
1	Repair / renovation of Qtr No 06 block Sr. officer New (04 storied 3 BHK) at Gulshan Ground Jammu.	PCD (PHQ) J&K, Srinagar	5.00 lacs	300/-	45 days	28-05-2021	"A"& "D"
2	Repair / renovation of Set No 8-02 at Gulshan Ground Jammu.	PCD (PHQ) J&K, Srinagar	1.51 lacs	200/-	30 days	28-05-2021	"A"& "D"
3	Repair / renovation of Qtr No 04 block-Y at PHC Bemina Srinagar.	PCD (PHQ) J&K, Srinagar	2.53 lacs	300/-	30 days	28-05-2021	"A"& "D"
4	Repair / renovation of Set No D-30 at DPL Jammu.	PCD (PHQ) J&K, Srinagar	4.00 lacs	300/-	45 days	28-05-2021	"A"& "D"
5	Repair / renovation of Qtr No 17 block-C at Channi Himmat Jammu.	PCD (PHQ) J&K, Srinagar	2.82 lacs	200/-	30 days	28-05-2021	"A"& "D"

1. Date of Publishing 19-05-2021 at 1100 hours.

2. The Bidding documents can be downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 1130 hours on 19-05-2021

i. The Bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> from 21-05-2021 to 27-05-2021 upto 1600 Hrs. The bids received will be opened at 1100 hours on 28-05-2021 on line.

ii. The complete bidding process will be on line.

iii. Technical bids of bidders shall be opened on line in the office of Executive Engineer PCD PHQ J&K Jammu/ Srinagar on 28-05-2021 at 1100 Hrs.

iv. In pursuance to Circular No. A/Misc(2018)-III-895/J dated. 22-12-2020 issued by Finance Department of J&K, there is no requirement of submission of bid security/ earnest Money deposit (EMD). However, every bidder has to furnish an undertaking/ declaration form accepting that if it withdraws or modifies its bids during the period of bid validity or if it fails to sign the contract or fails to submit a performance security within 03 days after opening of price bid, if they are awarded the contract, they will be suspended from participating in any tender process in future for a period of one year. Aforementioned undertaken/ declaration needs to be furnished as per format provided in Annexure "A" to this bid document duly attested by 1st class magistrate / Notary on stamp paper.

v. The cost of tender documents should be submitted by the bidder in shape of treasury challan / receipt and upload the same.

vi. In case of abnormally low bids, the tender inviting Authority reserves the right to ask from the bidder for additional performance security with the approval of the next higher Authority which shall be binding upon the bidder in such case.

3. Bid documents can be seen at and downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> Bid documents contain qualifying criteria for bidder, specifications, bill of quantities, conditions and other details.

4. The site for the work is available. The intending bidders are strongly advised to inspect the site of work before bidding.

5. Financial Bids will be opened on line in the office of the Executive Engineer, PCD PHQ J&K Jammu/Srinagar. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

6. The bid for the work shall remain open for acceptance for a period of 90 days from the date of opening of bids. If any bidder / tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender before the said period or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid, the said earnest money shall stand forfeited.

7. No Engineer of Gazetted rank or other Gazetted Officer employed in Engineering or Administrative duties in an Engineering Department of the Government is allowed to work as a Contractor for a period of two years after his retirement from Government service, without permission of the Government. This contract is liable to be cancelled if either the contractor or any of his employees is found any time to be such a person who had not obtained the permission of the Government as aforesaid before submission of the tender or engagement in the Contractor's Service.

8. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents.

9. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

i. The interested bidder can download the NIT/bidding document from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>

ii. To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get (DSC) "Digital Signature Certificate" as per Information Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding. This certificate will be required for digitally signing the bid. Bidders can get above mentioned digital certificate from any approved vendors. The Bidders, who already possess valid (DSC) Digital Signature Certificates, need not to procure new Digital Signature Certificate.

iii. The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with Digital Signature. The bids cannot be uploaded without Digital Signature. No Proposal will be accepted in physical form.

iv. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para 2(III).

v. Before submission of online bids, bidders must ensure that scanned copies of all the necessary documents have been attached with bid.

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

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

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

ix. Original Registration certificate of GST No. shall be uploaded on line.

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

11. No construction material shall be supplied by Police Construction Division, PHQ. However, the brands of the material will be approved by Engineer Incharge of the concerned site in consultation with Executive Engineer, PCD PHQ J&K.

12. In case the contractor quoted rates are unbalanced i.e. in some items very high and in other very low, the payment shall be made on estimated rates / prevalent rates for the items of higher rates till successful completion of work i.e. after executing all the items of work for which he has quoted lower rates.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer

PCD (PHQ) J&K Srinagar.

No:-e-NIT/EE-PCD/PHQ/2021-22/2325-31

Dated: 18-05-2021.

DIPK-1798/21

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Srinagar Admin Finalises Modalities To Setup Covid Care Centres At All Panchayats

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a bid to decentralise COVID-19 care, by creating an adhoc infrastructure at the Panchayat level, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad Friday held an interactive meeting with the members of DDC, BDC and Panchayats representatives to finalise modalities to set up Covid Care facilities in all 21 Panchayats of district Srinagar.

The meeting was held here at Banquet Hall during which DC sought suggestions from the concerned Public Representatives to identify/notify the buildings for setting up of 5 bedded Covid Care Centers as directed by the Lieutenant Governor of J&K.

The meeting was attended by Chairman District Development Council (DDC), Srinagar, Malik Aftab, members DDC and Block Development Council (BDC) and Panchayats of Srinagar district, besides Additional District Development Commissioner, Srinagar, Gulzar Ahmad, Chief Planning Officer, Mohammad Yaseen, Chief Medical Officer, Srinagar,



Dr Jameel and other officers were also present in the meeting.

During the meeting, all the participants put forth their opinions and suggestions before the DC and buildings to accommodate 5 bedded Covid Care Centers in all 21 Panchayats were identified on the spot.

On the occasion, the DC said that each Panchayat will be provided Rs 1 lakh from the district Capex budget for the creation of facilities to meet the challenge

of COVID-19 mitigation with establishing minimum 5-bedded Covid Care Centre including one Oxygen supported bed for the patient requiring immediate medical attention.

He said in addition each Panchayat will be provided an Oxygen Concentrator besides other support to strengthen COVID infrastructure at panchayat level.

CMO Srinagar apprised the panchayat representatives about measures to combat Cov-

id pandemic in District Srinagar.

The DC said the process for setting up of the Covid Care mitigation infrastructure has been taken to strengthen the Covid-19 management and containment measures at Panchayat level besides to create basic minimum infrastructure to provide isolation facilities at Panchayat level as many households may not have option for isolation of Covid positive patients in their own houses.

He asked the ADDC to prepare a Covid mitigation plan in consultation with the CMO so that all Panchayat level Covid centres are made operational within two days. He also asked CMO to equip these Centers with necessary medical kits besides linking them with the nearest Health Centres for deployment of medical and paramedical staff.

The DC also instructed that facility of Tele-Consultation must be made available besides poster regarding details about necessary helpline, Covid-19 War Control Room, Ambulance services and other interventions be put on display for emergency help and support.

He stressed on conducting Community Triaging at Panchayat level for early detection of Covid-19 positive cases which is an important parameter to reduce oxygen dependency. He urged upon members of Panchayat bodies to make people aware about the Covid-19 SoPs besides avoiding social gathering to break the chain of Covid-19 infection in the district.

AAC Pays Tributes To Mirwaiz Farooq, Hawal Massacre Victims

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu & Kashmir Awami Action Committee (AAC) Friday while remembering its founder leader Shaheed-e-Millat Mirwaiz Moulvi Muhammad Farooq (RA) and the Hawal Martyrs of May 21, 1990 on their 31st martyrdom anniversary and Shaheed-e-Hurriyat Khwaja Abdul Gani Lone (RA) paid glorious tributes to them for their great sacrifices.

AAC in a statement said that Shaheed Mirwaiz was a born leader, a torchbearer for the people and the party, who led with example. Strong on his convictions, throughout life his focus was to strive for and highlight the rights and aspirations of his people in the light of promises made to them, and its realisation in a peaceful and just manner.

"Shaheed Mirwaiz was an ardent advocate of unity and brotherhood among people and believed it to be the means to succeed in any endeavour. He made all out efforts to forge unity and erase divisions and factionalism among the people of J&K and also Muslims globally. A visionary he saw the larger picture and the larger good for people in pursuing accord," the statement said.

AAC said that Shaheed e Millat's life was dedicated to the good of his people. As the Mirwaiz, a social and educational reformer and as a strong political voice, he would champion the cause of his people.

The religious, educational and

social institutions Shaheed Mirwaiz headed were driven by the concern for each other's welfare and advancement, especially of the downtrodden and poorer sections of society.

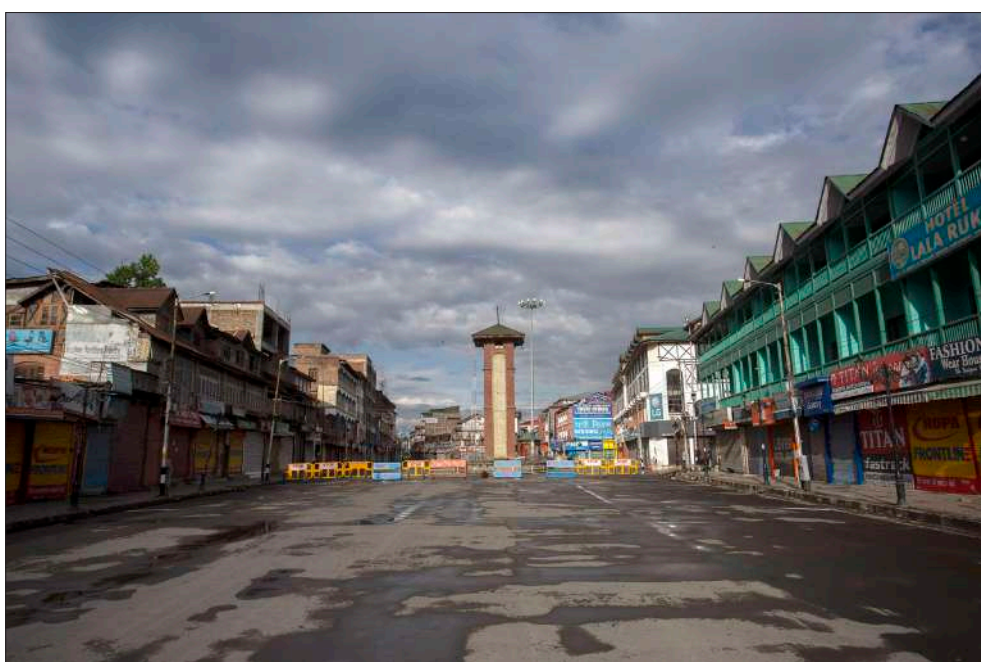
AAC said in today's testing time of the deadly Covid pandemic, the best way to pay tribute to late Mirwaiz is to exhibit a spirit of mutual cooperation among ourselves and extend helping hand to each other especially the poor and needy, COVID-19 affected, and other deserving people so that we come out of this humanitarian crisis successfully.

"People should assist all civil society initiatives and NGO's who are helping in the battle against this deadly disease and providing food and other assistance to the poor and needy whose livelihood has been destroyed and badly affected by the pandemic lockdown."

AAC said that the Mohalla and Masjid committees in each area should ensure that no one in the area goes without food and medical assistance.

AAC said that at its own level and under the socio-welfare and humanitarian organisation Darul Khair Mirwaiz Manzil led by the incarcerated Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is engaged in medical, humanitarian and relief & rehabilitation work in this pandemic.

AAC said that it pledges that it will continue to pursue peacefully and with patience to work for the realisation of the will and aspirations of the people of J&K, as was the dream of our Quaid.



SRINAGAR'S CITY CENTRE LALCHOWK WEARS A DESERTED LOOK as Kashmir is under corona lockdown to prevent the spread of the pandemic. KO Photo by Abid Bhat

Comprehensive Plan Formulated To Tackle Covid-19: DC Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammed Aijaz Asad Friday said that buildings have been identified/notified for setting up of Covid Care facilities at all 21 Panchayats in the district.

He said, in this connection, an interactive meeting was held today with the members of DDC, BDC and Panchayat representatives to identify/notify the buildings for setting up of 5 bedded Covid Care Centers in their respective jurisdictions,

as directed by the Lieutenant Governor of J&K.

The DC during the meeting said a comprehensive plan has been formulated to tackle 2nd wave of Covid-19 in joint consultation of Panchayat Bodies, Health authorities and District Administration.

He said the initiative is aimed at to decentralize COVID-19 care, by creating an adhoc infrastructure at the Panchayat level. He also said that each Panchayat will be provided Rs 1 lakh from the district Capex budget for the creation of fa-

cilities to meet the challenge of COVID-19 care with establishing a minimum 5-bedded Covid Care Centre including one Oxygen supported bed for the patient requiring immediate medical attention.

The DC said that in addition each Panchayat will be provided an Oxygen Concentrator by the DDMA besides other support to mitigate the present situation of Covid-19. He stressed that priority is to save precious human lives and overcome the 2nd wave of Covid-19 in the district.

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
- BIJBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPOR: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

- Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)
- Mughal Road - (Partially Open)
- Srinagar- Leh- (Open)

This Day in History

- 334 BC - The Macedonian army of Alexander the Great defeats Darius III of Persia in the Battle of the Granicus
- 1849 - Abraham Lincoln receives a patent (only US President to do so) for a device to lift a boat over shoals and obstructions
- 1902 - US President Theodore Roosevelt signs a treaty with Mexico under which both countries agree to submit a long-standing dispute over interest payments to the Court of Arbitration at The Hague
- 1906 - Wright Brothers are granted a patent for their "flying machine," having applied for one 3 years earlier (patent no. 821,393)
- 1919 - A. E. Douglass establishes the relative dates of two archaeological sites using ancient wood samples, marking a major step forward in the dating of archaeological sites.
- 1926 - Chiang Kai-shek replaces communists in Guomindang China
- 1939 - Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini sign "Pact of Steel"
- 1940 - UK Premier Winston Churchill flies to Paris to decide with General Maxime Weygand a strategy to save the city
- 1941 - British troops attack Baghdad
- 1942 - Mexico declares war on Nazi-Germany & Japan
- 1943 - Stalin disbands Komintern
- 1947 - 1st US ballistic missile fired
- 1950 - Celal Bayar elected President of Turkey
- 1955 - Oldest man to drive in the Grand Prix (aged 55) finishes 6th
- 1957 - South Africa's government approves race separation in universities
- 1967 - Egyptian president Nasser closes Straits of Tiran to Israel
- 1972 - Ceylon becomes Republic of Sri Lanka as its constitution is ratified
- 1972 - US President Nixon begins visit to Moscow
- 1973 - President Nixon confesses his role in Watergate cover-up
- 1976 - NASA launches space vehicle S-179
- 1979 - Canadians elect conservatives, Joseph Clark replaces Pierre Trudeau as the 16th Prime Minister of Canada Jim Henson
- 1981 - Soyuz 40 returns to Earth
- 1990 - Microsoft releases Windows 3.0
- 1990 - North & South Yemen merge to form Republic of Yemen
- 1992 - India launches its Agni rocket
- 2006 - Results from the Montenegrin independence referendum, 2006 are announced. 55.4% of voters vote to become independent from the Serbia and Montenegro Union.
- 2010 - Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus' remains are reburied in Frombork Cathedral, Poland after a 200 year search for his tomb
- 2014 - Royal Thai Armed Forces, led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha stage a coup in Thailand, suspending the kingdom's constitution and taking control of the government, the 12th since the country's first coup in 1932



HIJRI
CALENDAR

10

SHAWWAL
-UL-
MUKARRAM

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR

3: 47

ZUHR

12: 27

ASR

5:24

MAGRIB

7:33

ISHA

9:09

From KO Archives

Major Among 3 Soldiers Killed

Observer News Service

JAMMU - An Army Major was among three soldiers killed and an equal number injured when militants ambushed their patrol party in Rajouri district Friday afternoon.

Brigadier General Staff (bgs) 16 corps, Brig. Dhruv Katoch, told reporters the militants ambushed a patrol at Mouhla area in Rajouri district, 160 km north of Jammu, at 11 a.m. "The attack left Major Satyajet Shinde and three soldiers dead," Katoch said.

The attack took place when an army patrol party of 14 Maratha Light Infantry was on its way for an operation in Dharamshah area of the district following a tip off that militants were present in the area, the sources said.

Militants had set-up ambushes at Bandri area in Kalarara forests in the belt and as the troops led by Major Shinday reached the place militants hurled the grenades and opened indiscriminate fire around 1300 hours, they said

Troops took positions and fired back, they said adding that in the subsequent fire fight four army personnel were killed and four others injured.

The bodies of dead and injured were ferried in a helicopter to military hospital in Rajouri, reports said. The condition of two injured jawans is reported to be serious, they said. Hizbul Mujahedin has claimed responsibility for the attack. Brig Katoch was quoted by reports Friday evening saying that additional troops have been sent to the area and a fierce gun-battle was going on.

Meanwhile in a separate incident in the same district an army jawan was critically injured in a landmine blast near the Line of Control (LoC) to-day. Army sources said Sepoy Ajay Kumar inadvertently stepped over a landmine near LoC in Rajouri while he was on routine patrol in the area. In the explosion, Ajay sustained critical injuries. He was airlifted to army command hospital in Udhampur

Another soldier was injured when militants triggered a powerful Improvised Explosive De-vice (IED) at Komoh Kulgam in south Kashmir today.

(Kashmir Observer, 22 May, 2005)

Dr Farooq, Omar Condole Demise Of Party Member

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Party President, Member of Parliament from Srinagar Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Vice President Omar Abdullah on Friday expressed profound grief and sorrow over the demise of veteran Party Member and oldest Halqa President Abdul Ahad Dar of Majeed

Bagh, Baghat Srinagar.

In their condolence message, Dr Farooq and Omar Abdullah paid glowing tributes to the deceased, prayed for peace to his departed soul and much needed strength to the bereaved family to bear the inconsolable loss. Recalling his immense contribution towards the party, the duo said the passing away of Abdul Ahad Dar has left a deep vacuum in the party's lo-

cal unit which will be impossible to fill for many years to come. The President and Vice President have also expressed union with the grief stricken family in their hour of grief.

Among others Party General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, Provincial President Nasir Aslam Wani, have also condoled the demise of Abdul Ahad Dar Sahib, prayed for peace to his soul and fortitude to the bereaved.

Ventilators Not Available At JVC Hospital: Shaheen

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Terming the deaths owing to Covid-19 "very unfortunate", Jammu Kashmir Democratic Party President GM Shaheen on Friday urged people particularly party workers to be with the people in this time of crisis to ensure every facility for the common man in every nook and cranny of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shaheen in a statement appealed to workers to ensure supply of food to the needy, on the lines of the efforts made

during the lockdown last year.

He lamented that Covid-19 vaccines are still not available to the common people while in a couple of hospitals, especially at JVC there are no ventilators available for the patients.

"I was shocked after receiving a call from the relative of a patient who said there is no ventilator available for the patient whose Oxygen level has dropped considerably," Shaheen said.

He urged authorities to keep the ventilators available in all the hospitals. "It is very unfortunate that big claims are being

made about hospital infrastructure but on ground the situation is really very different. Patients are dying due to lack of infrastructure," Shaheen said.

He also criticised the Food Department for failing to regulate the prices of vegetables and fruits saying that some vendors and shopkeepers are charging prices at will, caring a fig for the rules. "If police can regulate order on roads, why can't the Food Department regulate the prices in interior markets where shops and vendors do normal business," Shaheen said.

آہ غلام احمد پہلوان نہ رہے



یہ خبر نہایت ہی دکھ کے ساتھ دی جاتی ہے کہ غلام احمد پہلوان مورخہ 20 مئی 2021 مطابق 8 شوال المکرم کو اس دنیا فانی سے کوچ کر گئے۔ مرحوم نیک سیرت اور ملنسار اور شریف النفس آدمی تھا۔ مرحوم کی اجتماعی و فاتحہ خوانی 23 مئی 2021 بروز اتوار کو ان کے آبائی مقبرہ نزد یک ڈپنسری کھائی ون نزروہ میں صبح 10 بجے انجام دی جائے گی۔

بذریعہ سوغواران

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Total Deaths Due To Pandemic Up To Three Times Higher Than Reported: WHO

Agence France-Presse

GENEVA: Up to three times more people have died due to the pandemic than indicated by the officially reported Covid deaths, the World Health Organization said Friday.

So far, more than 3.4 million deaths worldwide have officially been attributed to Covid-19 since the disease first surfaced in China in late 2019.

But according to a global health statistics report from the WHO, far more people have died who would otherwise not have died had it not been for the pandemic, either due to Covid or because they could not get treatment for other ailments.

"Total deaths are at least two to three times higher than officially reported," Samira Asma, the WHO assistant director-general in charge of data, told reporters.



In 2020, the report found there had been at least three million excess deaths due directly or indirectly to Covid-19, while the official number of Covid deaths was 1.8 million at the end of the year.

At a regional level, excess mortality estimates for the Americas stood at up to 1.46 million, and as much as 1.21 million in the European region in 2020, representing 60 and 50 percent more than the reported Covid deaths there, the report found.

Asked how many excess deaths could be attributed to the pandemic up to today globally, Asma said that "I think safely, about six to eight million deaths could be an estimate."

The WHO was working with countries "to understand the true human toll of the pandemic so we can be better prepared for the next emergency," she said.

- 'An undercount' -

The discrepancy is due to a number of factors, including lagging reporting on Covid deaths in a number of countries and the fact that many people early on died of Covid without being tested.

"This has resulted in many of the official Covid-19 statistics being an undercount," WHO data analyst

William Msemburi told reporters. In addition, he said, there "are the deaths that can be attributed to the difficult conditions that many people in the world are living under because of the pandemic".

Many people suffering from chronic diseases or acute illnesses other than Covid-19 have been unable to get treatment and access healthcare due to the measures imposed around the world aimed at reigning in the pandemic.

The socioeconomic toll of lockdowns and other measures has also lead to significant increases in depression, and the WHO said there were indications of growing suicide rates in some parts of the world.

"Acknowledging that the reported Covid numbers are only a fraction of this full impact, we have been looking at the excess mortality attributable to Covid-19 for the year 2020," Msemburi said.



PALESTINIANS WAVE NATIONAL FLAGS AT AL-AQSA MOSQUE complex in Jerusalem, Friday, May 21, 2022, as a cease-fire took effect between Hamas and Israel after an 11-day war | AP

Israel Declares 'Unconditional' Truce, Palestinians Celebrate

Agencies

GAZA/JERUSALEM: Moments after Israel announced an unconditional truce, halting 11 days of relentless bombing of Gaza Strip, Palestinians across occupied territories poured onto the streets, waving flags and flashing 'V' signs for victory.

In Gaza, which had been under heavy Israeli bombardment for 11 days, people came out onto the streets and chanted Allahu Akbar, while in East Jerusalem and West Bank towns, people set off fireworks.

Earlier Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had vowed on Wednesday to press ahead with a fierce military offensive in the Gaza Strip, pushing back against global calls for truce.

Mosque loud-speakers feted "the victory of the resistance achieved over the Occupation (Israel)." Cars driving around East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah at dawn flew Palestinian flags and honked horns, echoing the scenes in Gaza.

An Egyptian-mediated truce between Israel and Hamas took hold on Friday after the worst violence in years, with U.S. President Joe Biden pledging to salvage the devastated Gaza Strip and the United Nations urging renewed Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

Israeli aerial bombardment of the densely populated enclave killed 232 Palestinians, damaged thousands of homes and disabled critical infrastructure. Gaza rocket attacks killed 12 people in Israel and wounded hundreds.

In the countdown to the 2 a.m. (2300 GMT Thursday) cease-fire, Palestinian rocket salvos continued and Israel carried out at least one air strike.

Each side said it stood ready

to retaliate for any truce violations by the other. Egypt said it would send two delegations to monitor the ceasefire.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said the resistance groups have obtained guarantees from Egyptian mediators that the Israeli attacks on Gaza and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque - the issues that triggered the fighting - would stop.

The violence erupted on May 10, triggered by Palestinians' anger at what they saw as Israeli curbs on their rights in Jerusalem, including during police confrontations with protesters at Al-Aqsa mosque during the Ramadan fasting month.

The fighting meant many Palestinians in Gaza could not mark the Eid al-Fitr festival at Ramadan's conclusion. On Friday, postponed Eid meals were held throughout Gaza.

In Israel, radio stations that had carried around-the-clock news and commentary switched back to pop music and folk songs.

Embarrassing Defeat

In a commentary, the Times of Israel wrote Friday that the Palestinian resistance in Gaza has turned into "a military monster which now aspires to compete with Hezbollah and is managing to embarrass Israel time after time".

Gideon Sa'ar, an Israeli politician and the leader of New Hope party, denounced Netanyahu's unilateral declaration of ceasefire with Hamas as "embarrassing".

"With the best intelligence and air force in the world, Netanyahu managed to extract from Hamas an 'unconditional ceasefire' - embarrassing," Sa'ar tweeted.

Earlier, he had warned

against a ceasefire, saying such a move "would seriously harm Israeli deterrence" against Hamas and other resistance groups.

Hamas cast the fighting as successful resistance of a militarily and economically stronger foe.

"It is true the battle ends today but Netanyahu and the whole world should know that our hands are on the trigger and we will continue to grow the capabilities of this resistance," said Ezzat El-Reshiq, a senior member of the Hamas political bureau, referring to Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

El-Reshiq told Reuters in Doha the movement's demands included protecting the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and ending the eviction of several Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem.

In Israel, relief was bitter-sweet.

"It's good that the conflict will end, but unfortunately I don't feel like we have much time before the next escalation," Eiv Izyaev, a 30-year-old software engineer, said in Tel Aviv.

Amid growing global alarm, Biden had urged Netanyahu to seek de-escalation, while Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations sought to mediate.

Death Count, Reconstruction

Gaza health officials said 232 Palestinians, including 65 children, had been killed and more than 1,900 wounded in aerial bombardments. Israel said it had killed at least 160 combatants.

Authorities put the number of deaths in Israel at 12, with hundreds of people treated for injuries in rocket attacks that caused panic and sent people rushing into shelters.

'Share Dollars And Doses': Richer Nations Try To Tackle Vaccine Inequalities

Major drugmakers and rich nation leaders faced up on Friday to the startling global imbalance in fighting COVID-19 and made big pledges to up supplies of cut-price vaccines to poorer regions.

Lavishly-funded mass inoculation campaigns are helping the West and others slash infections, but few shots have reached poorer nations where the virus is still raging, sometimes uncontrollably, drawing accusations of "vaccine apartheid".

More than 80% of the first billion shots went to wealthy countries, compared to just 0.2% for low-income nations, US philanthropist Bill Gates told a special Group of 20 summit focusing on the global health crisis.

"If we do not close this immense gap, more people will die needlessly. There are two immediate actions countries can take: share dollars and doses," he said. The summit was to call for voluntary licensing and technology transfers to boost vaccine production, but will sidestep a push from the United States and other nations to waive valuable patents, a joint declaration showed.

The European Union promised to invest 1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) to set up vaccination manufacturing hubs in Africa.

At the Italian- and EU-hosted virtual summit, Pfizer and BioNTech also pledged to make available 1 billion cut-price doses this year to poorer nations. Another 1 billion vaccines would be provided next year, Pfizer boss Albert Bourla told the summit.

Johnson & Johnson promised 200 million doses of its vaccine to COVAX, a vaccine-sharing



programme co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"As we prepare for the next pandemic, our priority must be to ensure that we all overcome the current one together. We must vaccinate the world, and do it fast," Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi said.

China's President Xi Jinping pledged \$3 billion in aid over the next three years to help developing countries recover from the pandemic and proposed setting up an international forum to promote fair distribution of vaccines.

US President Joe Biden was not among the speakers, organisers said. His administration has backed calls from many developing countries for a waiver of patents for COVID-19 vaccines, in the hope that would boost production and allow for more equitable distribution.

However, the final declaration seen by Reuters did not mention such a mechanism. It has been contested by some European nations, who have instead called for the removal of US trade barriers that they consider the main bottleneck preventing a ramping up of vaccine production.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said existing global agreements already allowed countries to force companies to share their licences in an emergency. REUTERS

Israeli Tourists Flocking To Yemeni Island Of Socotra Using UAE-Issued Visas: Report



Agencies

The United Arab Emirates has reportedly transported groups of Israeli tourists to the strategic Yemeni island of Socotra to spend their vacations there, more than eight months after the Persian Gulf country established full diplomatic relations with the Tel Aviv regime in a deal brokered by former US president Donald Trump.

Yemeni sources, requesting not to be named, said hundreds of foreign tourists have entered the island over the past few days on visas granted to them by Abu Dhabi, in flagrant violation of Yemen's sovereignty as well as international law and regulations, local media outlets reported.

The sources posted pictures of the tourists, mostly Israelis, on social media platforms.

They also called on the international community and the UN Security Council to adopt a clear position in the face of UAE's violations, particularly as the administration of former Yemeni

president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, has so far failed to take effective measures against the occupation of Socotra island.

Home to some 60,000 people, Socotra overlooks the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a main shipping route that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea. It has a unique ecosystem.

Socotra has been a source of tension between the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which have been vying for control of the resource-rich island.

Last June, UAE-backed separatists of the so-called Southern Transitional Council (STC) took control of Socotra in a move described by Hadi's administration as "a full-fledged coup."

The French-language news outlet JForum said in a report last August that Israel, in cooperation with the UAE, was planning to build intelligence-gathering bases on the Socotra island.

The purpose of the bases, according to the report, is to electronically monitor Saudi-led forces waging a war on Yemen.

Bomb Blast At Pro-Palestine Rally In Pakistan Kills 6, Injures 14

Agencies

A bomb explosion at a pro-Palestine rally in Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan has left at least six people dead and 14 others injured.

The deadly blast occurred in Chaman, a town near the border with Afghanistan, on Friday, as people gathered to voice support for Palestinians following Israeli violence and the bombardment of the besieged Gaza Strip.

"It was an improvised explosive device which went off as participants began to disperse,"

provincial official Tariq Mengal said, referring to the bomb used in the attack.

A second official also confirmed the incident and the toll.

Thousands of people rallied in support of Palestinians across Pakistan on Friday, hours after a ceasefire was announced between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas, which ended 11 days of relentless aerial strikes and shelling by the Israeli regime and retaliatory attacks by Palestinian resistance groups.

The demonstration in Chaman was organized by the Jamiat



Ulema-e-Islam party. Local news networks, citing police, reported that the bomb targeted the car of the party's Vice President Maulana Abdul Qadir Loni, but he was not killed or wounded in the explosion.

The latest development comes just weeks after a car bomb exploded at a luxury hotel where the Chinese ambassador to the country was reportedly staying

ed in the explosion.

The latest development comes just weeks after a car bomb exploded at a luxury hotel where the Chinese ambassador to the country was reportedly staying

NEWS MAKERS

Internet Explorer To Retire In June 2022, Says Microsoft

Agence France-Presse

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft said it is retiring Internet Explorer, the browser it created more than 25 years and which is now largely abandoned as people instead use competitors like Google's Chrome or Apple's Safari.

"We are announcing that the future of Internet Explorer on Windows 10 is in Microsoft Edge," the company said in a blog post Wednesday, referring to its other browser.

"Not only is Microsoft Edge a faster, more secure and more modern browsing experience than Internet Explorer, but it is also able to address a key concern: compatibility for older, legacy websites and applications," Microsoft said. People ribbed Internet Explorer in tweets on Thursday.

"RIP Internet Explorer, I never used it, but after it dies we can't make fun of it anymore," wrote someone with the handle Arcader UwU.

"I still fondly remember how I used it to download Chrome on every new Windows system," said Hrishikesh Pardeshi.

"This browser might seem old and outdated nowadays, but back in the day, everyone needed it. RIP Internet Explorer 1995-2022," said someone called TheCool_ColdMan.

Microsoft said that as of June 15, 2022 Internet Explorer will be retired and no longer be supported by the company. But Internet Explorer-based websites and applications will work with Edge at least until 2029, Microsoft said, because many organizations have websites based on the now-doomed browser.

Old Records Shed New Light On Smallpox Outbreaks In 1700S

Associated Press

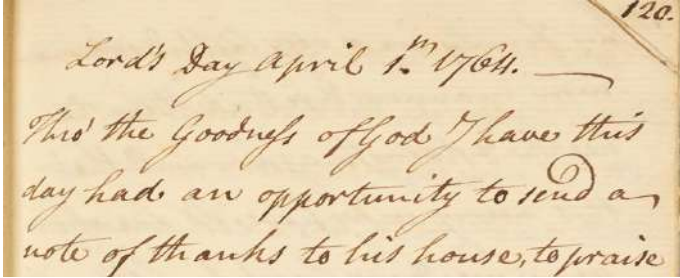
And three centuries later, the parallels with the coronavirus pandemic are uncanny. "How little we've changed," said CLA archivist Zachary Bodnar, who led the digitization effort, working closely with the New England Historic Genealogical Society.

"The fact that we're finding these similarities in the records of our past is a very interesting parallel," Bodnar said in an interview.

"Sometimes the more we learn, the more we're still the same, I guess." Smallpox was eradicated, but not before it sickened and killed millions worldwide.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say the last natural outbreak of smallpox in the United States occurred in 1949.

In 1980, the World Health Orga-



nization's decision-making arm declared it eradicated, and no cases of naturally occurring smallpox have been reported since.

But in April 1721, after an English ship, the HMS Seahorse, brought it to Boston, it was a clear and present danger.

By winter of 1722, it would infect more than half of the city's population of 11,000 and kill 850.

Much earlier outbreaks, also imported

from Europe, killed Native Americans indiscriminately in the 1600s.

Now, digitized church records are helping to round out the picture of how the colonists coped when it was their turn to endure pestilence.

The world's first proper vaccination didn't occur until the end of that century, when an English country doctor named Edward Jenner inoculated an 8-year-old boy against smallpox in 1796.

Japanese Bullet Train Arrived 1 Min Late...Reason? The Driver Was On The Toilet

Agence France-Presse

TOKYO, JAPAN: The driver of a speeding Japanese bullet train handed over the controls to an unqualified conductor so he could answer an urgent call... of nature, a rail operator has revealed.

The unfortunate driver's toilet trip might have gone unnoticed, except for the fact that his train was subsequently one minute late, which prompted an investigation in a country famous for punctuality.

The driver confessed that he had left his post after experiencing abdominal pain, and turned over controls of the train with 160 passengers on board to a conductor so he could run to the toilet.



He was away for three minutes as the train ran at 150 kilometres (93 miles) an hour.

Bullet trains are tightly controlled by computerised central command systems, but human drivers are required to stay in place to deal with any unexpected situation, a spokesman told AFP.

They also need to manually brake or accelerate as necessary to ensure safety and keep trains on schedule.

Adherence To SOPs Bearing Results, Positivity Rate Declining: DC Kupwara

Observer News Service

KULGAM: Strict Adherence to Covid-19 SOPs has started showing results and positivity rate has also started to decline in the district, however need of the hour is to stick to SOPs to witness much better results in coming days stated Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat here during a press brief.

On the occasion, the DC said that the situation is gradually improving however people have to stick to Covid-19 SOPs for further improvement in the situation.

With regard to availability of Oxygen in the district, the DC said that the 1000 lpm Oxygen generation plant at District hospital is functioning properly while repair work is in progress on the 350 lpm Oxygen Generation plant and it will soon be in service. He said that to deal with any exigency the District administration has also established Oxygen bank.

Giving details on the positive cases in home isolation, the DC said that the Medical kits containing essential medicines are being provided to patients at home isolation besides proper

follow up of positive patients is a routine.

The DC said that presently there are 2800 positive cases under home isolation in the district whereas earlier 75 patients were admitted at Covid-19 hospital and after recovery of patients now the number of admitted patients stands 45.

He said that the district administration has placed aggressive testing mechanisms in the district to detect the positive patients and reiterated that it has enhanced infrastructure with better healthcare facilities in the district to save the lives of people.

In order to strengthen Covid care facilities in rural areas Covid care centers with a capacity of 5 beds along with all other requisite facilities at every Panchayat will be established said the DC.

He appealed to people for the cooperation and urged for sticking to the precautionary measures for containment of the disease. He advised people to strictly follow the SOPs and guidelines issued by the administration so that spread of this disease is curtailed and added that by collective efforts we will overcome this situation.

Multi Pronged Strategy Being Adopted To Tackle Covid In Kupwara: DC

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Imam Din today said that both Administration and Health department along with police are putting their best efforts in mitigation of Covid crisis in the district.

The DC said this while briefing media persons, about covid situation in the district adding that a multipronged strategy is being adopted vis-à-vis tackling the Covid-19 situation.

He said that sampling has been intensified in the district to identify the positive cases and isolate them to safeguard the lives of other people.

Giving details, the DC said that the district had total 10015 positive cases, adding that 8044



recovery cases have been recorded in the district which commensurate to 80.32 percent. He said 131 deaths have also been recorded so far in the district.

The DC said that the positive rate of cases is declining day by day in the district and appealed to the people to continue their support to the administration by following Covid guidelines in letter and spirit.

DC Anantnag Directs For Expediting Work On Vailoo-Singapore Tunnel, NH-244

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag Dr. Piyush Singla, in a meeting with concerned officers, directed for expediting of work on Vailoo Singapore Tunnel, Ahlan Vailoo and Vailoo Donipawa stretches of NH-244.

It was informed by GM NHIDCL that the identification of land for 10 km approach road from Vailoo to Ahlan (tunnel spot) has been done besides work on Vailoo Donipawa stretch is under process from Akingam downwards.

The DC stressed for prompt verification and survey of land

from Vailoo to the tunnel in a time bound manner so that the project is completed at the earliest.

He directed for issuing land title verification, pollution control clearance, NOCs etc to ensure the work is expedited.

Assuring the NHIDCL authorities full support from administration, the DC directed SDM Kokernag to constitute revenue teams which will coordinate on ground with them. He also called for taking welfare measures for the local people.

The meeting was also attended by ADC (G), ACR, engineers of NHIDCL and other concerned officers.



POLICE OFFICIALS QUESTIONING COMMUTERS IN CITY CENTRE on Friday as restrictions were tightened in view of the martyrdom anniversaries of late Mirwaiz Farooq and Hawal massacre. KO Photo by Abid Bhat

Staying Positive Essential For Covid Patients, Health Workers: Clinical Psychologist

'I Will Advise Everyone To Smile Even Behind Your Mask'

Observer News Service

UDHAMPUR: Dr. Amrita Thakur, a clinical Psychologist, deployed in District Hospital on Covid 19 duty Friday said that to maintain mental positivity was very essential for recovery of covid patients.

While sharing her views regarding Covid-19, she emphasised that this Coronavirus pandemic led to unprecedented hazards to mental health globally. In this era mental positivity is very essential for the Covid patients, health workers as well as the general public also. Being a psychological medico, she stated that the surge in covid cases has developed high risk of depression, anxiety, mental fatigue.

"During this difficult time it is important to keep ourselves both physically as well as mentally healthy" she said and added "This will not only help you to fight against the virus if you get it but also help in the long run. She suggested that to eat a healthy and nutritious diet which helps one's



immune system to function properly. In addition to this, she advised the general public to take care of yourself and that of your family members then everything will become so easy to handle. She further advised to take a walk and stay away from social media to develop a positive attitude.

"I will advise everyone to smile even behind your mask". To develop a positive attitude the people should think of the doctors and paramedical staff, who work day and night to fight against this deadly virus" she

advised. She said it has been observed that paranoia and hysteria are adding to the woes of both the Covid patients and the health workers. She said one should keep exercising like walking for at least 20 minutes daily and stay away from negative thoughts and news.

"We need to stay optimistic that the virus will disappear soon because we are collectively fighting it" she maintained and appealed to the public to protect themselves and not to come out of their houses without an inevitable reason.

65 Percent Recovery Rate In Anantnag: DC Stresses On Community Triaging For Effective Management

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Piyush Singla Friday said that the current Covid recovery rate of the district is about 65 percent and 8081 patients have recovered so far.

The DC said this while briefing about the situation arising from the 2nd wave of Covid Pandemic besides the measures being taken to combat it.

Regarding the oxygen availability, the DC informed that 2350 lpm and 500 lpm capacity oxygen plants are running smoothly and catering to the medical oxygen needs at Covid Hospitals, GMC Anantnag and Trauma Hospital Bijbehara respectively. He added the oxygen capacity is being augmented besides working of the plants, oxygen purity and



requirement of the patients is properly monitored by oxygen audit committees.

Dr. Singla said the district is focussing on aggressive contact tracing and sampling especially in containment zones adding 14 contacts are tested per index case.

The DC said the administration is strengthening Community Triaging and referral system in rural areas with establishment of 5 bedded Covid Care Centres in each Panchayat which will have proper linkage with formal health centres.

Dr. Singla said the administration has enhanced medical infrastructure and is committed to provide quality healthcare to the covid patients adding that the people should not pay any heed to the rumours.

The DC also appealed to the public not to lower the guard and to stick to Covid Appropriate Behaviour besides avoiding the gatherings for containing the spread of infections.

Dr. Singla thanked the people for cooperating with the administration and solicited further support to contain the pandemic effectively.

Positivity Rate Declines In Jammu From 7 Percent To 10 Percent: DC

Observer News Service

JAMMU: After new refined containment strategy and other measures being taken by District Administration, overall positivity rate which was above 10 percent in the first week of May has dropped to below 7 percent in the last few days.

This was stated by Deputy Commissioner Jammu Anshul Garg at a press briefing, held today here at DC Office.

The Deputy Commissioner said that despite decreasing trend in positive cases, the District Administration has not lowered its guard and it is taking all measures to combat Covid-19 pandemic.

"Equivalent emphasis has been given on testing in urban as well as rural areas. Around 7 thousand to 8 thousand tests are being conducted on a daily basis out of which 50% have been conducted in rural areas; he informed. He said the Administration is laying more emphasis on early testing as testing, tracking and treatment is the only solution to win the battle against Covid-19, Deputy Commissioner said.

Anshul Garg said that with the active participation of PRI members, a redefined containment strategy has been developed under which village wise roaster is being maintained to isolate the positive patients.

Regarding the oxygenated beds, the Deputy Commissioner said that District Administration has taken several measures and is working round the clock to augment the availability of Oxygen

supported beds not only in the GMC and Associated Hospitals but also at district and Sub-district Hospitals. He also informed that as per the directions of Lieutenant Governor, each Panchayat of the Jammu district will have 05 bedded and each block 30 bedded Covid Care facilities soon. "These will be established within days for which adequate resources and manpower has already been mobilised" the DC said.

The Deputy Commissioner further informed that during the door to door mopping exercise, more than 2250 positive patients have been provided assistance with Covid kits including oxy-meters, essential medicines and dos & don't pamphlets. Moreover, around 5 thousand kits have also been distributed to the public in general.

Regarding inoculation, the Deputy Commissioner informed that the majority of 45+ age group persons have been vaccinated under the vaccination drive. He said that over 3.55 lakh beneficiaries of this age group have been given the first dose of vaccine and left out beneficiaries will be covered soon to achieve the 100% target.

The Deputy Commissioner appealed to the people under 45+ age group to get their vaccination as vaccines are available at the vaccination centers.

The Deputy Commissioner also appealed to the public in general to follow the restrictions and guidelines issued by the government as these are for their benefits and are very crucial to break the chain of Covid-19 transmission.

My Father Killing Was A Murder Of Truth: Sajad Lone

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Peoples Conference chairman Sajad Gani Lone on Friday said that his father Abdul Gani Lone was killed for speaking the truth and expressing his sharp ideas.

In his Tweets Lone said that some opposed his father and created a false narrative that ended up in his killing seeing what his father was mercifully spared from seeing.

"But what gives me some solace is that those who opposed him and created that false narrative that culminated in my father being killed- that crowd some of them still alive were better dead than alive. they saw what my father was mercifully spared from seeing," Lone tweeted.

He said the worst form of oppressors is those who oppress under the fig leaf of fighting oppression. "As long as we do not stop col-

lectively lying especially on who killed whom we as people will continue to be in the state that we r. People deserve to know- oppressors have many forms. And the worse form of oppressors' are those who oppress under the fig leaf of fighting oppression," Lone tweeted.

Lone said his father left as a hero and his death symbolized dignity and sacrifice.

"My father left when dying the way he did symbolised dignity symbolised sacrifice. He went at the right time. He left a hero," Lone tweeted.

Abdul Gani Lone, who founded Peoples Conference in 1978, was killed when he was attending a rally on May 21, 2002 at Eidgah to mark the death anniversary of Mirwaiz Muhammad Farooq

It is pertinent to mention that the label of their killing was leveled against unknown gunmen, who were never identified.

Govt Re-Designates Post Of Secy J&K Legislative Assembly As Secy General

SRINAGAR: The Government Friday re-designated the post of Secretary, J&K Legislative Assembly as Secretary General, J&K Legislative Assembly.

An order issued by Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in this regard reads, "Sanction is hereby accorded to the re-designation of the post

of Secretary, J&K Legislative Assembly as Secretary General, J&K Legislative Assembly in the Pay Level 14 (144200-218200) held by Muzaffar Ahmad Wani subject to the condition that the said post shall revert back to its original position immediately once Muzaffar Ahmad Wani vacates the post".

Adv Khan Reviews Functioning Of RD&PR Dept, Performance Of NRLM

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan Friday chaired a meeting to review the functioning of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj ((RD&PR) department of Kashmir division at Civil Secretariat here.

During the meeting, execution of MGNREGA works, implementation of ongoing works under Centrally sponsored schemes, PMAY, Rural Sanitation and status of construction and renovation of Panchayat Ghars and buildings for DDCs and BDCs were discussed in detail.

The Advisor also reviewed the implementation of National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) under the chapter of UMEED in Jammu and Kashmir.

Advisor while taking firsthand feedback from the respective Directors about the implementation of schemes,

directed the officers to have strict adherence to rules besides verification of the works done through engineering staff on regular basis. He further stressed on the need to have cross verifications done by the officers and solicit feedback from PRIs and locals so that there is no compromise on the quality and transparency.

Highlighting the importance of strict adherence to timelines, Advisor directed the officers for timely disbursement of wages under MGNREGA. He said that the wage employment has assumed great significance in these times of COVID crisis. He insisted on the maintenance of proper record about the wage distribution so that a fair idea about the number of families that are being benefitted emerges.

Emphasizing on the regular field visits by the officers in their respective blocks, he directed the officers to step up



monitoring so that the impact of wage employment on ground is evident and its benefits are truly replicated on ground.

He also directed the concerned SEs to maintain record of their field visits and report in this regard should be shared with the higher authorities on regular basis for follow up action. He said that this will not only give an insight into the ongoing works but will also make the officers accountable at all levels.

Detailed presentations were

given by the Director Rural Development, Kashmir, Director NRLM, J&K and Director Rural Sanitation with respect to their respective departments. The Advisor was given an overview about the district and Panchayat wise progress achieved so far regarding MGNREGA, Pardhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) and 14th Finance Commission in respect of Kashmir division.

A detailed status was also

given about the construction of new Panchayat Ghars and renovation of Panchayat Ghars under RGSA in Kashmir besides the implementation of NRLM and SBM.

Regarding the repairs and renovation of Panchayat Ghars under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), it was given out in the meeting that out of the approved 50 Panchayat Ghars for repairs and renovation during 2018-19, 41 have been completed while another 80 Panchayat Ghars are to be

renovated during 2020-21. It was also given out that 75 new panchayat bhawans are to be constructed during 2020-21.

The Advisor directed the officers to complete all the Panchayat works on war footing basis as these buildings have assumed a great significance in view of the successful conduct of Panchayat elections.

He also enquired about the number of Sarpanches and Panches that have been trained through various programmes and exposure visits. He added that the PRIs need to be given an exposure to the best practices which are to be emulated in their respective areas.

While reiterating the role of Rural Development department in the crises of COVID, he laid emphasis on the decision taken by the Lieutenant Governor regarding the establishment of 5-Bedded hospitals at each Panchayat level. The Advisor directed the Director RDD to identify the buildings and locations in consultation with medical department and by involving PRIs

immediately and forward the information to the concerned quarters by tomorrow.

The Director assured the Advisor that the information is being compiled and the same shall be forwarded to the concerned quarters by tomorrow.

Regarding the functioning of NRLM in Jammu and Kashmir he was informed that 46198 SHGS have been formed under NRLM (Umeed). It was given out in the meeting that 400764 rural women have been mobilized into SHGS. It was also given out that 4164 village organisations have been promoted and 441 cluster level federations have also been promoted.

The Advisor directed that Rural Haats should be given priority and should be included in the works programme. He said that Self Help Groups from every district should be provided platform for showcasing their products in these Rural Haats.

The Advisor added that these Rural Haats provide a platform to Rural women registered with SLRM to earn their livelihood.

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NO HOLDS BARRED



Start with vaccination: we need to put shots into at least a billion arms as fast as possible. To date, fewer than 10% of citizens in each South Asian country (with the exception of Bhutan) have received at least one vaccine dose, according to Our World in Data. We must pull new levers to speed things up

Modi is Here to Stay

Why Covid-19 catastrophe in India may not dent the PM's popularity

RIYAZ WANI

There are still three years to go before another general election. The PM has ample time to not only resurrect his battered image but also rally people around a new crisis, manufactured or otherwise

As India descends into chaos following runaway Covid-19 surge, many people foresee the eventual unraveling of the charisma of the country's strongman leader Narendra Modi. But there are reasons to believe that the virulent second wave may not be enough to dent the PM's popularity. His 21 years in power - six of them as prime minister of the country - prove it.

From 2001 to 2013, he won three successive elections in Gujarat despite getting a bad press in the country and being shunned internationally. The PM was banned from setting foot on the US soil for his alleged role in Gujarat riots that led to death of over 1000 Muslims. But despite the controversies surrounding his rule, Modi's popularity in Gujarat rose and soon spilled over its borders. He began to be seen as a tough and an efficient guy, a one-stop solution for country's ills. Soon, the myth around and about him caught on. Later he diversified his image and added to it the dimensions of a good organizer, administrator and the promoter of Gujarat's economic development. By the time, Modi won his third Gujarat election, he was a nifty package of all the ideal qualities that a critical mass of Indian population in 2014 wanted in its leader.

As prime minister with an absolute majority in the parliament there has been no looking back for Modi. With a penchant for dramatic measures that create a false impression of being a magic bullet for the country's problems, the PM in 2015 announced demonitization of high denomination notes. The move triggered nation-wide chaos. The entire population of the country was forced to stand in long queues outside banks in the heat of harsh Indian summer to deposit old notes - scores of people perished while doing so. Demonitization also set back the small-scale business sector, a fallout that was further reinforced by the subsequent implementation of uniform tax regime for the country.

But Modi became only more popular. He turned the massive suffering into a moral experience for people. Soon after, he won the all-important polls in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous and politically very important state. The victory in Uttar Pradesh was of profound significance not only for the future of the state but also for India as a whole. At stake was not only the mundane question of who ruled the UP over next five years but where the India was headed as a country.

Modi's win in the UP was also a ringing public endorsement of demonitization and mandate to the PM to go ahead with similar radical measures. Thereafter followed surgical strike against Pakistan. But by the time, 2019 elections drew around, Modi's chances of re-election looked diminished. This is when Pulwama attack that killed over 40 CRPF personnel took place. The PM once again launched an attack against Pakistan, this time deep inside the country on alleged terror camp at Balakot. This fired up his support base, winning him election with a landslide majority. Pakistan's swift retaliation, the loss of a fighter plane and the cap-



As prime minister with an absolute majority in the parliament, there has been no looking back for Modi with a penchant for dramatic measures that create a false impression of being a magic bullet for the country's problems

ture of its pilot did nothing to affect his chances.

Soon after, the re-elected PM embarked on far-reaching moves like repeal of Article 370 that granted J&K its semi-autonomous status under India's constitution. The move per se didn't invite any adverse international reaction. Even Pakistan, the country most affected by the move, restricted its response to diplomacy and the downgrading of the bilateral relationship.

The Article 370 move was followed by measures like National Citizens Register, Citizenship Amendment Act that not only deprived lakhs in Assam of their citizenship but also made religion as the basis of citizenship. Last year, without any debate or consultation, the PM enacted new farming laws impacting millions of farmers. Both the citizenship law and the farming legislation triggered monthslong nation-wide protests but Modi kept winning. His image has often hurt but he has managed to bounce back with a vengeance, often rallying people around a new contentious issue.

Similarly, last year when lakhs of daily wage labourers in major metropolises lost their jobs and were forced to walk hundreds of kilometres to their homes following the sudden announcement of nation-wide lockdown, few expected Modi to win more elections - at least not in the home states of these labourers like Bihar. But the BJP, Modi's party, increased

its tally in the state in subsequent election - a significant chunk of his seats comprising the constituencies largely inhabited by these very labourers.

It is true that the catastrophic nature of the second Covid-19 wave has confronted the PM and his overarching image its biggest challenge. Lakhs of infections and thousands of deaths caused largely by the lack of adequate medical facilities has apparently unraveled brand Modi. But this state of affairs won't be enough to do him in. He may have lost West Bengal but the BJP has secured its place as the No 2 party in the state, virtually eliminating the communists and Congress from the scene.

Looking ahead, there are still three years to go before another general election. So the PM has ample time to not only resurrect his battered image but also rally people around a new crisis, manufactured or otherwise. But, yes, ahead of 2024, the election in Uttar Pradesh next year would be crucial for the PM's future. A loss in the country's most populous state would certainly cast shadow over his re-election.

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

The author is the Political Editor at Kashmir Observer

Our Responsibility to South Asia

KEVIN RUDD

A friend's father last week. Everyone I know has someone they've lost."

There are already too many of these stories, and now this tragedy is spilling across India's borders. In Nepal, where one out of every two citizens is testing positive for the virus, the hardship is multiplied by the fact that India is the country's principal supplier of vaccines and oxygen; that supply line is now shut down.

While these up-close images reveal an unfolding humanitarian calamity, the 30,000-foot perspective shows that things will only worsen as this deadly wave expands unchecked to rural areas of the subcontinent, where essential medical facilities are even scarcer. As fellow members of the human family, and as citizens of democracies that stand up for each other when help is required, we all need to act - governments, businesses, and private citizens. The quicker we do so, the more lives we might save.

Helping South Asia is not only the right thing to do; it is also in our own self-interest. The rampant spread of the virus anywhere can create more deadly variants that threaten all of us. So, what can be done?

Start with vaccination: we need to put shots into at least a billion arms as fast as possible. To date, fewer than 10% of citizens in each South Asian country (with the exception of Bhutan) have received at least one vaccine dose, according to Our World in Data. We must pull new levers to speed things up.

To that end, the rest of the world should join the United States and 100-

There are already too many of these stories, and now this tragedy is spilling across India's borders. In Nepal, where one out of every two citizens is testing positive for the virus, the hardship is multiplied by the fact that India is the country's principal supplier of vaccines and oxygen; that supply line is now shut down.

plus other countries in backing a temporary World Trade Organization waiver of intellectual-property protections on vaccines. While not a silver bullet, this initiative, coupled with the removal of restrictions on related supplies and equipment, would help India's sizable pharmaceutical industry to increase production, thereby reducing vaccine shortages domestically and in the region.

It is also incumbent on countries with excess vaccine supplies - particularly those in the developed world - to share the wealth. Earlier in the pandemic, India set an example by sending more than 66 million doses of vaccines to 95 countries around the world when it could have vaccinated its own people more rapidly. It is time to return the favor.

Equally important, more must be done to counter the scourge of misinformation. In an environment where fraudulent miracle cures are being propagated widely on social media, the world should help fund and support vaccine-literacy programs. Campaigns to increase the acceptance of masks, vaccines, social distancing, and other measures are needed especially in rural parts of the subcon-

continent, where complex sociocultural factors and linguistic diversity pose additional challenges.

Finally, there is the problem of insufficient oxygen - canisters, concentrators, and tankers to transport them. Of all the requests we have heard from our friends in the region, the plea for more oxygen has been the most urgent. India has only around 1,600 cryogenic tankers capable of transporting oxygen from production facilities to hospitals. And that includes the tankers it already supplied to Nepal, which itself has such a paucity of oxygen canisters that it is now asking mountaineers returning from Mount Everest to donate their empty ones.

Shipping cryogenic tankers and oxygen canisters to South Asia will help save the lives of those threatened by the shortage, rather than by COVID-19 itself. Here, developed countries with ample production capacity can help in ways that local nongovernmental organizations cannot - and help they must.

Ultimately, this pandemic, and the legacy of our global response, belongs to all of us. Each generation is confronted by challenges great and small, and this one is ours. Unless we can truly protect people everywhere by arresting the virus and slowing its mutations, we may find ourselves facing the prospect of a permanent pandemic

Project Syndicate

BRISBANE - Almost one-quarter of humanity lives on the Indian subcontinent. That fact is easily forgotten elsewhere, as world leaders focus on combating outbreaks of COVID-19 and its new variants within their own countries. But when our descendants pass judgment on this moment in history, they won't remember just the lockdowns, face masks, and vaccination programs. They will also remember India and its neighbors.

They will remember how human remains have been found bloated and decomposing on the banks of the sacred River Ganges; how bodies had to be left in the heat outside crematoria, owing to a lack of wood for funerary pyres. They will remember how hospitals ran low on oxygen, medication, and hospital beds, while people lined up outside emergency departments and clinics begging for someone to save their loved ones.

All of this will be seared in memory and history. Beyond inflicting agony on the sick, the coronavirus outbreak in the world's most populous democracy is now robbing victims of their dignity in death, too.

At the Asia Society, we hear accounts almost daily from friends and colleagues who have lost their relatives. According to one member of our Asia 21 Young Leaders network, "An uncle passed away last evening. Another the day before.

Israel-Palestine: Nine days that shook the world

The contours of the new struggle have already been determined. It has Jerusalem at its geographical centre, and Palestinian citizens of Israel as its foot soldiers

David Hearst

"I am getting lots of messages from my Israeli friends," a Palestinian citizen of Israel said over Signal. Presumably because she thought Shin Bet could not monitor the call. "They tell me not to worry. Things will soon be back to normal."

'For the first time in my life I see something that has been dormant for decades, stirring, coming alive'

- Palestinian citizen of Israel

"I think to myself: 'the normal for you is to go back to the beaches. The normal for us is to go back to our cages. What is normal like for a Palestinian in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jaffa? To smile as we serve you falafel and humus, to laugh as we sell you our vegetables or repair your cars cheaper than you would do at home, or to labour on your construction sites?'"

"We are scared at the bloodshed that could take place. But we are happy. For the first time in my life I see something that has been dormant for decades, stirring, coming alive."

"I see a new generation stepping up. They are younger than me. They take orders from no-one and they are rising. I am fucking happy not to consider myself an 'Israeli Arab'. I am Palestinian, and for the first time in my life I can see light at the end of our long tunnel."

Fuelling the resistance

The speaker has an Israeli passport, a good job, a flat - actually a house which was once appropriated from a Palestinian family in Jerusalem. She travels regularly to Europe. Her Hebrew is perfect, better than many Jewish immigrants. In fact, she is often mistaken for a Jew.

Hers is only one, in a cacophony of voices, and I do not select it because it suits the way I think. But as each day passes, the sentiments she has expressed, and that of other Palestinians like her who do not say it out loud, will do more to determine the future of this conflict than any contorted statement by US President Joe Biden or his Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

In fact, every apartment block Israeli jets demolish in Gaza, every family evicted from their home, every house given by the courts to a Jewish settler, now becomes an act of war. It will not produce defeat or resignation. It will fuel the fire of resistance.

The Israeli Zionist left prefers to see the status quo upheld by "extremists on both sides" putting Jewish settlers and Hamas in the same bracket. The status quo, if you follow the logic of the speaker quoted above, is extremist and only benefits one side in this extremely unequal struggle.

Nine days have changed the conflict in a way most people outside the mixed cities of Haifa, Lod, Ramle, Acre and occupied East Jerusalem have yet to realise.

The realities of the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians that



This struggle has been characterised by long periods of quiet and submission. Each time this happens, Israel mistakes quiet for acquiescence

occupied West Bank under the nominal rule of an unelected Palestinian leadership; Palestinians in Jerusalem, who have residency permits; Palestinian citizens of Israel who have passports. The Palestinians in the diaspora do not appear to exist, according to Israel.

This struggle has been characterised by long periods of quiet and submission. Each time this happens, Israel mistakes quiet for acquiescence

Each had different issues. For Gaza, it was electricity, water, and concrete. For the West Bank, it was salaries and jobs. For Jerusalem it was houses; for Palestinian citizens of Israel, it was equality and policing. But each was dependent on Israel, to open and close gates in the wall, to have access to tax income, or medical care. The security apparatus of the Palestinian Authority (PA) was designed and trained as an extension of Israel's security.

This way, Palestinians were kept on a leash providing the cheapest ever occupation for Israel.

Separation became so dominant that, for years, it was internalised by the Palestinians. They had difficulty thinking that it could be otherwise. When fighting erupted between Israel and Gaza in 2009, 2012, 2014, Palestinians in the West Bank were, mostly, passive spectators. Cars were not burnt in Lod. There was no general strike. The residents of areas threatened with

Jerusalem had called for Gaza to intervene and chanted for Mohammed ad-Deif, the head of al-Qassam Brigades, to come to their support.

The unpalatable truth

The Israeli security establishment said this was because the organisers of the al-Aqsa protest were members of Hamas.

They gave the militant group too much credit. It was not just Hamas members chanting "Mohamed ad-Deif". It was a new generation of Palestinians in search of their Saladin. The unpalatable truth is that Hamas does not appear to have made a mistake by firing those missiles at Jerusalem when Israel refused to withdraw from the al-Aqsa complex.

By firing missiles not in defence of Gaza, but of al-Aqsa, Hamas pushed the conflict past a tipping point, triggering the revolt among the Palestinians of 1948 and the West Bank too. Had rockets not been fired, the situation could have returned to calm, after the end of Ramadan, and that is what the Israeli media were expecting. After Ramadan, Israeli authorities could have resumed their evictions of the Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah in particular and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem in general.

As a consequence, the events that followed have created a broad Palestinian front, a phenomenon not seen since 1948.

A revolt of these dimensions has not come out of the blue. It has been decades

its paymasters in Israel. It is telling that a general strike was first called by the leadership of the 1948 Palestinians, to be endorsed by Palestinians in the West Bank. This led to the biggest general strike since 1936.

There are grounds to be sceptical about this newfound unity. The Palestinian leaders are past masters at shedding their political skins and slithering back to the opposite camp. But they are not the drivers of this movement. They are being driven by it.

Palestinians and Arabs

The second major strategy to have been denied, if not undermined, in the last nine days was the sustained attempt to separate Palestinians from their Arab backers. This culminated in the Abraham Accords in Washington last year, but had started with Egypt's and Jordan's peace treaties with Israel.

Just a few short weeks ago, it looked as if Saudi Arabia would come on board, to be followed shortly afterwards by Oman and Qatar. Within a matter of months, the boycott of Israel by the major GCC powers would have been reversed, the Arab Peace Initiative (the last major offer to settle this conflict) would have been over, and the Palestinians would have effectively become a migrant workforce without a state, relegated to the status of the Kurds.

While this scenario has not disappeared, and while the Saudi and Emirati influencers and bots are still pumping out Israel's narrative, this strategy is being overwhelmed by mass demonstrations of protesters in Jordan trying to cross the border with Israel; incursions too, from southern Lebanon into Israel; and Egypt being forced to open its border at Rafah and take in wounded Palestinians in Gaza.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is no fan of Hamas or the Muslim Brotherhood. He destroyed a whole city, the Egyptian side of Rafah, and forcibly removed its inhabitants so that tunnels running under the border could be flooded and destroyed.

If any Arab leader has enforced the siege of Gaza more zealously than the Israelis, it has been Sisi. And yet he has been forced now to open the border he spent so much energy in shutting. Of course, political messages are being sent. After the unpleasant shock of a Saudi-sponsored attempt at a palace coup, Jordan's King Abdullah is no doubt using the turmoil to remind Netanyahu that Israel has its longest and most vulnerable border with Jordan.

Little happens in the kingdom without the permission of the Jordanian mukhabarat, and particularly not in the sensitive border area, so the pictures of crowds of Jordanians marching on the Israeli border would not have happened without state license. It is telling how eastern Jordanians were in the forefront of this protest. This is another sign that the divisions, which kept the status quo in place, are dissolving.

The exact identity of the group responsible for launching missiles from

southern Lebanon at Israel has yet to be determined and verified. So far, it suits Hezbollah to license missile launches rather than launch its own much deadlier rocket arsenal at Israel.

Palestinian diaspora

The third plank of the status quo was to isolate Palestinians worldwide. A whole ministry, the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, was created by Israel to combat BDS, delegitimisation, and deal with Western politicians who would not play ball with their narrative.

Irrespective of the now ritual statements of support from the political elite, the feeling of popular outrage over and support for Gaza is overwhelming

The ministry succeeded in its tactical battle to conflate opposition to Zionism, and opposition to Israel, with anti-semitism. It succeeded in bullying and terrifying a generation of politicians on both sides of the Atlantic, making the former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn an object lesson of what happens to a politician when he refuses to play ball.

But these were tactical victories, not strategic ones. Irrespective of the now ritual statements of support from the political elite, the feeling of popular outrage over and support for Gaza is overwhelming. Large demonstrations took place in London, New York, Berlin and Paris.

Israel has lost a battle that is being played out on unfamiliar territory: TikTok and Instagram. The IDF social media accounts are a joke.

When Paris Hilton retweeted Middle East Eye's interview with a 10-year-old girl in Gaza expressing in fluent English her incomprehension at the bombing: "I am just ten. Why do we deserve this?", her anguished plea of pain went around the world several times.

The Israeli army is a past master at manipulating the truth. It hoodwinks the mainstream western media into believing a ground incursion into Gaza had started (to flush out Hamas fighters entering their tunnels). Its air force may bomb the building housing AP and Al Jazeera.

But the conflict of the last nine days was not played out in the mainstream media, which was slow to start and reluctant to report it all the way along. It was fought on social media and Israel can not prevent videos of anguished Gazan children from spreading like wildfire over social media. Furthermore Palestinians can now express themselves in good English.

Hilton deleted her tweet. Bella Hadid did not delete hers. Irrespective of the pressure on A-listers to conform to the status quo, the damage has been done.

A new dawn

It will be for history to judge whether the events we are witnessing turn into a full intifada, or an al-Quds or Jerusalem intifada. The debate now among Palestinians is how a third intifada could continue after the ceasefire which will inevitably happen in the next few days.

But let's say an exhausted quiet descends on the region after a ceasefire is negotiated between Israel and Hamas. Will everything go back to normal?

I doubt it. The contours of the new struggle have already been determined. It has Jerusalem at its geographical centre, and Palestinian citizens of Israel as its foot soldiers.

They will be backed by a generation with nothing to lose. They have no leaders, no state, no Arab countries backing them, no rights, no arms, and no hope of getting any of them. Having deprived them of their own state, and declared in the Nation-State Law that the state of Israel is the expression of self-determination for its Jewish citizens only, a revolt can not come as a surprise.

The power-drunk lords of the land have left this generation of Palestinians with few viable alternatives. This struggle has been characterised by long periods of quiet and submission. Each time this happens, Israel mistakes quiet for acquiescence. It deludes itself into thinking the conflict is over.

But each time a new leadership emerges from the bottom up. This is how Yasser Arafat came to the fore. This is happening again and the world should wake up to it.

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

The article was originally published in the Middle East Eye



nine days ago appeared set in concrete - all 25-foot high and stretching for over 400 miles - have tumbled down with a speed that no one (least of all the speaker quoted above) could have predicted.

Bear with me while I go through them.

United we stand, divided we fall

For decades, the strategy of Israel, under a left or right-wing government, was divide and rule.

Palestinians lived separate lives in enclaves under different regimes, enjoying different privileges: Gaza as an enemy state under siege with just enough calories and electricity to survive; the

eviction like Sheikh Jarrah fought their own lonely, local battles for decades.

For nine days, unity has been coursing through Palestinian veins. It was caught live on Al Jazeera, which at one point a week ago carried split screen of scenes at the Damascus Gate where Palestinians were arriving to enter the old city, and at the Hebron Gate, where Jewish settlers were arriving with Israeli flags.

At first, I did not realise what I was seeing. A rocket from Gaza flew overhead. The settlers fled in panic. The Palestinians stayed where they were, waving and cheering. Palestinians in

in the making. It has come precisely at the time when the Israeli right boasted that the conflict was over. They said so openly in the US media and at the UN. On Monday, Fatah flags were seen to be flying alongside Hamas flags in protests in Nablus and it is a long time, too, since that was seen. Fatah has to be seen to be responding to the prevailing mood.

Similar unity was expressed at the start of the Second Intifada, but as soon as Yasser Arafat was dealt with, Fatah returned to security cooperation with

A revolt of these dimensions has not come out of the blue. It has been decades in the making. It has come precisely at the time when the Israeli right boasted that the conflict was over. They said so openly in the US media and at the UN



‘Workplace COVID-19 safety protocols impact employee behaviour outside work’

Agencies

Employer COVID-19 safety measures influenced worker precautions even when they were not on the clock, according to a new study from Washington State University. The results of the study were published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. The study found that workplace cultures that adopted COVID-19 prevention measures, such as daily health checks and encouraging sick workers to stay home, resulted in less “sickness presenteeism” or going places when feeling ill. The effect was found both inside and outside of work - meaning fewer employees with COVID-19 symptoms showed up to work and other public places like grocery stores, gyms, and restaurants. The same held true for attitudes toward the COVID-19 prevention measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention such as mask-wearing and social distancing: employees working for companies with strong

COVID-19 prevention measures were more likely to have positive attitudes toward the CDC guidelines. “The workplace COVID-19 climate had a direct effect on shaping employee attitudes towards the personal, preventative health actions that the CDC recommends,” said Tahira Probst, WSU psychology professor and lead author of the study. “Public health officials and employers should be aware of the impact that organizations and workplaces can have on stemming the tide of the pandemic. It’s not just that employers have an impact on the transmission that occurs within the workplace, but they are also influencing those same employees’ attitudes and behaviours outside of the workplace,” added Probst. For the study, the researchers surveyed more than 300 working adults recruited on the Amazon Mechanical Turk crowdsourcing website in three waves during the pandemic holiday surge. They first surveyed the workers in October 2020 to assess the COVID-19 climate of their workplaces; then in December 2020, about their attitudes toward the

One of the more enduring consequences of the pandemic might be that organizations not only offer more sick leave but also encourage employees to stay home if they’re sick

CDC prevention guidelines, and finally in February 2021, about their work and non-work behaviours when sick or exposed to COVID-19. The study found a significant connection between the workplace COVID-19 climate, employee attitudes toward the pandemic prevention measures, and ultimately whether they showed up to work or other public places while feeling ill with COVID-19 symptoms or following known exposure to the virus.

The respondents came from 44 U.S. states and Washington D.C. While the survey did not use a nationally representative sample, the respondents’ demographics—with a median age of 40, 59 per cent male and 76 per cent white—aligned well with the general labour force with a median age of 40-44, 53 per cent male and 78 per cent white. However, the survey group was generally more highly educated with 67 per cent reporting having a college degree or higher, compared to 40 per cent in the general labour force. During the survey period, about half of the respondents were working on site and half remotely. Interestingly, the study found that even the remote workers were influenced by their employers’ COVID-19 workplace climate. Remote workers were less likely to frequent public spaces after exposure to the virus or while ill when working for a company with strong prevention measures in place.

The researchers noted that many U.S. organizations have long-standing cultures stigmatizing sick leave and encouraging sickness presenteeism. The good news, the authors point out, is that workplaces can help curb the spread of COVID-19 by actively encouraging sick employees to stay home, instituting daily health checks, and adopting other CDC workplace health and safety precautions. The pandemic has forced some organizations to examine their culture around sick leave, and Probst is interested to see if this will become a long-term change. “One of the more enduring consequences of the pandemic might be that organizations not only offer more sick leave but also encourage employees to stay home if they’re sick,” said Probst. “Frankly, prior to COVID-19, a lot of our culture has been: ‘unless you’re gravely ill and can’t get out of bed, you should be at work.’ That behavior spreads diseases and ultimately reduces productivity. We’re hopeful that the pandemic might institute a re-thinking of this norm moving forward,” concluded Probst.

Study finds new, much effective treatment for Vitamin D deficiency

Agencies

A new study demonstrates 25-hydroxyvitamin D3 is an effective treatment for vitamin D deficiency in some specific patients. There are several million people worldwide with various fat malabsorption syndromes including those who have undergone gastric bypass surgery and those with obesity. These patients often have a difficult time absorbing vitamin D and both groups of patients are at an increased risk for vitamin D deficiency and therefore at higher risk for osteoporosis and osteomalacia (softening of the bones). Patients with obesity are also susceptible to vitamin D deficiency as vitamin D derived from intestinal absorption and cutaneous synthesis is diluted in a larger body

pool of fat. These findings appear online in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. According to the researchers, approximately one-third of adults are obese and require much larger doses of vitamin D to satisfy their requirements. “This vitamin D metabolite is better absorbed in patients with fat malabsorption syndromes and since it is not as fat-soluble, it does not get diluted in the body fat and is effective in raising and maintaining blood levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D in obese people,” explained corresponding author Michael F. Holick, PhD, MD, professor of medicine, physiology and biophysics and molecular medicine at Boston University School of Medicine. Healthy adults, adults with a fat malabsorption syndrome and obese adults were compared to evaluate if a more water-soluble form of vita-

min D3 known as 25-hydroxyvitamin D3 was more effective than the same dose of vitamin D3 in improving their vitamin D status. The researchers observed that compared to healthy adults only about 36 percent of orally ingested vitamin D3 was found in the blood of patients with fat malabsorption syndromes including patients who had gastric bypass surgery. When the same adults ingested 25-hydroxyvitamin D3 the patients with fat malabsorption syndromes were able to absorb it as well as the healthy adults thereby raising their vitamin D status to the same degree. A similar observation was made in the obese subjects compared to the healthy controls. “Therefore using 25-hydroxyvitamin D3 could be a novel approach for treating vitamin D deficiency in patients with fat malabsorption syndromes and obese adults,” added Holick.

Government Medical College. Srinagar

10-Karan Nagnr, Srinagar Kashmir, (190010), Phone, No. 0194-2504114. Fax. 01942503115

Ref: i) Govt. Order NO. 398-JK(HME) of 2021 Dated. 18-05-2021

Advertisement Notice No. 20 -GS of 2021 Dated. 20-05-2021

- a) Date of Commencement for submission of online applications 22-05-2021 from 06.00 PM.
b) Last date for submission of online applications 27-05-2021 upto 4.00PM only.

Online applications are invited from the eligible candidates (belonging to Kashmir Division) for engagement on contract basis against the following positions initially for a minimum period of one year extendable upto three years for establishment of 500 bedded temporary COVID Hospital, at Srinagar:-

S. No.	Category of manpower	Pay scale/Level	Eligibility criteria
01.	Staff Nurse	Level 4 25500-81100	Diploma in General Nursing & Midwifery (GNM) / B.Sc Nursing from any recognized Institution / State Medical Faculty / J&K Paramedical Council.
02.	Lab. Technician	Level 4 25500-81100	10+2 with Science or above qualification with minimum two years Diploma in Laboratory Assistant Course or having Degree in Medical Lab. Technology Course from any recognized Institution / State Medical Faculty / J&K Paramedical Council.
03.	Pharmacist	Level 4 25500-81100	10+2 with diploma in Medical Asstt. / Pharmacist training from a recognized Institution.
04.	Anesthesia Technician	Level 6 35400-112400	Bachelors Degree in Anesthesia Technology Course from any Institution recognized by the State Medical Faculty / J&K Paramedical Council.

In the emerging situation arising out of COVID-19 pandemic, it may not be possible to hold written test/interview of the candidates and the selection shall be made purely on the basis on aggregate marks obtained by the candidates in the Diploma/Degree Courses. Therefore, the applicants are advised to reflect aggregate marks (Total marks of all semesters/examination; total CGPA points of all semesters/examination or aggregate marks of Diploma course plus marks of Post Diploma Course in case of lateral entry candidates) in their online application forms.

Terms and Conditions:-

- These contractual appointments are not being made against any substantive post and as such won't confer any right upon the hired persons for regular/permanent appointment. The contractual engages shall have to furnish an affidavit duly attested by the 1st Class Magistrate to the effect that they will not claim regular appointment at any future date on the strength of this contractual engagement.
- The engagement will initially be made for one year and will be extended upto three years subject to the satisfactory performance of the candidates/approval of the competent authority and:-
 - Availability of Budget/Funds.
 - Continuation of this Scheme.
- The contractual engages shall be paid full salary corresponding to the minimum of the pay scale including all allowances as long as they remain in the service and actually perform their duties.
- The contractual engages shall be entitled to a casual leave of (15) days for the whole period of their contractual engagement of one year, Any leave beyond that period, on whatever ground it may be, shall be at the discretion of the appointing authority on justified grounds.
- The contractual engagement shall be terminable on one month's notice from either side or on payment of one month's salary in lieu of notice by the appointing authority; provided that the appointment of the contracting party shall be terminable without notice by the appointing authority whenever the post if filled up on regular basis by it and in that case the contracting party shall have no claim against the Government/appointing authority.
- If a contractual engagee at any point of time willfully neglect or refuses to perform his duties, the appointing authority shall immediately terminate his contractual appointment without any notice and he shall not be entitled to any salary for such period

NOTE

The candidates must be in possession of all required documents and no document/certificate issued beyond the cutoff date shall be accepted/entertained.

Instructions for applying online-

- The necessary instructions for filling-up of online form and submission of fee details shall be available on Government Medical College, Srinagar. Website (www.gmcsl.edu.in).
- Separate Links for filling up of online application forms for these posts shall be available on the Official website of Government Medical College, Srinagar w.e.f 22-05-2021 (6.00PM) to 27-05-2021 upto 04:00PM only.
- Candidates are required to apply online through the official website of Government Medical College, Srinagar only.
- The requisite original documents including domicile certificate issued by the competent authority on the format prescribed for the purpose must be produced at the time of document verification or as and when sought by Government Medical College, Srinagar.
- The candidates are required to upload the images of their recent photograph and specimen signature which should be uploaded in (jpeg) format only.
- Candidates have to deposit fee of Rs.200/- through online mode only i.e. through Net Banking/Debit Card/Credit Card.
- Applications of those candidates will not be considered who do not pay the fee in online mode.
- Candidates must take a print out of the application form and fee receipt after successful filling up of the application form.
- Candidates cannot edit their application form after submission.
- Candidates shall ensure that their E-mail ID and Phone Nos as specified in the online application form are active during the currency of selection process.

No: GS-MC/AII-Advt/Notices/885-92
Dated 20-05-2021.

DIPK-1868/21

Principal / Dean



Deptt.of ISM (AYUSH) District Anantnag. AYUSH Immune Booster Medicine Distributed at village Syedpora Wantrang Anantnag from ISM Dispy. H.Turoo Anantnag

On the directions of Director Indian Systems of Medicine (AYUSH) J&K & ADMO ISM Anantnag. FREE AYUSH Immune Booster Medicines were distributed at Village Syedpora Wantrang ANANTNAG Door to Door and also importance of COVID SoPs and vaccination was explained in detail From Govt. ISM Dispensary H.Turoo Anantnag UT.

mia

Covid2.0 To Obstruct Recovery In Domestic Consumption Of Petroleum Products: Ind-Ra



NEW DELHI: The resurgence of Covid-19 is expected to obstruct the recovery in domestic consumption of petroleum products, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Friday.

In a report, the ratings agency cited that India's domestic consumption of petroleum products declined 1.8 per cent month on month to 4.4 million barrels per day (mb/d) in March 2021, after achieving FY21's peak level of 4.5 mb per day in February 2021.

"The mom decline is likely to have been higher in the months of April and May due to the fresh restrictions imposed to curb the second covid wave," the agency said.

"However, Ind-Ra opines that the consumption levels to have remained higher on a yoy basis due to the lower base effect caused by the more stringent restrictions imposed during the same period last year."

As per the report on a cumulative basis, production, domestic consumption and exports on a YoY basis declined by 11 per cent, 8.7 per cent and 13.3 per cent, respectively, during FY21.

Similarly, domestic crude production fell 3.1 per cent YoY. "During March 2021, the production volumes of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, Oil India and fields under production-sharing contracts decreased 3.7 per cent yoy, 1.8 per cent yoy and 2.3 per cent yoy, respectively."

"Domestic production declined 1.6 per cent mom during the month."

On a cumulative basis, a fall of 4.7 per cent YoY in domes-

tic crude production was registered during FY21.

Besides, the report pointed out that in March 2021, natural gas (NG) production increased 11.3 per cent YoY and NG production volumes from private or joint venture fields increased 118.4 per cent YoY while the production from Oil and Natural Gas Corp and Oil India fell by 3.9 per cent and 0.7 per cent respectively.

"The increase in domestic consumption was largely led by a 28.1 per cent yoy and 21 per cent yoy increase in consumption by the city gas distribution and power segments, respectively, in March 2021."

Furthermore, LNG import volumes increased 3.8 per cent YoY while it declined 4.3 per cent MoM in March 2021.

"Ind-Ra expects continued subdued crack spreads in both gasoil and gasoline will impact the overall gross refining margins of Indian oil marketing companies (OMCs), though they have healthy complexity and low operating costs per barrel."

"Gasoil and gasoline are the two key products of Indian refiners, accounting for around 65 per cent of their product slate."

In addition, Ind-Ra said refining and marketing segment would continue to dominate the overall profitability in the near term, while OMCs have been consistently increasing their pipeline capacity to reduce transportation costs and venturing into new business segments such as petrochemical and city gas distribution to diversify its revenue streams.

"With the expectations of a subdued recovery in the gross refining margins and continuance of healthy marketing margins, Ind-Ra believes that the marketing segment would be the principal contributor to OMCs' profitability in FY22 and witness a higher demand once the economy recovers."-IANS

Indian Workers Waste 5 Business Hours Per Week From Home: Survey



Indian office workers feel stagnant in their roles and waste five business hours per week on mundane tasks, according to a survey by enterprise automation software firm UiPath.

The 2021 Office Worker Survey showed that 63 per cent of office workers in India believe they can't efficiently help customers as they are faced with too many time-consuming tasks to complete. Emails (66 per cent), scheduling calls and meetings (62 per cent) and inputting data/creating datasets (56 per cent) were the top tasks Indian workers prefer to be automated.

More than two-third (67 per cent) office workers globally feel they are constantly doing the same tasks over and over again. About 68 per cent people surveyed said they wish they had more time to explore how to incorporate new responsibilities into their day-to-day routines; and 58 per cent believe their jobs don't allow them to be as creative as they'd like to be, the survey found.

"It's no surprise that employees are looking for ways to feel more engaged at work. Automation unlocks workers' productivity, and, more importantly, frees them to focus on meaningful work that is creative, collaborative, and strategic," UiPath's Senior Vice President of Learning, Tom Clancy, said in a statement.

"It's critical that companies

provide training for and access to automation and other digital technologies to create more fulfilled and energised employees," he added.

The UiPath survey assessed the views of office workers working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic about how their roles have changed over the past year and how they see their roles evolving in the future.

The survey also found that automation is being more widely adopted by organisations. India and Singapore had the highest rates of companies scaling their existing automation software, totaling 51 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively.

In India, 65 per cent said they received automation training and 94 per cent credit it with a boost in job performance.

Further, the survey showed that digital transformation is changing the future of work. About 65 per cent of all respondents believe it is possible their jobs will evolve in the next 10 years and thus upskilling is key to keeping pace with digital transformation.

Most workers used their remote work period to enhance their skill sets. Employees also believe their employers should offer training on digital technologies.

The 2021 Office Worker Survey, which polled 4,500 office workers across the US, UK, France, Germany, India, and Singapore, was conducted in March 2021.-IANS

46% Of Businesses In India Saw Rise In Fraud Amid Pandemic: Report



More than 45 per cent of businesses in India have seen an increase in fraud amid the pandemic, said a report on Friday.

According to data analytics company Experian, despite the growing risk of fraud, 40 per cent of Indian businesses indicate that they are placing more emphasis on revenue generation rather than fraud detection, which can lead to an increase in losses and a decline in customer confidence.

Considering that 56 per cent of consumers in India cite online

privacy as a significant concern, businesses must take robust actions to safeguard themselves and their customers against potential digital risks, it said.

"India has now become one of the largest and fastest-growing technology markets in this world," Steve Griffiths, Managing Director, Decision Analytics, Experian Asia Pacific, said in a statement.

"Businesses need to build a digital infrastructure that is agile and adaptive to these changing dynamics," Griffiths added.

While 90 per cent of busi-

nesses in India say they have implemented strategies related to recognising their customers across their various platforms -- the highest among all regions surveyed in the global report, only 18 per cent of organisations surveyed in India are confident in preventing new types of fraud.

To counter the rising threat of fraud, Experian has upgraded and enhanced one of its flagship products, CrossCore.

The enhanced version of CrossCore cuts complexity, increases efficiency and helps businesses to quickly respond to today's emerging fraud threats, the company said.

"Experian's enhanced CrossCore presents an opportunity for businesses to put consumers at the heart of the relationship," said Neeraj Dhawan, Managing Director, Experian India.

"With the latest version of CrossCore, Experian empowers businesses by consolidating numerous fraud risk signals into a single, holistic assessment, enabling them to improve operational processes, stay ahead of fraudsters, and protect their customers," Dhawan added.-IANS

Bad Loans: Sc Allows Banks To Invoke Personal Guarantees Of Defaulters

Agencies



The Supreme Court on Friday upheld a Indian government 2019 notification to invoke personal guarantees of the promoters whose companies defaulted on bank loans. The Supreme Court ruling will now allow banks to file personal bankruptcies against several top Indian promoters whose companies have been sent to the NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) for debt resolution.

The IBC was enacted in 2016 and the Indian government amended the IBC in November 2019 and gave additional powers to lenders to invoke personal guarantees of the defaulters. Lenders invoked personal guarantees of several companies including Bhushan Steel, Bhushan Power and Steel, Punj Lloyd, and Reliance Communication which were sent to the NCLT for defaulting on bank loans. Some of these promoters then moved high courts across India when banks started invoking their personal guarantees. The Supreme Court later transferred all the cases to itself following petitions from Indian lenders.

In its order the SC bench led by L. Nageshwar Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat held that approval of a resolution plan does not ipso facto discharge a personal guarantor (of a corporate debtor) of her or his liabilities under the contract of guarantee. "As held by this court, the release or discharge of a principal borrower from the debt owed by it to its creditor, by an involuntary process, i.e. by operation of law, or due to liquidation or insolvency

proceeding, does not absolve the surety/guarantor of his or her liability, which arises out of an independent contract," the bench wrote in its order. The law will be prospective from December 1, 2019 and will be applied to all those cases which were invoked after that date.

Lenders said with today's judgement, it will be easier for them to bring erring promoters to cough up their dues. Swaminathan Janakiraman, Managing Director (risk management and stressed assets), State Bank of India said the judgement upholds constitutional validity (on invoking personal guarantees). "However, it is difficult to put the number to possible upside to recovery as that would vary from case to case, depending upon net worth of those providing guarantees. This ruling will bring better credit culture compelling corporate debtors to cooperate for resolution. The promoter's personal assets are also liable to be put into the IBC process now. The corporate debt resolution process is expected to be a more efficient process now," he said.

Lawyers said the judgment provides the much needed teeth to the lenders as far as recovery actions with respect to personal guarantees are concerned. "In fact, this will enable the lenders to pursue simultaneous action against the corporate debtor and

the personal guarantors, thereby ensuring that the promoters bearing the provider of personal guarantees have to deal with their own insolvency and not become an impediment/roadblock in the insolvency proceeding of the corporate debtor. This will now cause promoters in the capacity of personal guarantors to try and agree on a settlement with the lenders whether under the repayment plan or by way of a one-time settlement under a private treaty basis and also undertake not to be an impediment in the resolution of the corporate debtor," said Ajay Shaw, Partner, DSK Legal.

Misha, Partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co said the Supreme Court has upheld the government notification, bringing into effect the provisions in relation to personal insolvency in respect to personal guarantors to corporate debtors. "The constitutional validity of notification of such provisions only to one category of individuals i.e. personal guarantors was challenged before the Supreme Court by way of several writ petitions. The Supreme Court while pronouncing its decision upholding the validity of the said notification, also held that upon approval of a resolution plan for a corporate debtor, the liability of the personal guarantor for the balance does not get extinguished. This will help settling the jurisprudence finally on simultaneous initiation and proceeding with insolvency resolution process against principal borrower and guarantors or co-guarantors/co-obligors as well," she said.

US Officials Rushed To Defend Amazon Biz Practices In India: Report



NEW DELHI: US officials rushed to defend Amazon's business practices in India after a global news wire reported in February that the company had favoured certain sellers on its website and bypassed local law that requires foreign e-commerce companies to treat all vendors equally.

The global news wire reported that emails obtained through the US Freedom of Information Act from the office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) showed that US officials prepared a note for John Kerry, a top envoy of President Joe Biden, about the February 17 report.

The note, contained in an email dated February 18, said that India's antitrust watchdog had reviewed many such allegations against US e-commerce companies and found nothing wrong.

Biden's envoy, former US Secretary of State Kerry, is in charge of climate change policy. He was scheduled to speak that day with India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. The US government was concerned that Goyal would bring

up the global news wire story, so it hastily drafted a note about the article in case he did, the emails show.

"This could come up in the call since as you know Minister Goyal is prone to bring up tangential topics," Thomas Carnegie, a US Embassy official in New Delhi, emailed an official at the USTR.

Philip M. Ingeneri, another US Embassy official, also told the USTR official in an email on February 18 that he had "verified" the contents of the note prepared for Kerry with Amazon India's government affairs chief as "true and accurate". The emails do not describe what ultimately happened during the Kerry-Goyal call.

The US Embassy in New Delhi referred questions to the US Department of State in Washington, which said it expected that any issues regarding US e-commerce companies' practices in India would be reviewed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) "with the same level of independence, transparency, and professionalism it has demonstrated in the past".-IANS

COVID-19: IMF Unveils \$50 Billion Plan To Vaccinate Everyone By Mid-2022

Agencies

It may require about \$50 billion to vaccinate all eligible people around the world by mid 2022, said International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Friday. IMF proposed an investment programme that could have a global economic benefit of around \$9 trillion.

The proposal targets: (1) vaccinating at least 40 percent of the population in all countries by the end of 2021 and at least 60 percent by the first half of 2022, (2) tracking and insuring against downside risks, and (3) ensuring widespread testing and tracing, maintaining adequate stocks of therapeutics, and enforcing public health measures in places where vaccine coverage is low.

The benefits of such measures at about \$9 trillion far outweigh the costs which are estimated to be around \$50 billion—of which \$35 billion should be paid by grants from donors and the residual by national governments potentially with the support of concessional financing from bilateral and multilateral agencies.

IMF asked nations to ensure

free cross-border flow of raw materials and finished vaccines. It said, "An urgent focus should be to eliminate constraints on cross-border exports of critical raw materials and finished vaccines. Free cross-border flow of vaccine inputs and supplies is essential for the world to achieve its vaccination targets without delay."

Speaking of the export of raw materials to the Indian COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers, IMF said, "Governments are taking steps to relax such constraints on raw materials (for example, the recent pledge by the US to facilitate greater access of critical raw material to Indian manufacturers after severe shortages emerged). However, there is scope for greater multilateral action on this front, as significant constraints still remain. Greater access to critical raw materials—combined with a commitment by Indian authorities to maintain no restrictions on exports once near-term shortages ease—will also enable the Serum Institute of India (currently the chief supplier to COVAX) to meet its export commitments, which is important for the path to global vaccination."

SHORT TAKES

Second Wave Flattens Fizz For Soft-Drink Makers: Crisil

NEW DELHI: India's non-alcoholic beverages industry, led by cola giants Pepsi and Coca-Cola, is unlikely to reclaim pre-pandemic levels this fiscal, ratings agency Crisil said.

"Indeed, despite some claw-back after an estimated decline by a fifth last fiscal, revenue will still be 10 per cent short of the fiscal 2020 mark," the ratings agency said.

"Credit profiles of players, however, remains resilient because of their cost-control measures, strong balance sheets and ample liquidity."

As per an analysis of 13 Crisil-rated bottlers of Pepsi and Coca-Cola, which account for over 50 per cent of the market, indicates as much.

As things stand, Crisil said Pepsi and Coca-Cola have a combined market share of over 80 per cent in India's non-alcoholic beverages industry.

"The manufacturing operations are either owned by them or are done through third-party bottlers

in different regions of the country."

Last fiscal, a strict nationwide lockdown and subsequent restrictions over April-September severely affected peak season demand as summer months alone account for two-thirds of annual cola sales.

"A redux looms now."

According to Nitesh Jain, Director, Crisil Ratings: "Beverages sales volumes will be adversely impacted in the peak season once again due to localised lockdowns and restrictions on movement to contain the second wave of the pandemic."

"This will affect out-of-home consumption of beverages the most in the first quarter. Though these restrictions are staggered across regions and are less stringent this time around, full-year revenue may still be 10 per cent below pre-pandemic levels."-IANS

MSN Laboratories Launches Posaconazole To Treat Black Fungus



MSN Laboratories on Friday announced the launch of Posaconazole, a triazole antifungal agent indicated for treating Black Fungus (Mucormycosis) patients, in India. According to a press release

issued by the company, MSN has launched the product under the brand name PosaOne as 100 mg Delayed Release tablets and 300 mg injections, respectively. "As an outcome of MSN's competence in research and

manufacturing of anti-fungal infection drugs, it is now targeting to pro-actively reach patients across India by ensuring the access of PosaOne, through its strong distribution network & field force," the city-based drug maker said.

MSN has developed the active pharmaceutical ingredient and the formulation of PosaOne in its in-house Research and Development and manufacturing units.

The drug is approved by the Drug Controller General of India (DGCI) and matches the international quality standards.

As part of the COVID treatment range, MSN has already launched Favilov (Favipiravir) in the strengths of 200mg, 400mg & 800mg, OSELOW (Osetamivir) as 75 mg capsules and also licensed Baridox (Baricitinib) recently with Eli Lilly.-IANS

Experts Sound Alert

uncontrolled diabetes”, she said. “The patient had Mucormycosis apparently due to long term use of steroid drugs.”

The “Covid-triggered” black fungus infection is rising in India. So far, over 7,000 people have been infected with the disease and over 200 have lost their lives.

The doctors in Kashmir maintain frequent use of steroids during Covid treatment, impure water for humidifiers during the oxygen therapy are the major cause behind this infection.

They also added that patients who are diabetic or Covid positive and the people with weak immune systems have an increased chance of contracting the infection.

Dr. Shafqat-ul-Islam, senior consultant ENT at Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Hospital (JLNM) told Kashmir Observer that one of the main reason for the spreading of the fungus during pandemic is the industrial oxygen, which has been directed for medical use, could be one of the main sources of contamination.

“They use impure water to make o2 (Oxygen) and the same is being supplied to people and in hospitals. The water carries fungus so that is why it is spreading rapidly this time,” Dr. Shafqat told Kashmir Observer.

He says the misuse of steroids can also be one of the reasons but at the same time argues that it is being given throughout the world, however no country witnessed the fungus.

“My point is the diabetic and weak immune system patients are throughout the world and people used steroid frequently so why wasn't the disease reported anywhere,” he says adding that it is because of the industrial oxygen that use impure water to make oxygen, that is why more and more cases are reported in India.

However, the leading ENT specialists maintain that Black fungus disease was there, even before the pandemic and was mostly found in Diabetic patients.

Dr. Shafqat warned that if the disease is not detected at the early stage, the fungus reaches to the brain resulting in the death of the patient.

He noted that a patient has to maintain his blood sugar and has to be “vary cautious” about it.

According to Influenza expert Dr. Nisar ul Hassan, also president of the Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) one of the factors through which COVID-19 positive can contract this disease is the humidifiers, streamers which they use.

“If the water of these medical equipment is unchanged frequently, it will become a breeding ground for the fungus,” Dr. Nisar said.

He noted the fungus is COVID-19 patients have higher chances of contracting the fungus because these medical equipment including the wall oxygen aren't cleaned for weeks and months.

“The recommendation is that you have to use sterilised water for the equipment and change it frequently and yes this is the big factor of the disease,” he added.

According to doctors, black fungus is a rare fungal disease and is considered more deadly with a mortality rate of 50 per cent.

According to reports, in many states of India, Doctors removed people's eyes and jaw bones, trying to stop the spread before it reached their brains but leaving the patient permanently disfigured.

Dr. Nisar told Kashmir Observer he has seen just five fungus cases in his 30 years of medical profession till this disease was declared on May 20.

He said the fungus is present everywhere be it soil, plants, air, manure, construction or dusty areas, hospitals (if kept unclean) and decaying fruits and vegetables.

Dr. Nisar said, patients with immunocompromised (having an impaired immune system) are usually found if somebody has a chronic disease like cancer, kidney failure, diabetes, liver disease etc.

“So because of the these chronic disease, the fungus becomes invasive or deadly for those patients usually,” he said adding that “It is also seen now in the covid-19 recover patients even after days of recovering,”

The symptoms

The Doctors advised that it is important for the people to understand the disease and know about the symptom earlier.

The symptoms, according to doctors for the black fungus are, headache (for the COVID-19 recovered patients) swollen eyes, pain or numbness over half the face, nasal blockage and a blackish nasal discharge, black crusts in the nose, black scars under the eyes and nose and vision loss are some early signs of mucormycosis. Dr. Nisar said, if it goes into the brain, the patient can go into coma and if it goes into lungs—the patient can have similar symptoms that of covid-19.

The patient needs to consult the ENT specialist immediately, if these symptoms are found and the early diagnosis can save him, the doctor noted. He said to prevent this life-threatening disease in COVID patients, doctors should use steroids judiciously and ensure there is no misuse of steroids.

Cases reported last year

According to a report, some cases of Mucormycosis were found in Kashmir division in the first wave of pandemic, among them three patients died.

Dr. Rouf Ahmad Professor and head ENT at SMHS Hospital, who operated on a few patients with Mucormycosis confirmed to Kashmir Observer that they had witnessed some cases of black fungus last year.

“The disease has different stages and accordingly the treatment is done. In any case you have to do the endoscopic surgery,” Dr. Rouf said.

Follow Health advisory

On 19 May, the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir issued an advisory for the prevention of Black Fungus after such cases were reported in Covid-19 patients in many parts of India.

“Better control of the sugar levels during COVID with or without steroids. Judicious use of steroids observing correct timing, correct dose and correct duration,” the advisory said.

It said there should be judicious use of antibiotics or antifungal drugs.

“To use clean, sterile water for humidifiers during the oxygen therapy, use distilled or sterile water, never use unboiled tap water or mineral water,” it said.

“Fill up to 10 mm below the maximum fill line, check the water level twice daily and top it up as necessary. Ensure that once a week all

the components of the humidifier should be soaked in a mild antiseptic solution for 30 minutes, rinsed with clean water and dried in air,” the advisory said.

Furthermore, Chief Medical officers are directed to ensure that the sale of steroids by retail medical shop owners is regulated and dispensed only under a valid medical prescription.

Dr Mir Mushtaq, spokesperson to the Health Department at Directorate of Health Services Kashmir urged people to follow the health advisories issued by the department.

“If people find any symptoms related to this disease, they need to report to the hospital immediately and avoid self medication including use of steroids,” he said.

Corona Claims

succumbed to the deadly infection at the various healthcare facilities, taking the death toll since the outbreak of pandemic in J&K last year to 3465, officials said.

A 33-year-old man from Bhagalpur, Bihar, who was residing at Sonwar here, died at SMHS hospital, a week after he was admitted there, officials said. Besides him, Shiv Sena Hindustan's provisional president from Chadoora Budgam, at present Lal Mandi Srinagar, also died at SMHS hospital, a fortnight after he was admitted there for treatment, they said.

Also, an 86-year-old woman from Nawabazar Srinagar also died a day after she was admitted to the hospital, officials said. Two deaths were reported at GMC Anantnag, they added. A 70-year-old man from Habbak died, eight days after he was admitted to SKIMS Soura.

A 50-year-old woman from Sopore died four days she was admitted to the tertiary care hospital, they said. A 59-year-old woman from Tral died a day after she was admitted to SKIMS Bemina, they said.

Meanwhile, 2406 fresh cases of coronavirus were reported from Kashmir Valley and 1442 from Jammu division on Friday thus taking the total number of infected people to 263905.

Giving district wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 598, Baramulla 320, Budgam 344, Pulwama 224, Kupwara 204, Anantnag 303, Bandipora 105, Ganderbal 125, Kulgam 121, Shopian 62, Jammu 401, Udhampur 160, Rajouri 155, Doda 58, Kathua 130, Samba 163, Kishtwar 30, Poonch 48, Ramban 201 and Reasi 96 new cases of Covid-19.

Also, they said, 2736 people have recovered—1730 in Jammu division and 2736 in Kashmir. There are now 49893 active positive cases—20601 in Jammu division and 29292 in Kashmir, they added.

PM Pitches

a new mantra -- Jahan bimaar, wahin upchaar -- at a video conference with doctors where he choked up while speaking of lives lost to the virus.

“Though the attack of the pandemic has been checked to an extent with the joint efforts of all, it is not the time to feel satisfied,” he told healthcare professionals and other frontline workers in his Varanasi constituency.

“We have to fight a long battle,” he added. He said health services need to pay attention to the rural areas of Varanasi and Purvanchal and pitched his new ‘mantra’ of “treatment at the doorstep”.

“We shouldn't forget – Jahan bimaar, wahin upchaar” (treatment where the patient is located).“

“If the treatment is taken to the sick, it will bring down the pressure on the health system,” Modi said. He talked about telemedicine and involving young and retired medical professionals in tackling the pandemic.

He lauded the efforts of doctors, nurses, technicians, ward boys and ambulance drivers. “But this pandemic is so big that despite all the efforts we have not been able to save the lives of our family members,” he added.

“This virus has snatched so many of our near ones,” Modi said, choking with emotion.

There was a long pause, before the prime minister continued, “I pay my respects to all these people and offer condolences to their near and dear ones,” he said.

Modi called for special efforts to save children from coronavirus. He also flagged mucormycosis or black fungus as a “new challenge”.

He said the fight was on many fronts in the second wave of the pandemic. The infection rate was high, the patients had to be hospitalised for longer and there was “extreme pressure” on the health system.

Stressing the importance of vaccination, he said frontline workers managed to serve without worry because of it. This “suraksha kavach” (shield) should reach everyone, he added.

Just as the fight against coronavirus has been a joint effort, the vaccination should also be a collective responsibility and everyone should take the vaccine when their turn comes, he said.

He said the work done in the health sector over the past seven years helped but under such extraordinary circumstances, the situation was brought under control because of the health workers who worked round the clock.

He said yoga was criticised and a communal colour was initially given to it when the government made efforts to help it get global recognition. But today Yoga has helped in the fight against coronavirus.

He said the battle is against an “unseen” and “changing” enemy.

Modi said Varanasi benefited from the strategy of having micro-containment zones. He also mentioned “Kashi Kavach” – a telemedicine initiative involving doctors, laboratories and private companies.

The PM said the arrangements made to deal with the second wave of coronavirus should be maintained even when the cases come down.

He expressed satisfaction that people's representatives remained connected to the drive against the pandemic despite facing “naraazgi”, an indirect reference to hostile comments. (PTI)

MOS Singh

magistrates of Jammu and Kashmir and asked them to revive the free teleconsultation facility in a big way for coronavirus patients in home isolation.

He said, guidelines already exist for empan- elment of recognised doctors for teleconsultation on a shift wise basis and this will go a long way in reducing the burden of patients on district hospitals through indiscriminate referral system.

The minister also asked the district chiefs

to rope in NGOs and youth groups, who have come forward in providing free medical consultation on phone, a statement issued by the personnel ministry said.

The move will also negate the self-styled remedies being forwarded on social media to fight the pandemic, he said.

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, has directed the district collectors to set up COVID war rooms and enlist the support of elected representatives, doctors and members of civil society and share the positive news and best practices of COVID management with the media at regular intervals.

He asked the collectors to undertake a people-friendly vaccination drive on a mission mode by involving elected representatives, religious heads and civil society at large.

Singh said, the community participation will also help in overcoming vaccine hesitancy, if any, through mass awareness campaigns.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent interactions with state and district officials, he said, continuous efforts are being made to increase the supply of COVID-19 vaccines on a very large scale.

Singh said, all the states and union territories will get a schedule of the next 15 days, so that they can prioritise the vaccination drive in each district, the statement said.

Responding to some of the issues flagged by the district magistrates, he advised that post-graduate and final year undergraduate medicine students and nursing staff may be engaged at government medical colleges and other associated hospitals to fight the problem of lack of human resource.

Singh also called for short term training programme for operation of ventilators by recruiting retired doctors and enrolling medical students till the pandemic is over.

The minister said he has been in regular touch with the administration in different districts as well as medical authorities of all government medical colleges in both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir including the Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Science (SKIMS), Soura and all the bottlenecks are being fixed on a day-to-day basis.

District collectors of Jammu, Srinagar, Udhampur, Bandipora, Poonch, Rajouri, Pulwama, Baramulla, Doda, Kathua, Shopian, Kupwara, Ganderbal, Reasi, Samba, Kulgam, Kishtwar, Ramban, Badgam and Anantnag joined the video meeting on COVID-19 review and future preparedness, it said.

All the district officials have apprised the minister that there is a continued plateauing in daily new COVID-19 cases over the past few days, the statement said.

However, Singh cautioned them that the grip should not be loosened till the battle against the pandemic is won across the country. (PTI)

HC Seeks Report

the covid-19 pandemic in Jammu and Kashmir.

“The Advocate General may ...file a comprehensive report as to the action/steps so far taken by the Government in relation to the pandemic,” said a division of Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul while hearing a Public Interest Litigation.

The court also asked several lawyers to project grievances and suggestions through Amicus Curiae to the Advocate General “who will respond to each and every grievance and suggestion within two weeks and if necessary may take up those matters with the State Government and try to resolve them as early as possible.”

“The Advocate General is further directed to respond to the various applications which are pending in this petition and on which response was earlier directed to be submitted.”

On previous date of hearing, the court had asked the Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education to file an affidavit, giving complete details of the number of government and private hospitals available in J&K for treatment of covid patients, number of beds available, District wise/City wise quantity of Remdesivir allotted and exact quantity of the drug received and used with the corresponding figures of the requirement.

It had also directed the government to nominate the Nodal officers and publicise their full details with contact number so that the patients or their relatives may approach them with proper medical prescription for the supply of oxygen. (GNS)

Srinagar Under

roads leading towards the city centre from the civil lines area, officials said.

Movement towards the Eidgah martyrs graveyard where the slain leaders – Farooq and Lone – are buried is not allowed, they said. People with movement passes and those having emergencies were, however, allowed to cross the barricades set up across the city, the officials added. People's Conference chairman Sajad Lone, Abdul Gani Lone's son, paid tributes to his father in a series of tweets.

“Remembering my father Abdul Gani Lone who was killed on this day nineteen years ago. Killed for expressing his ideas. Killed for speaking the truth. Truth is as much of a rarity now as it was then.

“But what gives me some solace is that those who opposed him and created that false narrative that culminated in my father being killed- that crowd, some of them still alive were better dead than alive. They saw what my father was mercifully spared from seeing.” Sajad Lone said.

Mirwaiz Farooq was shot dead on May 21, 1990, while Abdul Gani Lone was shot dead on the same day in 2002 at an Eidgah when he was on his way to pay homage to Late Mirwaiz.

LG Takes Note

efforts in J&K, an official spokesperson said. He said that the LG took cognizance of the low vaccination rate in some districts, the Lt Governor passed strict directions to the DCs for scaling-up the vaccination in their respective districts.

“Rate of vaccination & testing, effective management of Covid Care Centres will be the parameters for monitoring performance of the officers,” Sinha said, as per official spokesperson.

“Maximize the testing for areas with high positivity rate. Fix vaccination & testing targets for Tehsildars and BDOs. Share good practices and take comprehensive measures to bring down the covid positivity rate across the

districts, besides tracking the trend on daily basis,” he added.

The LG, he said, is keeping a close watch on the Covid containment measures being undertaken by the district administrations across the UT.

“Protect and save precious lives by discharging your duties with determination, dedication and greater responsibility. Put in your best efforts and work round-the-clock to ensure the availability of all the necessary medicare facilities, besides laying a strong rapid response mechanism in all districts in order to deal with the emerging situation”, the LG said.

The official spokesperson further said that the DCs were asked to prepare a futuristic plan to contain the spread of the deadly virus.

“Take prompt action on covid related issues and regularly brief the media providing factual and accurate information to the public,” the LG said.

Emphasizing on regulating the movement of people during the restrictions, the LG, as per the official spokesperson, directed the Divisional Commissioners and DCs to streamline the process of issuance of passes.

The LG also set timelines for establishment of 5-bedded Covid Care Centres at panchayat level across J&K while reviewing the district-wise status of preparations being made to contain the spread of Corona virus in rural areas.

According to the official spokesperson, the LG directed for prioritizing far flung areas for establishing these centres, besides ensuring availability of all requisite facilities for the patients including proper ventilation, beds, oxygen support, necessary medical kits, linkage with nearest healthcare centres, referral linkage with dedicated Covid health centres & hospitals, availability of tele-medicine facilities, power backup and other basic facilities.

“We are decentralizing the Covid management, which is essential for an effective and efficient public health system. Focus on strengthening primary health care in rural areas. There is a need to increase the availability and accessibility of healthcare support systems in far flung areas,” the LG said, as per the official spokesperson.

He also instructed the Principal Secretary, Rural Development Department to lay a comprehensive mechanism for monitoring the operationalization of Covid care centres in Panchayats.

The LG, he said, also laid stress on proper training of ASHA and Anganwadi workers, besides mobilizing PRIs & volunteers and utilizing SDRF funds for effective management of Covid care centres at panchayat level. Health department was directed to proactively engage in functioning of these Covid care facilities.

“Community health workers ASHA/ ANMs are the foundation of health services. Panchayat Covid Centre to help people adopt Covid protocol. The need for hospital services can be reduced with effective implementation of preventive and promotive protocols by the community health workers,” Sinha said, as per official spokesperson.

He further said that the LG underlined the need for spreading massive awareness in villages regarding oxygen saturation level and educating the people on when to seek medical attention.

“Reiterating the directions issued in earlier meetings, the Lt Governor called for ensuring timely payments under MGNREGA, and continuous extension of benefits of various beneficiary oriented schemes. He further asked the Rural Development and Social Welfare Departments to put a close monitoring on the implementation of welfare measures like special pension for life and scholarships for children being taken by the Government to help those who unfortunately lost their loved ones to Covid-19,” the official spokesperson said.

On the development front, the LG, he said, directed the DCs for early submission of the District Plans. The District Plan must reflect the participation of all stakeholders, besides replicating the developmental aspirations of the people, he added.

According to official spokesperson, Atal Dulloo, Financial Commissioner, Health & Medical Education Department gave a detailed overview about the status of Oxygen generation and supply, bed occupancy in hospitals, containment activities, status of vaccination drive under different age groups, district-wise daily and weekly trends of Covid-19 cases, positivity rate, recovery rate etc.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to Lt Governor; BVR Subrahmanyam, Chief Secretary; Dilbag Singh, DGP; Arun Kumar Mehta, Financial Commissioner, Finance Department; Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary to the Government, Home Department; Bipul Pathak, Principal Secretary to Government, Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj; Rohit Kansal, Principal Secretary, Power Development Department & Information Department; Shailendra Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Government, Public Works (R&B) Department; Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Lt Governor; Ranjan Prakash Thakur, Principal Secretary to the Government, Industries & Commerce; Mukesh Singh, ADGP; Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Ms. Sheetal Nanda, Secretary to the Government, Social Welfare Department; Vijay Kumar, IGP Kashmir; Dr. Raghav Langer, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Choudhary Mohammad Yasin, Mission Director, NHM; Deputy Commissioners and SPs, attended the meeting, in person and through virtual mode.

Peace Only Way

the forces of disruption threatening human lives and values.

Sinha made these remarks while administering pledge to the officials and staff members of the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat here at Raj Bhavan to mark Anti-Terrorism Day. Special Security Force's (SSF) personnel also read out the Anti-Terrorism Pledge on the occasion.

“Terrorism is the biggest enemy of humanity which must be opposed in all forms and manifestations. Violence can never be the answer, and peace is the only way towards prosperity and progress. It is high time we joined our efforts to defeat the forces of disruption threatening human lives and values,” Sinha said, as per an official spokesperson.

“Let us all reaffirm our strong commitment to uphold the country's tradition of non-violence and tolerance by promoting peace, unity, social harmony; creating a better

understanding among one-another, and educating our younger generation about universal brotherhood,” he added.

According to the official spokesperson the objective of observing Anti-Terrorism Day every year was to generate awareness amongst all sections of the society about the alarming impact of terrorism and violence on humanity.

Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to LG was also present on the occasion.

Effective Anti-Covid

He said that humanity has been struggling with Covid pandemic for one and a half years now and all efforts are being made to bring life back on the track of normalcy and overcome the challenges posed by the virus particularly in the wake of the second coronavirus wave and the surge in positive cases.

“As viruses have eclipsed the health sector in both developed and developing countries, many countries have gone back to the basic planning and strategizing as to how to undertake manufacturing of vaccines on a mass scale. Having done that, the stocks are getting diminished due to huge demand and consumption,” he said, while emphasizing on following the precautions and Covid appropriate behaviour for remaining safe from the deadly infection.

He also called for getting vaccinated to increase the defence mechanism of the body against virus.

However, he said that effective anti-Corona virus therapy is not available yet, so people should take Covid protocol seriously which includes wearing masks, maintaining physical distance and disinfecting contaminated hands frequently.

While describing and enumerating the common symptoms of the infection like cold, cough, sore throat, loss of smell and taste, loose motion, body aching, chest pain and breathlessness, Dr Koul advised to consult doctors as soon as these symptoms are noticed by an individual.

He also suggested continuous monitoring of oxygen saturation of family members at home, which according to him should not recede below 92 percent. In case of decrease in oxygen saturation, below 92 percent, the person should be admitted to a hospital.

Dr Koul further said that physical distance and pandemic has created mental stress among people which according to him can be overcome through virtual interaction and communication with friends, family and other colleagues.

While advising people to stay indoors and avoid venturing out aimlessly, Dr Koul asked people to keep perseverance and patience till the worst spell of Covid is over.

Besides, he said everybody should get tested for Covid by RAT or RTPCR test to clear any confusion regarding symptoms.

“Covid test will clarify presence of infection in an individual,” he added.

Covid-19 Could Become

The research, published in the journal Viruses, makes this likely prediction based on mathematical models that incorporate lessons learned from the current pandemic on how our body's immunity changes over time.

“This shows a possible future that has not yet been fully addressed,” said Fred Adler, a professor of mathematics and biological sciences at the University of Utah in the US.

“Over the next decade, the severity of COVID-19 may decrease as populations collectively develop immunity,” Adler said.

The study suggests that changes in the disease could be driven by adaptations of our immune response rather than by changes in the virus itself.

Although the SARS-CoV-2 virus is the best-known member of the family, other seasonal coronaviruses circulate in the human population, and they are less dangerous.

The researchers noted that some evidence indicates that one of these cold-causing relatives might have once been severe, giving rise to the “Russian flu” pandemic in the late 19th century.

The parallels led the scientists to wonder whether the severity of SARS-CoV-2 could similarly lessen over time. They built mathematical models incorporating evidence on the body's immune response to SARS-CoV-2.

Analysing several scenarios and their versions set up a situation where an increasing proportion of the population will become predisposed to mild disease over the long term.

“In the beginning of the pandemic, no one had seen the virus before. Our immune system was not prepared,” Adler explained.

The models show that as more adults become partially immune, whether through prior infection or vaccination, severe infections all but disappear over the next decade, the researchers said.

Eventually, the only people who will be exposed to the virus for the first time will be children who are naturally less prone to severe disease, they said.

“The novel approach here is to recognise the competition taking place between mild and severe COVID-19 infections and ask which type will get to persist in the long run,” said Alexander Beams, study first author and graduate student at University of Utah.

“We have shown that mild infections will win, as long as they train our immune systems to fight against severe infections,” Beams said.

However, the researchers noted that the models do not account for every potential influence on disease trajectory.

For instance, if new virus variants overcome partial immunity, COVID-19 could take a turn for the worse, they said. The team also noted that these predictions will hold up only if the key assumptions of the models hold up.

“Our next step is comparing our model predictions with the most current disease data to assess which way the pandemic is going as it is happening,” Adler added.

GMC Sgr To Hire

shall be initially for a minimum period of one year extendable up to maximum of three years.

“Due to the situation arising because of covid-19 pandemic, it may not be feasible to hold written test and interview of the candidates and the selection may be made on the basis of aggregate marks obtained by the candidates in the Diploma/Degree courses,” the officials added.

The advertisement has also been published widely in prominent local newspapers of Kashmir division for the information of interested candidates who may wish to apply for these posts.

FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup To Be Held In India In October 2022

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The U-17 women's World Cup will be held in India from October 11 to 30 next year, FIFA Council said on Thursday.

India were earlier scheduled to host the 2020 U-17 World Cup but it was postponed to 2021 before being cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The governing body then handed the hosting rights of the 2022 edition to India last November.

On the eve of the 71st FIFA Congress, the FIFA Council approved key dates for the international match calendars, including the dates of the 2022 U-17 world Cup in India.

"The Council also approved dates for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup India 2022 (11-30 October 2022), FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Costa Rica 2022 (10-28 August 2022), as well as a 14-team play-off for the FIFA Arab



Cup 2021, taking place between 19 and 25 June this year," the governing body said in a statement.

The FIFA Council also approved the tournament dates for the Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 from July 20 to August 20, 2023.

"The new play-off tournament for the Women's World Cup 2023 will be held from 17 to 23 February 2023."

COVID-19 Hit Asian Kabaddi Champion V Tejaswini Gets Sports Ministry Aid



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Sports Ministry has approved financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh for double Asian Games gold-medallist woman kabaddi player V Tejaswini Bai, who recently battled COVID-19 and lost her husband to the dreaded infection.

The assistance has been sanctioned under the new joint initiative with the Indian Olympic Association to support former athletes and coaches during the pandemic. The financial assistance has been sanctioned from the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for sportspersons.

Tejaswini and her husband contracted COVID-19 on May 1. While she is on the path to recovery at home, her husband Naveen succumbed to the deadly virus on May 11.

"He was just 30 but he was panicking a lot after the death of his father. It was the fear and stress that took his life," Tejaswini said in a statement issued by the Sports Authority of India.

"I was not expecting this (financial assistance) but the Sports Ministry, SAI and IOA took very prompt action to take this decision of giving us the assistance. This is the first time that we have been given such support.

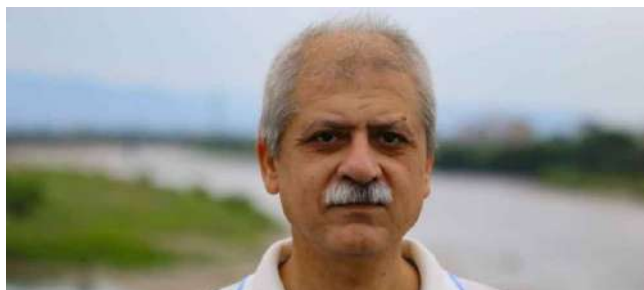
"Many people like us have financial problems and if we get the proper help, it feels good."

Karnataka's Tejaswini won the Arjuna Award in 2011, and was part of the Indian women's kabaddi team that won gold medals at the 2010 and 2014 Asian Games respectively.

Tejaswini said she came to know about the initiative from Karnataka Sports Committee member and former Arjuna awardee Honnaappa Gowda and now wants to invest the money to safeguard the future of her child.

"I have to take care of my 5 months old baby and also invest in her future from this money. I am the only parent now and will have to do something for my child," she said.

Tokyo-Bound AFI Medical Commission Chairman AK Mendiratta Dies Of COVID-19



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Athletics Federation of India's medical commission chairman Arun Kumar Mendiratta, who was set to travel with the Indian contingent for the Tokyo Olympics, died on Friday due to COVID-19 related complications at a hospital here. He was 60.

The Athletics Federation of India condoned the death of Mendiratta, who was also part of the Asian Athletics Association for over 25 years.

"He led AFI's relentless fight against age-fraud and doping. He was also the architect of our no-needles policy," AFI President Adille J Sumariwalla said in a release.

"Soft-spoken and genial, Dr. Mendiratta will be missed by the athletics community. May his soul rest in eternal peace."

Mendiratta was appointed as the chief medical officer by the Indian Olympic Association for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

Widely-travelled and well-respected, Mendiratta had accompanied Indian teams at vari-

ous World Championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Olympics during his long career in sports. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) took to twitter to condole his death.

"We are deeply saddened to hear about the untimely demise of Chief Medical officer of the Indian contingent at many Game, member of the IOA Medical Commission and chairman of the AFI medical Commission, Dr Arun Kumar Mendiratta," it said in a post.

"Actively involved with Asian Athletics and Indian sports, his selfless service to sports medicine and doping control for over 3 decades will be fondly remembered.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and dear ones. May his soul find eternal peace."

Mendiratta was particularly well-respected for being an active campaigner against age-fraud and doping violations.

He used to attend all National Junior Championships and National Youth Championships to weed out attempts of doping and age-fudging, the AFI said.

BCCI Has Not Officially Sought Any Change In Test Series Schedule: ECB



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The BCCI has not made any official request to alter the schedule for India's five-Test series against England for completing the postponed IPL, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Friday.

British media had reported about a possible approach from the BCCI to advance the first Test, starting August 4, by a week so that the remaining 31 matches of the League could be held.

However, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said they plan to follow the original schedule since their Indian counterparts have not yet made any official request for a change.

"We talk to the BCCI on a regular basis about a wide range of issues especially as we address the challenges of COVID-19 but have had no official request to change dates and are continuing to plan for the five Test series as scheduled," an

ECB spokesperson told PTI when asked about the possible change in the schedule.

The BCCI stands to lose revenues to the tune of Rs 2500 crore if the 2021 edition of Indian Premier League (IPL) is not completed.

This year's edition was postponed recently when COVID-19 cases were reported inside the bio-bubble for the League.

Former England captain and renowned cricket writer Michael Atherton wrote in his column for 'The Times' that the BCCI has enquired about the possibility of moving the final Test of the English summer to make room to complete the postponed IPL.

When approached, a BCCI source said the Board is certainly exploring options but the ECB has not been approached officially.

"The situation is pretty fluid now. There are options that are being explored but no official request has yet been sent. Obviously as Atherton wrote in his column,

there are some specific enquiries being made. Who said that enquiries mean official communications," a BCCI source said.

The Test series as of now is scheduled to conclude at the Old Trafford. The fifth Test will begin on September 10. The game match is expected to attract big crowd and the Lancashire county has already started selling the tickets.

If India make a formal request, the ECB will have to tweak the window for their ambitious project 'The Hundred' along with limited overs series against Pakistan.

Pakistan will play three ODIs and as many Twenty20 Internationals between July 8 and 20. The Hundred will be played between July 23 and August 22.

However if BCCI manages to convince the ECB for advancing the dates, it will be interesting to find what kind of quid pro quo is sought -- asking participation of Indian cricketers in the 'Hundred' or hosting the remainder of the IPL in England?

Tim Southee Says Tests Against England 'Great Preparation' For WTC Final

Press Trust of India

SOUTHAMPTON: Senior New Zealand pacer Tim Southee believes that the upcoming two-Test series against England would serve as "great preparation" for his team as it gears up for the marquee World Test Championship final against India here.

New Zealand are playing two Tests against England at the Lord's (Jun 2-6) and Birmingham (Jun 10-14). The WTC final is scheduled from June 18.

Asked if the focus will be on the WTC final, Southee said: "Anytime you get to play a Test match for New Zealand, it's an amazing opportunity and I don't think you treat them as warm-ups. Our focus is first and foremost on the two match series against England."

But the 32-year-old with 302 Test wickets didn't deny that it was indeed a great opportunity to gear up for the big battle against India.

"...but great to have those matches leading to the final. So for us, it's great preparation for that final but we are looking at two-match series against a quality English side in their conditions," Southee said.

Southee also didn't feel that three Tests in three weeks will be much of a workload after a wel-



come break for many.

"It's exciting to play three Test matches in a short space of time," Southee said after his first training session at the Ageas Bowl following a three-day hard quarantine.

"It is something that the team doesn't get to do that often. We've come off a bit of a break, which has been nice, and (we have) been able to get some conditioning into our bodies..." Southee said.

The post-quarantine training in Southampton is also very helpful as they would play India at the same venue.

"I imagine we'll probably be in

the same room when we come back and it's nice for the guys who haven't been here to be able to come here and experience it," he said.

"And when you come back for the final, you're a little bit more comfortable having spent some time here."

At 32, Southee believes that he has many more years of Test cricket left in him with a role model like James Anderson to emulate.

"Age is just a number and it's great to see guys like Jimmy bowl at 38, and it's a dream playing for your country and I would like to do it for many more years to come," he signed off.

TTFI Announces Financial Assistance For COVID-Hit Players And Coaches



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Table Federation of India on Friday announced financial assistance to past and present India players and coaches who have been hit by COVID-19.

The decision was taken at TTFI's executive board meeting earlier this week.

"We will be helping all India players (top 16) who are affected by COVID-19. Rs 1 lakh will be provided to someone who is on oxygen support, Rs 2 lakh for seriously ill and Rs 3 lakh to the family in case of death," M P Singh, former secretary and TTFI advisor, told PTI.

"All coaches who have been with the Indian team are also

covered under this initiative.

"These are challenging times for everyone and this is the least we can do for the affected players and coaches," he added.

Indian table tennis has coped with death of two former players because of COVID-19 in the past two months.

Former international Suhas Kulkarni (68) and Arjuna award-winning legend V Chandrasekhar (64) passed away after battling the dreaded infection.

None of the current players have so far reported being affected by the raging pandemic.

Singh added that TTFI will start working on the schedule for national events after the COVID situation in the country improves.

Indian Boxing's First Dronacharya Awardee Coach OP Bhardwaj Dies

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: India's first Dronacharya awardee coach in boxing, O P Bhardwaj, died on Friday after battling prolonged illness and age-related issues here.

He was 82 and had tragically lost his wife Santosh to ill-health about 10 days ago.

Bhardwaj was bestowed the highest national honour in coaching jointly with Bhalchandra Bhaskar Bhagwat (wrestling) and O M Nambiar (athletics), when it was introduced in 1985.

"He had been unwell for many days with a lot of health issues and was hospitalised. Age was a factor and there was also the shock of losing his wife about 10 days back," T L Gupta, a close family friend and a former boxing coach, told PTI.

Bhardwaj was India's national boxing coach from 1968 to 1989

and also served as a selector. Under his tutelage, Indian pugilists won medals at the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games and the South Asian Games.

Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh condoned his demise.

"O P Bhardwaj ji has been a flag-bearer for the sport of boxing. As a Coach, he inspired a generation of boxers, and coaches while as a selector, his work has been visionary and unparalleled," Singh said.

"I join my colleagues in the Boxing Federation of India to mourn this irreplaceable loss and pray for his eternal peace."

A pioneer, Bhardwaj was the first chief instructor for boxing's diploma coaching course at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. He was also a commentator and owned a gym in Delhi after retiring from NIS.

Tokyo Olympics To Go Ahead Even Under State Of Emergency: IOC VP

Agencies

TOKYO: The IOC vice president in charge of the postponed Tokyo Olympics said Friday the games would open in just over two months even if the city and other parts of Japan were under a state of emergency because of rising COVID-19 cases.

John Coates, speaking from Australia in a virtual news conference with Tokyo organizers at the end of three days of meetings, said this would be the case even if local medical experts advised against holding the Olympics.

"The advice we have from the WHO (World Health Organization) and all other scientific and medical advice that we have is that -- all the measures we have outlined, all of those measures that we are undertaking are satisfactory and will ensure a safe and secure games in terms of health,"

Coates said.

"And that's the case whether there is a state of emergency or not."

Public opinion in Japan has been running at 60-80% against opening the Olympics on July 23, depending on how the question is phrased. Coates suggested public opinion might improve as more Japanese get fully vaccinated. That figure is now about 2%.

"If it doesn't then our position is that we have to make sure that we get on with our job," Coates said. "And our job is to ensure these games are safe for all the participants and all the people of Japan."

IOC officials say they expect more than 80% of the residents of the Olympic Village, located on Tokyo Bay, to be vaccinated and be largely cut off from contact with the public. About 11,000 Olympic and 4,400 Paralympic athletes are expected to attend.

'I Will Have Discussions Soon': Bala Devi Hopes For Contract Extension With Rangers

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: India women's football team striker Bala Devi on Friday said she is eyeing an extended stay at the Rangers FC after her 18-month contract with the Scottish women's league side expires on June 6.

Bala had become the first Indian woman to earn a professional football contract abroad after signing for Scottish giant Rangers FC in January last year.

The 31-year-old said she hopes she has done enough to impress upon the Rangers coaching setup with her performances in the last one-and-a-half year.

"As a professional footballer, it really felt good to train and for a big side like Rangers for a full season. I have gained plenty of experience from this stint," the Indian star said in a virtual interaction on Friday.

Bala had scored a scorcher from over 30 yards, her second goal for the Rangers, in a Scottish Women's League match on May 16.

Coming in as a substitute in the 67th minute, Bala scored in the dying moments of the game as Rangers WFC thrashed Spartans FC 5-0. She had scored her first goal during the 9-0 drubbing of Motherwell FC in December last year.

"I have an 18-month contract which is



ending on June 6 with the conclusion of the league. So what is stored in future I can't say but I will have discussions with Rangers after June 6," she said.

"I have tried to give my best and I am hopeful but you can't predict anything."

Before Rangers FC, Bala had featured

abroad in the Maldivian league for New Radiant Sports Club alongside state-mate and idol Bembem Devi.

Bala, who is also first Asian international footballer to represent Rangers FC, had decided to stay back in Glasgow during coronavirus-forced global lockdown last year.

She has been away from her family since last year and the footballer admitted that she is definitely worried about her parents, who lives in her village in Manipur.

"I got emotional last year during the lockdown. With no games around it was tough, I didn't understand what to do. But then I realised why I came here for.

"My father has kidney problems so I am worried about him but my family has been my biggest support during the last one year," Bala said.

By her own admission, Bala is delighted to witness the global growth of women's football, especially India.

"I have been representing India since 2005 and it is very pleasing to see the growth of the game in India since 2017. With the support of the federation (AIFF), we are getting exposure.

"Women's football in India has grown by leaps and bounds. We have also grown in confidence," she said.

Bala said she would be more than happy to share her Rangers experience with her national team colleagues.

"The players who are representing India now have improved a lot. But I will definitely share my experiences with them when I play for India."

PM Modi Chokes During Virtual Meet With Doctors, Frontline Workers Of Varanasi



Agenceis

VARANASI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday lauded doctors, nurses and paramedical staff of his Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi for their efforts in fighting Covid.

The prime minister gave a new slogan "Jahan bimar, wahin upchar (treatment of the ailing at their doorstep)" during his video conference with the healthcare professionals, saying this can bring down the pressure that the second wave of Covid has put on the country's health system.

"A lot of work has been done, but there is also a need to concentrate on the rural areas of 'Purvanchal' (eastern region of Uttar Pradesh)," Modi stressed.

The effect of the pandemic has been so vast that despite all efforts, numerous lives were lost, the prime minister said in a voice choked with emotion.

"You have contained the virus significantly but there should be no complacency as it is going to be a long fight," Modi told the doctors and frontline workers of Varanasi.

He also took stock of the functioning of various Covid hospitals in the holy city, including the Pandit Rajan Mishra Covid Hospital which was recently started through joint efforts of the DRDO and the Indian Army.

The prime minister discussed ongoing efforts for tackling the second wave of Covid in Varanasi and preparations for the future. PTI

Prisoners Have Fundamental Right To Access Their Medical Records: Bombay HC

Agenceis

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Friday said all prisoners had a fundamental right to access their own medical records.

A bench of Justices SJ Kathawalla and SP Tavade directed Maharashtra prison authorities to provide lawyer-activist Sudha Bharadwaj, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, with her medical records, and said such relief must be extended to all prisoners across the state.

The HC was hearing a plea filed by Bharadwaj's daughter last week through senior counsel Yug Chaudhry seeking medical aid and medical bail for her mother.

On Friday, however, Chaudhry told the bench that after the plea was filed, Bharadwaj was taken to state run JJ hospital and got requisite medical treatment.

Therefore, he would not press for medical bail for Bharadwaj at present, Chaudhry said.

He, however, urged HC to consider his request to direct the state to provide all prisoners with their medical records, and to permit them to have a phone conversation with family members or their lawyers after every visit to a hospital or a medical examination conducted outside the prison premises.

Chaudhry said in the absence of such an order, inmates were forced to file petitions to get access to their own medical records, pathology test results, etc.

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, who appeared for National Investigation Agency, and the state's counsel, YP Yagnik, opposed the request, telling the court Chaudhry had not filed a PIL so he could not seek a general order.

"This is not a PIL. You can get an order for your own case. Specific orders can be passed on a case to case basis. There are various orders passed by HC from time to time taking care of prison inmates," ASG Singh said.

The bench, however, said it agreed with Chaudhry's submission that prison inmates must have access to their own medical records under their fundamental right to life as guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution.

"In our view, prisoners have a right to their own medical records



under Article 21. All medical records, details of tests, medicines prescribed etc., should be given to the petitioner (Bharadwaj).

In fact we will go a step further and say this order must apply to all prisoners," the HC bench said.

The bench also said Bharadwaj was permitted to make a phone call to an approved family member after any visit to a hospital outside the prison premises, and the family member could then update the lawyer about the inmate's condition.

"This facility in our view should also remain available to all prisoners," it said.

Bharadwaj, an accused in the Elgar-Parishad Maoist links case, is currently lodged in Byculla women's prison here.

Last week, Chaudhry had sought medical treatment and interim bail for Bharadwaj on medical grounds, given the activist's comorbidities and the risk of her contracting COVID-19 while in prison.

Chaudhry had said Bharadwaj was kept in a prison ward with 50 other women under extremely unsanitary conditions, with just three toilets for all of them.

"The ward where she is lodged is a literal death trap," Chaudhry had said at the time.

He told the court on Friday that he and Bharadwaj's family members had made numerous phone calls and written several emails to Byculla prison authorities seeking medical aid for the activist, but all these had gone unanswered.

Bharadwaj was finally taken to the JJ hospital after the present plea was filed, he said.

"We don't want bail unnecessarily but give us medical attention and our medical reports. We have a right under Article 21," Chaudhry said on Friday.

The HC disposed of the plea following Chaudhry's submissions.

China Developing Tibetan Border Villages Near Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Nepal: White Paper

Agenceis

BEIJING: China is ramping up efforts to develop the infrastructure in remote villages located along Tibet's border with India, Bhutan, and Nepal, according to a white paper on Tibet issued by the Chinese government on Friday.

Developing the border areas and improving people's lives in Tibet has become important as the strategic Himalayan region shares 4,000-km long external borderline, the document titled 'Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity' said.

The inhabitants of the contiguous areas experience harsh living and working conditions and a high incidence of poverty. Governments at all levels have been making constant efforts to develop border areas and improve people's lives, it said.

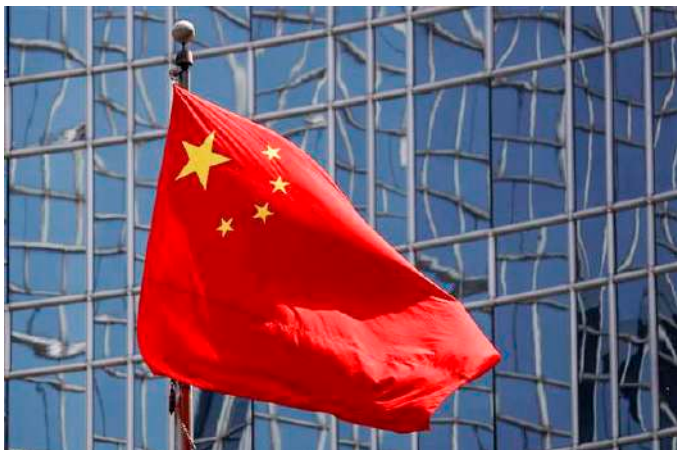
The document said that under the guidance of the ruling Communist Party, the financial allocation has been increasing year by year for border development in Tibet.

The development of China's border areas by establishing new villages with added emphasis on security has been accorded a priority since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012.

The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) of which 1,126 km is located in Arunachal Pradesh. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet, which India has firmly rejected.

China also shares an over 477-km-long border with Bhutan which is yet to be delineated and 1,389 kms of border with Nepal.

The border village development was highlighted when President Xi wrote a letter to a Tibetan herdsman family in Lhunze County



close to Arunachal Pradesh in 2017 asking them to "set down roots" to safeguard the "Chinese territory" and focus on developing their hometown.

"Without the peace in the territory, there will be no peaceful lives for the millions of families," Xi wrote in his much-publicised letter focussing on border development.

Particularly since Xi came to power, border villages, townships, and counties in Tibet have been granted more preferential state policies on infrastructure construction, covering water, electricity, roads, and housing, it said.

In 2017, the Plan of Tibet Autonomous Region on the Construction of Villages of Moderate Prosperity in Border Areas (2017-2020) was released, designed to ensure better access to housing, water, electricity, roads, communications and the internet, to improve education, technology, culture, healthcare and social security in border villages, and to boost industries in border areas.

By the end of 2020, first-tier and second-tier border villages had access to highways, all border townships and towns were connected to the main power grid, and all border villages had access to postal services, mobile communications, and safe drinking water, it said.

The Tibet Autonomous Region also has built a comprehensive transport network composed of highways, railways, air routes and pipelines since its peaceful liberation in 1951 it said.

The region has built 118,800 km of highways over the decades, said the document.

"Now, 94 per cent of towns and 76 per cent of administrative villages in the region have direct access to asphalt and concrete roads," it said.

Tibet last year has announced USD 2.09 billion plan to build three new airports and the expansion of the Lhasa Gonggar Airport.

The three new airports will be built in Lhunze, Tingri and Burang counties.

China has already built airports at Bamda in Qamdo, Mainling in Nyingchi, Xigaze, and in Ngari. Tibet now has 140 domestic and international air routes in operation, reaching 66 cities, the white paper said. — PTI

What Is Black Fungus And Why Are Cases Up In India: What We Know So Far

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Several thousand coronavirus patients in India have contracted a deadly and aggressive fungal infection, compounding the country's troubles as it reels from the pandemic.

What is the fungus?

Mucormycosis, dubbed "black fungus", is caused by a mould found in soil and in decaying organic matter like rotting leaves, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

People get mucormycosis, of which there are several types, by breathing in the fungal spores. They can be spread in hospitals and homes by air humidifiers or oxygen tanks containing dirty water.

How dangerous is it?

The infection needs to be caught early as it is aggressive and dead tissue has to be scraped away. Surgeons sometimes have to remove patients' nose, eyes or even their jaw to stop it getting to the brain.

The average fatality rate is 54 per cent, according to the CDC.

Once infected, people can die within days. However it is not contagious, according to the CDC. India normally deals with a few dozen cases a year.

Generally the body's defences repel the fungus and only those with severely weakened immune systems — for example organ transplant or cancer patients — are affected.

Why are coronavirus patients at risk?

With coronavirus and other conditions, a dangerous phenomenon



called a "cytokine storm" can occur where the immune system goes into overdrive, damaging organs.

So doctors have been prescribing steroids to reduce the immune response. But both this weakens the body's defences and increases sugar levels, which fungus thrives off.

What other factors are there?

Diabetics — who also have excessive sugar in their bloodstream — are also at higher risk. India has high rates of diabetes.

Some hospitals and doctors have been over-prescribing steroids, and some people have been taking them at home without medical advice.

"People have started using (steroids) liberally, excessively and inappropriately," Professor K. Sri-nath Reddy, from the Public Health Foundation of India, told AFP.

How many infections are there

There are at least 7,250 cases in India, according to the Hindustan Times, which cited a government court submission.

Maharashtra state has now reported more than 2,000 cases. Gu-

jarat, home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has about 1,200, officials said. At least nine states have now declared the infection an epidemic. Several cities have opened special hospital wards.

Authorities have not said how many people have died nationally from black fungus. According to the Hindustan Times, at least 219 people — likely an underestimate — have died.

What about treatment drugs ?

There are severe shortages of the main anti-fungal drug to treat the infection, amphotericin B.

The government and drug companies in the country once dubbed the "pharmacy of the world" are scrambling to ramp up production.

Amulya Nidhi, a health activist, said the government had earlier failed to prepare an adequate supply of coronavirus medicines such as remdesivir and plasma.

With black fungus, it has repeated the same mistake.

"The government should have acted when it found out about the very first (fungus) case... People are not supposed to be begging for life-saving medicines."

UGC Panel Prepares Draft Guidelines For 'Blended Teaching' In Universities, Colleges

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Higher Education Institutions may soon be allowed to teach up to 40 per cent of any course through online mode with an expert committee set up by the University Grants Commission (UGC) drafting a concept note on "blended mode of teaching and learning" in varsities and colleges.

The UGC has sought suggestions and feedback from various stakeholders on the draft concept note by June 6.

"The UGC had decided that HEIs should be allowed to teach up to 40 per cent of each course through online mode and the remaining 60 per cent of the concerned courses can be taught in offline mode.

Exams for teaching under both modes can be conducted online," UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain said.

According to the draft, "the advantages of blended learning for students include increased learning skills, greater access to information, improved satisfaction and learning outcomes and opportunities both to learn with others and to teach others."

The concept note has been prepared in accordance with the new National Education Policy (NEP), which the expert panel believes, gives the acceptability of many modes of learning including that of face to face learning, online learning and distance or virtual mode.

"Blended learning is not a mere mix of online and face-to-face mode, but it refers to a well-planned combination of meaningful activities in both the modes. The blend demands consideration of several factors, mainly focusing on learning outcomes and the learner centred instructional environment," the draft note said.

"Given the emergence of digital technologies and the emerging importance of leveraging technology for teaching-learning at all levels from school to higher education, the NEP recommends for use of blended models of learning," it said.

"The NEP-2020 states that while promoting digital learning and education, the importance of face-to-face in-person learning is fully recognised. Accordingly, different effective models of blended learning will be identified for appropriate replication for different subjects," the note said.

Defining the role of teachers in blended learning, the draft note said, "blended learning shifts the

teacher's role from knowledge provider to coach and mentor.

This shift does not mean that teachers play a passive or less important role in students' education.

Quite the contrary -- with blended learning, teachers can have an even more profound influence and effect on students' learning."

"Traditionally, classroom instruction has largely been teacher-directed, top-down, and one-size-fits-all, with a bit of differentiation thrown in, but with blended learning, it now becomes more student-driven, bottom-up, and customised, with differentiation as a main feature," it added.

The expert panel noted that in order to implement blended learning as a new mode of teaching-learning in higher education, the area of assessment and evaluation needs to be explored again.

"Continuous comprehensive evaluation should be encouraged in universities and colleges.

Summative evaluation strategies including open book examination, group examinations even for conventional theory papers, spoken examinations, on demand examinations have been recommended besides formative evaluation strategies like ePortfolio, creative products, classroom or online quizzes," the draft said.

The UGC panel also pointed out that availability of infrastructure is fundamental to teaching and learning.

"It must be ensured that required infrastructure for online systems such as accessibility of internet, bandwidth, hardware, space and other related resources be made easily available for the smooth execution of blended teaching-learning process.

The financial aid required to develop the infrastructure and resources must also be taken care of," it said.

The commission has also called for experimenting with new tools for examination and assessment.

"During the COVID time, many exams were forced to be conducted in an online mode. These were supported by variety of tools which came into being in recent times and were based on proctoring through artificial intelligence tools," the draft said.

"However, AI as technology can be used for many more assessments like, attention levels, speed of learning, level of learning etc. Hence new tools should be experimented with for examinations and assessments," the draft said.

Twitter Labels Patra's Tweet On Congress "Toolkit" As "Manipulated Media"

Agenceis

Twitter has labelled as "manipulated media" a tweet of BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra on the alleged toolkit prepared by the Congress to target the Modi government.

Twitter says it "may label Tweets that include media (videos, audio, and images) that have been deceptively altered or fabricated."

The Congress on Thursday wrote to Twitter asking it to permanently suspend the accounts of BJP leaders including party chief JP Nadda and Union minister Smriti Irani for allegedly "spreading misinformation and unrest in the society".

The opposition party has insisted that the toolkit documents flagged by the BJP are "fake" and has filed police complaint against its leaders. The Chhattisgarh police has registered an FIR to probe the matter.

The BJP has been attacking the Congress over some controversial

content of the so-called toolkit. BJP leaders, including Patra, have posted numerous tweets to attack the Congress over the toolkit.

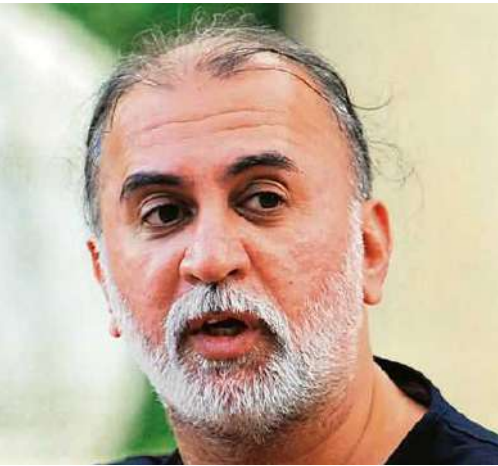
Patra's tweet, now labelled "manipulated media", had posted a document and said, "Friends look at the #CongressToolkit in extending help to the needy during the Pandemic! More of a PR exercise with the help of 'Friendly Journalists' & 'Influencers' than a soulful endeavour. Read for yourselves the agenda of the Congress: #CongressToolkitExposed"



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NEWS MAKERS

Journalist Tarun Tejpal Acquitted In Rape Case



Agenceis

Panaji.: A sessions court in Goa on Friday acquitted journalist Tarun Tejpal of sexually assaulting a former female colleague.

Tejpal, former Tehelka editor-in-chief, was accused of sexually assaulting the colleague inside the elevator of a luxury hotel in Goa in 2013.

The Goa Police had registered an FIR against Tejpal in November 2013 following which he was arrested.

He has been out on bail

since May 2014.

The court had earlier adjourned pronouncement of the verdict in the case on three occasions, citing various reasons.

The court was to deliver the verdict on April 27, but the judge had adjourned it to May 12. On May 12, it was further adjourned to May 19 and on May 19, it was adjourned to May 21.

The Goa police registered an FIR against Tejpal in November 2013 following which he was arrested. The Goa crime branch had filed a

charge sheet against Tejpal, who has been out on bail since May 2014.

He faced trial under IPC sections 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement), 354 (assault or criminal force with intent to outrage modesty), 354-A (sexual harassment), 354-B (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe), 376(2)(f) (person in a position of authority over women, committing rape) and 376(2)(k) (rape by a person in a position of control). PTI

A Temple For 'Corona Devi' In Tamil Nadu

Agenceis

A 'Corona Devi' temple has come up on the outskirts of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu amid the raging second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The temple has been built by a mutt, the Kamatchipuri Adheenam. This is like the 'Plague Mariamman Temple', dedicated by the faithful to the deity Amman seeking her protection when plague struck the district about 150 years ago.

An idol, named 'Corona Devi' has also been placed in the temple. The 1.5-foot tall black stone idol has been consecrated at the temple in the mutt area. Daily prayers are be-



ing held, seeking blessings to save the people from the deadly disease, for 48 days, sources in the Adheenam said.

It is not for the first time such a temple has come up. When plague spread across Coimbatore killing many people more than a century ago, an idol of Mariamman was installed and people had started offering prayers. The place had turned into a temple and came to be known as "Plague Mariamman Temple".

Only priests and mutt officials are allowed inside the 'Corona Devi' temple in view of the pandemic. COVID-19 guidelines like maintaining social distance are in place. The temple is strictly out of bounds for the public, the mutt officials said. A Mahayagam or special yajna, will be organised on the last day of prayers, sources said.