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P3 CITY

DRAMA AMID DIN: MAYOR AND CO. KEEP COMMISSIONER OUT OF SMC

The Mayor Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Junaid Azim Matto and over a dozen corporators Friday created ruckus in the Corporation lawns and stopped the Commissioner SMC Amir Athar...

P4 THINK

THE POLITICS OF DECEPTION

Politics is the game of deceptions and the inhabitants of District Budgam have become the victims of it yet again. This time, the issue is the U-turn that the administration took in shifting the proposed DRDO 500 bed hospital from...



P7 STATE

GANDERBAL ACHIEVES 100% VACCINATION TARGET OF ALL ABOVE 45 AGE GROUP

The district Ganderbal has become the second district in Kashmir division to achieve the hundred percent vaccination target of all above 45 age group with at...



AVOID COVID TALK, AVOID STRESS: Kashmir's Top Psychiatrist

Auqib Javeed

As more and more people are reporting mental health issues in the second viral wave, Kashmir's noted mental health specialist, Dr. Arshad Hussain, says people should watch less news regarding Covid-19 "since the important and necessary information that one needs to fight Covid-19 is already there".

The only information that has been added to Covid-19 is regarding the vaccination, while rest is the same, the prominent psychiatrist says.



LET'S HAVE NEW HABITS, proper sleep and an optimistic outlook to avoid stress."

"So we need to avoid watching news of death and destruction on a daily basis because it will affect your mental health," he warns.

Plus, he says, people should use social media as much as

possible for virtual-meetings, grief-sharing, gossip and humour.

"Let's not talk about Covid-19," Dr. Arshad Hussain reiterates. "We should've a normal talk. It really releases the stress."

In an exclusive conversation with Kashmir Observer, the distinguished psychiatrist and professor at the Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (IMHANS), Government Medical College, Srinagar, advises new habits, proper sleep and optimistic outlook as some measures to avoid stress.

How's Kashmir's third straight year of lockdown affecting people mentally?

Undoubtedly lockdowns are bad but they're necessary evils for survival, for saving lives and at the end what only matters is life everything else can get

compensated. Even the European countries with great health infrastructure had to implement it.

If there's any relaxation at this moment it'll invite devastation. But yes, lockdowns will have economic costs and that has its own negative effects on mental health.

How has coronavirus cast its shadow on Valley's mindscape?

As per many reports and studies, the pandemic has hit the mental health of the people but let me tell you honestly, it had very little impact here in Kashmir last year.

Although our hospital, Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences Kashmir, saw over 77,000 patients in 2020, they were mostly non-Covid mental health issues.

But somehow, [More On P6](#)



Change takes courage

—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

NEWS DIGEST

City Admin Seals Mahatta Cafe

SRINAGAR: Mahatta Diner Cafe in Srinagar has been sealed by the J&K administration amid a property dispute, and for allegedly violating Covid-19 norms. The cafe is owned by the Mehta family which had earlier been running a famous photo studio on the Bund Srinagar. The owners have accused former J&K Finance Minister, Haseeb Drabu, of a land grab attempt, IANS reported Friday. [More On P6](#)

Hizb Militant Nabbed In Kulgam: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday claimed to have arrested a Hizbul Mujahideen militant in Kulgam district of south Kashmir. Zakir Bhat of HM was arrested after police and army launched a joint cordon and search operation in the Frisal area of the district following information about the presence of militants in the area, a police spokesman said. He said that the investigations have revealed that [More On P6](#)

HC Quashes 3 PSA Detention Orders

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has quashed three detention orders under Public Safety Act and asked the authorities to release them "if not required in any other case." A bench of Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul quashed orders against Sajad Ahmad Bhat son of Ghulam Hassan Bhat of Nagam Chadoora, Budgam, Aijaz Ahmad Dar son of Habibullah Dar of Nasrullahpora, Budgam and Manzoor Ahmad Ganaile son of Ghulam Qadir [More On P6](#)

5 Gamblers Held In Twin Raids: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday claimed to have arrested five gamblers in twin raids in Budgam and Ganderbal districts of the Valley. Abdul Sattar Sheikh, Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh and Mohammad Yasin Sofi, all residents of Peth Sharen Khag in Budgam district were arrested by a police team after receiving an input about gambling activity in nearby village Hardu Suresh, a police spokesperson said Friday. An amount of Rs 5500 besides [More On P6](#)

Pesticide Factory Gutted In Fire

UDHAMPUR: A pesticide factory was gutted in a fire in the industrial area of Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said on Friday, adding no casualties were reported in the incident. It broke out in Dhanuka chemical factory at Batal-Ballian industrial estate around midnight on Thursday, they said, adding eight fire tenders were pressed into service along with the army and the air force. The fire engulfed the whole pesticide factory, which was one [More On P6](#)



Relatives of a corona victim fold their hands while performing last rites at a cremation ground in Srinagar on Friday. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Decision On Kashmir Unlock Shortly: Div Com

Auqib Javeed

SRINAGAR: As the business fraternity in Kashmir upped the ante over the phased reopening of shops and commercial establishments citing heavy losses, the Jammu and Kashmir administration said on Friday that the decision to ease lockdown will be taken shortly.

"The government is working to unlock Kashmir and the decision regarding the same will be taken shortly," Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, P K Pole told Kashmir Observer on Friday.

He said that the competent authority will assess the situation and take a call on phased unlocking, including days of relaxation and the activities to be allowed.

He further said that the admin is already giving relaxation in those areas where less COVID-19 cases are detected.

Pole's comments come a day after a trader's body in Kashmir appealed to the [More On P6](#)

Saving Lives, Protecting Livelihoods Is Our Priority: LG



Observer News Service

Asserting that the strict enforcement of test-track-treat protocol is the only long term solution to stop the spread of coronavirus, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said

on Friday that saving lives and protecting livelihoods of the people was his priority.

Chairing a series of meetings with Covid Task Force, Deputy Commissioners and SPs of the UT, here at Civil Secretariat on Friday, Sinha said called upon the officers to ensure no compromise on [More On P6](#)

Two Month Old Militant Killed In Shopian Encounter: Police

Another Gunfight Rages In Sopore, Two Militants Believed To Be Trapped

Zaid Bin Shabir

SRINAGAR: A Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant on Friday was killed in an encounter with government forces in south Kashmir's Shopian district, while another gunfight has raged in Sopore town of Baramulla district where two local militants are believed to be trapped, officials said Friday. Around 3:00 pm Friday, they

said, police, army's 44 RR and the personnel of CRPF 14 battalion launched a cordon and search operation in Ganapora area of Shopian district after receiving specific input regarding the presence of militants in the orchards of the village. The officials said that the militants opened fire upon the search team when they were given an opportunity to surrender.

"The joint search party retaliated to the fire leading to an encounter. In the ensuing encounter, one militant was killed and his body was retrieved from the site of encounter," a police spokesperson said. [More On P6](#)

China Blames Britain For Kashmir Quagmire

Press Trust Of India

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian created a flutter on Friday by tweeting an official media commentary blaming the British colonialists for injecting the "poison of hatred" into Kashmir's body politic under its "notorious" 'divide and rule' policy.

Interestingly, the article 'Kashmir: A Crack in the Jewel in the Crown of the British Empire' by state-run Xinhua news agency was published amidst growing tensions between Beijing and London over

a number of issues, including Hong Kong and human rights.

If British India was the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, then Kashmir has been the biggest crack in it when the crown finally fell over on that land, Zhao said in a series of tweets, quoting from a recent Xinhua commentary.

The British Empire fell, but the poison of hatred has been injected into the body politic of two peoples for decades to come, Zhao, who previously worked as China's Deputy Ambassador to Pakistan before taking over as a spokesman of the foreign ministry, tweeted. [More On P6](#)

Govt Launches 'Taskeen' For Covid Affected Children

Tele- Counselling Service To Address Fear, Anxiety; Other Mental Health Issues: Div Com

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In an effort to address the growing concerns among parents, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday launched 'Taskeen', a tele-counselling service for psychological support of Covid-19 affected children

during the pandemic.

The service was launched by the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole on Saturday, an official spokesperson said. He said a team of Psychologists and resources persons on alternate days shall provide counselling to address fear, anxiety and other mental stress related issues among the Covid-19 affected children by providing them psychological [More On P6](#)

Govt Hikes Salary Of NHM Employees

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday approved a substantial hike in salary of employees who are working under the centrally sponsored National Health Mission (NHM) scheme in the Union Territory.

The decision, in this regard, has been conveyed to the Union Territory in the approval received for Programme Implementation Plan for the financial year 2021-22 projected by the government, an official spokesperson said Friday.

As per the approval accorded by Union Ministry of Health and Family [More On P6](#)



Dr. Iqbal Saleem
Professor of Surgery, GMC

If you value your life, stop smoking.

If you love your elders double your effort to stop them from smoking.

Covid related adverse effects are more common in smokers. SO RIGHT TIME TO GIVE YOUR LUNGS SOME RESPIRE.



Dr. Salim Khan
Professor and HOD Community Medicine, GMC

If you want no third wave of COVID-19 comes in J&K, everyone has to follow COVID Appropriate Behaviour for times to come. Lowering guards in coming weeks would invariably invite third wave. Ensure behavioural change by following social distancing, wearing masks & hand hygiene



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

COVID treatment protocols do not vary based on variants. Don't let someone give you a drug claiming "it only works for x variant."



Dr. Shafi Kuchay
Endocrinologist

Mild covid is a great opportunity to make money, who wants to exploit it.

90 out of 100, who get covid, get ok without any medicine.

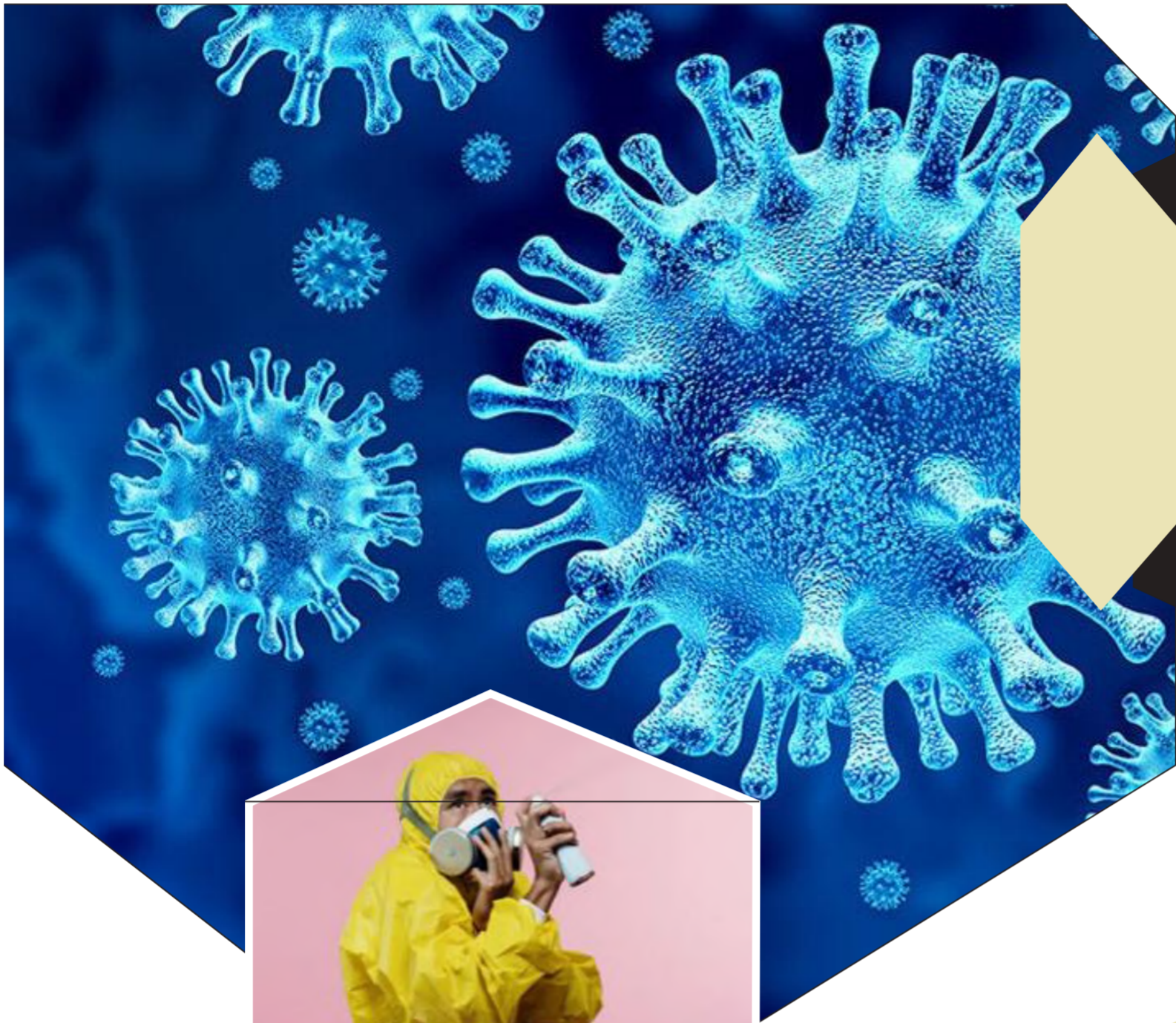
But u don't know the 10 who worsen over time.

So out of fear, u give medicine to all 100, majority of whom don't actually need it. #COVID19

Mehta Officially Appointed J&K CS

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Government on Friday appointed Arun Kumar Mehta (IAS, AGMUT) as the Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir. "Consequent upon the appointment of B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, IAS (CG:1987), Chief Secretary, J&K, as Officer on Special Duty in the [More On P6](#)



“

We Would like to emphasise that the effects of self-control and cooperation emerged above and beyond the effects of variables such as personal cost of engaging in health-protective behaviours, perceived risk and anxiety, and political orientation.

‘Not FEAR, but goal importance and others’ behavior makes one favour COVID-19 measures’

“

Psychologists at the University of Zurich Charlotte Kukowski, Katharina Bernecker and Veronika Brandstatter took a different perspective to study the impact on the impact of people's perception of others' behaviour when it comes to the public good, as well as people's own self-control in sticking to behaviour guidelines.

Agencies

Researchers have found that it is not fear but understating the importance of the end goal as well as the way people perceive the behaviour of other people are what makes individuals and societies more or less willing to drastically change their lifestyle and support government-imposed measures to mitigate spread of Covid-19.

Psychologists at the University of Zurich Charlotte Kukowski, Katharina Bernecker and Veronika Brandstatter took a different perspective to study the impact on the impact of people's perception of others' behaviour when it comes to the public good, as well as people's own self-control in sticking to behaviour guidelines.

Earlier research has mostly looked into factors such as fear, perceived risk, age and political views.

By using data from the United Kingdom and Switzerland, the researchers concluded that, indeed, valuing fair contribution to the public good and the ability to practice self-control make people more likely to undertake health-protective behaviour, though the effects for self-control are not entirely consistent across the countries the authors sampled.

Further, people who are more concerned with the cooperation of their fellow citizens and expect them to do their own part are more supportive of government regulations, possibly as a means of ensuring that others comply. However, the authors stress that future studies need to test this possible link.

The study has been published in the peer-reviewed, open-access scientific journal Social Psychological Bulletin.

Successfully overcoming conflicting desires and needs, such as taking public transporta-

tion, meeting with friends, and participating in large gatherings, for the benefit of society means that people must practice self-control. People will only be willing to control their desires and needs, however, if they value the higher goal, that is, managing the pandemic, even though their own health-protective behaviour might not affect them directly.

In this sense, self-control in the service of a societal goal is quite different from self-control for a personal goal, such as sticking to a healthy diet or meeting career goals.: While exercising and career achievements are largely private concerns, we all depend on each other's cooperation when it comes to a societal goal like managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher goal importance and perception of others' behaviour are key factors in practising health-protective behaviour.

"(...) we would like to emphasise that the effects of self-control and cooperation emerged above and beyond the effects of variables such as personal cost of engaging in health-protective behaviours, perceived risk and anxiety, and political orientation.

If future work replicates these findings, one might cautiously conclude that, in a time of crisis, people - including decision-makers - are indeed able to "rise above themselves" and lay aside political differences and personal costs for collective goal attainment," say the researchers.

The authors note that in collective actions, it is essential that one sees others put in the same effort.

In conclusion, the scientists note that, in order to improve public efforts in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other collective goals, including climate change mitigation, it is essential that we identify the factors contributing to successful self-control and cooperation in the service of higher, society-level goals.

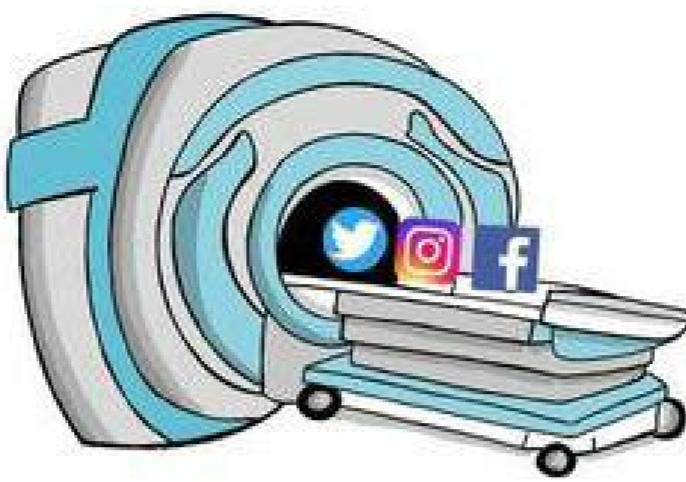
JCP To File Rs 5 Cr 'Defamation Case' Against Mattu

(Kashmir Observer, 29 May, 2005)

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NO HOLDS BARRED



Unlike a pandemic that puts rich and poor alike at risk, the kind of economic crisis currently simmering in much of the developing world does not affect the rich as much and therefore does not generate headlines and is easy to disregard – that is, until it can no longer be ignored

The Politics of Deception

Altaf Hussain

The eleventh hour shift of place intelligibly gives a sense of regional favoritism, a story not too rare in the case of district budgam which has often been a casualty of such political maneuvers.

Politics is the game of deceptions and the inhabitants of District Budgam have become the victims of it yet again. This time, the issue is the U-turn that the administration took in shifting the proposed DRDO 500 bed hospital from Reshipora in Budgam to Khonmoh in Awantipora. The land for this developmental project in the said district had been designated 10 years back. The site was left unutilized over these years leaving land donors in a conundrum with the uncertainty surrounding crude plans. Now, the cock and bull story spiraled around the shifting plans of the project are some technical reasons — that the soil testing report has indicated that the land is unfit for such a project and hence the sumersault.

The district Budgam is popular for its tourist attractions. Even as it has been significantly near to the summer capital, it has invariably been ignored in terms of progress and has as such faced developmental issues. Those incharge and entrusted with the responsibility of the district have ironically been the biggest roadblocks instead of being game-changers. The case of the land meant for the new hospital is a case in point.

One can only wonder, what made the Government change its plan at the eleventh hour? People (land donors) are up in arms against the State Administration for hoodwinking them. They had provided almost 78 kanals of land for the hospital that too free of cost. Instead of rewarding this goodwill gesture, the Admin in turn betrayed them last minute. Upsetting it must be, as time and again the land donors' hopes were discouraged by successive governments.

It is a grotesque dereliction of duty. Let's even suppose there are some technical issues behind this administrative flip flop. However, there are still feasible sites in the adjoining areas of Patwari, Paller, Ichgam, Rakhe arath in the District which are geographically fit for construction. Recently, a high-level delegation led by Divisional commissioner assured land donors of all possible benefits. How can one buy their argument now?

The eleventh hour shift of place intelligibly gives a sense of regional favoritism, a story not too rare in the case of district budgam which has often been a casualty of such political maneuvers.



This incident should be a wake-up call for people of Budgam especially for Reshipora residents whose land designated decades ago for a hospital, property worth lakhs in the form of poplar trees which were axed for the proposed construction and land-filling went down the drain.

So implausible is this last minute sumersault that some Budgam residents aren't in the wrong in their speculation that an incognito business group is involved to secure huge dividends at the cost of the livelihood of thousands of land donors.

In absence of responsible supervision (from ministries to magistrates), Budgam constituency continues to suffer from institutional and structural lapses. It deserves the needful and its equitable share. It is lagging far behind in terms of its Tertiary health care services. As the surge in covid

cases in the District is huge, standing 2nd in a row of all other Districts, the 500-bed covid hospital earmarked should come up at the designated place. The Administrative manoeuvre on the horns of a dilemma is discriminatory in nature. This kind of inimical approach may kindly be ceased and a deliberate attempt to let the District Budgam lag behind in development should halt now.

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

The author is a Mass communication student at Kashmir University

The Post-Pandemic Whiplash Awaiting the World's Poor

KAUSHIK BASU

Unlike a pandemic that puts rich and poor alike at risk, the kind of economic crisis currently simmering in much of the developing world is easy to ignore. But unless national governments and multilateral organizations act quickly, today's looming threat will be tomorrow's front-page news.

ITHACA – The world is currently transfixed by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping through many regions, especially Asia, Africa, and South America. But, focused as we are on the public-health crisis, we risk overlooking pandemic-related economic problems that could plague developing countries long after the wave has receded.

At the global level, the International Monetary Fund has warned of a "Great Divergence," whereby rich countries recover strongly while others flounder. Recent evidence suggests that several advanced economies, notably the United States, and a few developing countries, like Vietnam, Thailand, and Bangladesh, seem to be pulling out of the crisis and could grow faster than they did before the pandemic. But many emerging economies and low-income countries are likely to languish for a long time.

A Great Divergence is visible even within economies. The pandemic has punished sectors such as hospitality, travel, and tourism, and boosted others like pharmaceuticals, digital platforms, and networking technology. It is therefore not surprising that many rich people, including those who are good at navigating equity markets, have actually emerged from the crisis better off, while the poor have borne the brunt of its impact.

Therein lies the real danger. Un-



like a pandemic that puts rich and poor alike at risk, the kind of economic crisis currently simmering in much of the developing world does not affect the rich as much and therefore does not generate headlines and is easy to disregard – that is, until it can no longer be ignored.

Sure enough, evidence of trouble is beginning to mount. Emerging economies everywhere face rising debts, and some, like Zambia and Argentina, have already defaulted. In 2020, Latin America's economy contracted by 7.7%; the Philippines and India took even bigger hits, registering growth rates of -9.5% and -9.6%, respectively. And the World Bank estimates that the pandemic may have pushed up to 40 million people in Africa into extreme poverty.

The current wave of COVID-19 that

began in India became discernible only in late March. Although systematic data regarding its economic impact are not yet available, anecdotal evidence paints a gloomy picture. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, the seven million jobs lost in April caused the national unemployment rate to jump to 8%, from 6.5% in March. Moreover, youth unemployment in India already reached an all-time high of 23.75% last year.

The regular reports of dead bodies being dumped into the River Ganges and washing up in small Indian towns and cities indicate the tragic severity. But they are also tell-tale signs of a brewing economic crisis. For Hindus, not being able to acquire logs and find space to cremate the dead is a desperate situation. Only in cases of extreme

poverty would they abandon this effort and throw corpses into the river.

Another sobering account comes from the two women who run Nanritam, a remarkable NGO that operates a school and an eye hospital in a remote part of West Bengal. They told me how registration at their school is down to nearly half its normal level. Furthermore, the pandemic has forced thousands of the region's tribal chhau dancers and jhumur singers – whose only regular income is the Rs1,000 (\$14) per month they receive from the state government – to resort to begging. When Nanritam recently announced its usual simple relief dole for the poor living around their campus, the NGO was taken aback by some who walked and cycled for miles to get it.

But, aside from such evidence, of-

ficial data are also beginning to flash warning signs. Last month, Indian wholesale price inflation climbed to 10.5%, the highest rate in 11 years. This reflects mismatches in demand and supply, which, if not corrected soon, could become a major crisis, causing macroeconomic imbalances that can affect trade and financial flows. India has a highly capable central bank, but many of the country's current problems will be difficult to rectify through monetary policy alone, because they arise from poor governance.

India therefore urgently needs policy blueprints for dealing with the crisis. Policymakers should recognize that when basic goods such as medical oxygen, vaccines, or food are in short supply, pure financial interventions may not work, because the rich will be prepared to spend whatever it takes to get what they need (and more as a precautionary buffer). Providing the poor with cash support to make sure they can meet their basic survival needs will mean that the price of the good rises until the rich have what they want. The poor will thus be back at square one.

We see this kind of problem at both the micro and the international levels, notably with COVID-19 vaccines. Whereas many rich countries are buying up doses to secure ample stocks that go well beyond their basic needs, poor countries, including large parts of Africa, are left without any access to supplies.

Just as national governments in India and other developing countries have a lot to do, multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the G20 also must act quickly to build up policy buffers and help coordinate support. Otherwise, today's looming economic threat will be tomorrow's front-page news.

Project Syndicate

Scribe's Rise as Satirist

Bereft of slapstick comedy, the radio jockey's social media jesting is setting him apart from the crowd of comics.

Zaid Bin Shabir

HIS latest performance shows him in a quintessential koshur avatar down with heavy Iftaar meal.

In the state of trance, he delivers puns with precision. Sans sounding off-putting, he states: "I'm ok, I'm ok. It's just that I ate too much of rice." Before ending the act, he effortlessly delivers his best line: "Was it kabab or cocaine!"

Days before this hilarious act, the humorist was playing true to his social media jovial character. It was a wilting afternoon fasting time, and he was playing cricket in his office pathway with zest and zeal of a teenager. The office overlooked the City's forlorn at Hyderpora area.

But while he battled and remained oblivious of his growing online cult, those in streets were laughing their hearts over his enactments. He lately created one such moment at the ghats of Dal Lake where Javed Ahmad, a middle-aged man had arrived for a recreational run on Srinagar's cherished trail.

Just ahead of him were his 'fitness friends' maintaining a pretty normal speed. "You've to see this!" he called them out.

Wonderstruck, three of his friends halted their run and gave a collective sense of tentative confusion and an exhilarated look, before a calm but vigorous voice overtook the languorous surrounding of the British-built Boulevard.

There was a young, bearded and a handsome man dressed in a crewneck sweater, with a zip down, fur-coated jacket over it. He was sitting in a room, with a dustbin next to his ear, impersonating it as a telephone receiver. The man appeared to have no idea of what he was doing, until his alluring voice buzzed with: "Hello..Haan, Bashir Sa'eb!"

Then, he knew exactly what he was doing and immediately turned into a fictional vexed Kashmiri character, who comically made wrath of an Indian Director's "Vegetarian Wazwan" comment.

"Yiha Chu aasi hui (He's just like us)," Javid blurted laughingly while others nodded in acceptance.

The man with dustbin was RJ Vijdan, sharing a unique satirical criticism on his Instagram profile.

"After the classic characters like Aha'ed Raaz and Bashir Kotur, this young man [Vijdan] has a great promise to woo the masses by his satirical character," said Javid, as he kept on chatting to his mates about the RJ's funny but true self.

Back in his office where he took a break from a quick refreshing bat-ball session, Vijdan turned somber—a characteristics of a comedian who owns the stage and time—to assert that a great performance is an amalgam of satire and political awareness.

This RJ is a great believer of abatement before recording his trademark funny videos. For more than four years since he has been in show business, he has already allured his comrades by his early punch to the work.

"Vijdan is like a fighter who kicks open the dressing room door before a fight, enters in and then laughs-out unnecessarily, creating a jolly mood," said Ibrahim Mussa, Vijdan's close-friend.

There has always been a strong tradition in Kashmiri humour of "remaining hostile to the world", what one may call as an underdog comedy done by a nebbish guy struggling to gain mass attention.

But Vijdan is neither nebbish nor an underdog.

He's a harsh power confronter, who admires calmness in his act, influxed with an enormous quantity of finesse. A unique finesse, is what makes the main subject of Vijdan's resilient performance against the hostile world.

During an act



Being born as a sole son to a privileged Bandipora family, Vijdan Saleem's father had thought that his "chubby" son would live his life akin to a prince's but by then the turbulent times had already shifted sands towards a tumultuous future for these 90's generation kids—many of whom, years later, were forced to leave their "meadows" towards a new life in the busy world of Delhi and Mumbai.

In 2010, when another bloodshed was smearing the streets of Kashmir, Vijdan Saleem was enrolled as a Bachelors of Arts in Pune's renowned Fergusson College and then in 2014, Jamia Millia was the resting stop for him.

After serving as a student for 6 years—an experience he refers to in a very cheerful man-



RJ Vijdan during the comic act. KO Photos by Special Arrangement.

There was a young, bearded and a handsome man dressed in a crewneck sweater, with a zip down, fur-coated jacket over it. He was sitting in a room, with a dustbin next to his ear, impersonating it as a telephone receiver. The man appeared to have no idea of what he was doing, until his alluring voice buzzed with: "Hello..Haan, Bashir Sa'eb!"

ner—Vijdan wanted to be a journalist. He became a newsman and worked for many business standard newspapers operating outside the valley but by then this struggling scribe who rallied in the alleys of Delhi, had already lost his interest in this self-chosen field as the love for his home, the aroma of city alley's and above all his intense longing for his mother with whom he terms his relationship "joined at the hips", had already forced Vijdan to travel back to his homeland.

It was in Kashmir, Vijdan's career really had started to take-off or as many of his tribesmen say "It was here where his life came together."

Vijdan's "Anti-Taboo acts", as masses refer to it, has never been an aficionado of Kashmir's theoretical comedy and he himself remains highly uninterested in theorizing his satire. This all has developed after his body of work maintains a "Street Smartity".

To refer to Vijdan, as Kashmiri people always have, "a street smart guy", won't be perhaps a little far-fetched. When in old times, the Kashmiri comics were struggling hard to press towards a new way of making people laugh, they lacked an important ingredient for producing a legendary satire cuisine, it was "street smartness", that years later their own tribe member introduced among the masses through his sketch-comedy.

Being born as a sole son to a privileged Bandipora family, Vijdan Saleem's father had thought that his "chubby" son would live his life akin to a prince's but by then the turbulent times had already shifted sands towards a tumultuous future for these 90's generation kids—many of whom, years later, were forced to leave their "meadows" towards a new life in the busy world of Delhi and Mumbai.

"I'm the same guy who had used love as a tool for comedy and at the same time I've used Ramzan in my satire," said Vijdan while making a log-sheet for his upcoming show.

Being street-wise isn't rocket science, he continued. "A satirist needs to always check the people's meter before delivering anything and should keenly observe the acceptance quotation of his act, so that his joke remains a joke without dismaying the mass."

Vijdan's largely anti-conservative performances aren't just street-smart but also an amal-

gam of concurrent happenings and the political awareness he had developed over years.

"Everything is political in Kashmir," he said a few seconds before recording his show. "People in Kashmir have always done satire depending on what political bent they maintained based on which they could shape their performance. I think my satire is shaped as per political ideology of majority of Kashmiris."



During recreational times.

One late April evening, while Vijdan was requesting his colleague Nasir to have an Iftar party with him in the office, his other friends were busy watching his new upload—"Tulip-Garden Jam", a satirical video representing a boyfriend sharing his comical ordeal with a friend.

"This guy is a genius who knows the pin-point in his acts and that's why his viewership increases day by day because his content makes them crave for his next delight," said a close-friend of Vijdan.

The anti-conservative Kashmiri stereotypes in which Vijdan's satirical trades are, have unmistakably proved his comedy flawless.

"Love at first sight", "Piles has a cure" were some of his Instagram videos that acted as a baseball bat against the old prevailing taboos.

Among many of his caricatures—the heart-broken lover, a Kashmiri craving for meat, a

The young RJ claims to have inherited his euphoria through the indomitable alleys of Kashmir.

"Kashmir's alleys are the most buzzing alleys I've seen anywhere else," he continued. "There're stories in every corner of these alleys. The elders sitting outside the shops and laughing themselves out, trying their best to overcome the rampant that they had experienced during the 90's, is enough to serve as a motivation."

Vijdan is not one of those entertainers who resent to expect others that he's also funny off-screen. On the contrary to this, he remains a jovial person who adjusts himself among any group.

"I'm a very moody kind of a person," Vijdan said. "But, that's only while I'm working. Otherwise, I try my best to laugh myself out wherever I can and maintain a friendly and jolly self, so that others would love to sit by my side."



A portrait of the sketch-comedian.

As the young sketch-comedian's four years of experience has catered to his satire, it has also helped him with maintaining tip-off with his viewers on a good-intention. And now, Vijdan's comedy has turned out to be a sentimental relief for the conflict-ridden selves finding daily means of escaping the growing animosity.

"Vijdan's comedy acts as a rest-stop for many of us, who are always waiting for some warm heartedness amidst these dreadful times," said Uzair Farooq, a juvenile fan of Vijdan's sketch-comedy.

Even though Vijdan tries his best to remain careful while walking on a thin line, his "love" comedy is sometimes capable of creating a frisson for few with the audacity of his anti-tabooness.

When he had uploaded a love-themed sketch comedy and hosted a show based on "Falling in Love before marriage", some hotheads were triggered and threatened the young man of moral policing.

"For me, these caustic characters don't matter because soon after that show my phone was filled with calls from young couples appreciating my work," said Vijdan with a satisfactory smile on his face. "That's what matters to me the most."

But behind the impact of these collective procedures of producing an elegant piece of sketch-comedy, this jovial person had an emotional start before his life would become a symbol of satire in Kashmir. "Kashmir is a roller-coaster ride," he whispered.

In 2018, when Vijdan was to host his first ever show in Kashmir, his uncle was killed in a fatal shootout outside his office in Srinagar. The fall of the veteran journalist, Shujaat Bukhari had sent down tremors for this upcoming RJ.

Soon his first programme from 98.3 FM's Srinagar relay station was broadcasted with Vijdan speaking on "Death". It was the main theme of his show.

"I wanted to share the agony which I was suffering through at that time," said Vijdan while remembering his late uncle. "That's why, my goal is to provide solace through my comedy to every single Kashmiri who is agonised one way or the other."



Recording the show.

Back in the streets, Javid was once again laughing himself out after watching another of Vijdan's satirical video where he was calling Bashir Sahab with a new prop, a pressure-washer gun impersonating it as a phone, next to his ear. He laughed himself out until his throat turned soar.

Before his voice would utter "Malal is not halal" a theme for his Sehri show, from a large windowpane of his studio, Vijdan stood silent looking outside at the high-rise mountains with a calm and a satisfactory smile on his face as if he could hear Javid's cheerful laugh.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Avoid Covid Talk

the last six weeks have been really bad. We see 5 to 6 patients with mental health issues because of Covid-19 every day. And that's huge for us, as mental health problems mostly show an iceberg phenomenon.

There's not a single day I don't see a patient with a mental health issue because of Covid-19.

However, I've also said in many seminars and workshops that let's not bother about mental health right now and let's focus on how to control mortality and morbidity. If we're able to limit mortality and morbidity because of Covid-19, mental health is going to be fine.

But sadly, we failed to do so, and we reached a point where mortality has become a reality and this is what we feared because we knew once mortality sets in, the mental health is going to be the consequences and that is what is happening now.

Covid-19 has reached every home and everyone is struggling. It has hit our coping and defences, social networking, social bonding and most importantly grief-sharing process and this is why there's a rise of mental health issues due to Covid-19.

Has this Covid mental crisis initiated any research in your department?

Yes, in the last year we did over 6-7 Covid-related research projects.

Our hospital was the only mental health institution which was running physically throughout the year. As I told you, we saw over 77,000 patients with mental health issues.

We managed to run the hospital very smoothly despite so much influx of patients and we had a detailed research and wrote about how we managed it.

We also started Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), a lifesaving and emergency procedure in many of the patients. We also wrote a paper on how we did it throughout the year.

We were the first institution who started talking about post Covid delirium. We witnessed about 49 cases where memory and consciousness of elderly Covid-19 patients started getting affected.

We also set-up a full Telepsychiatry service through which we saw around 20,000 patients. It was the first of its kind in Kashmir.

Presently, we're working on two important projects – the mental health mortality among Covid patients and the mental health conditions among the families of those who lost their loved ones due to Covid-19 with regards to stigma, shame etc.

What kind of patients and issues are you dealing with these days?

Severe anxiety and depression are the common issues in pandemic. And most of the patients come from families who lost their members due to Covid, since they couldn't share the grief after the loss of their loved ones.

Also, young entrepreneurs who lost their business due to lockdown are also arriving for the checkup.

The patients who were isolated after their tests came positive are also among the visitors. But many of them coped up with the pressure, while others are still coming-up for the follow-up.

We must understand that Kashmir has a culture of grief-sharing. And the way deaths happen now, one can't visit the families, participate in the funeral. The families struggle to deal with it and it leads to several mental health issues.

So, it's very important for all of us to control the spread of diseases. Once the deaths are under control, the mental health will be fine.

At the same time, mental health has to be always made available, accessible and acceptable. Most importantly, right now, anyone with any difficulty should avail the help immediately, so that the mental crisis doesn't become a pandemic, like Covid-19.

I say, we're already witnessing three pandemics currently: Covid-19, mental health issues due to it and economic deprivation due to lockdown.

Since all the three are feeding on each other in a vicious circle, we should not leave the other two unattended while dealing with Covid-19.

How should people engage themselves at home in order to avoid stress?

I would suggest people watch less news regarding Covid-19. Because I believe the important and necessary information that we need to fight Covid-19 is already with us. We need to follow it and avoid unnecessary videos, stories etc.

The only information that has been added to Covid-19 is regarding the vaccination, rest is the same. So we need to avoid unnecessary stuff because it will affect your mental health.

Plus, for a change I as a mental health professional advocate use social media as much as possible for virtual meetings, grief-sharing, gossip and humour. All that lessens the burden of distress.

Let's not talk about Covid-19. We should've a normal conversation. It really releases the stress.

Also, we should develop new hobbies and teach our children new things. We must talk to our families to avoid loneliness and social isolation inspite of practising physical distancing. Put your faith in God and do practise precautions and then let go of all worries.

I would say follow the saying of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) that is going viral on social media nowadays: "Tie your camel first, and then put your trust in Allah." Follow the necessary advisories and then be at peace.

We should sleep and rest and keep one thing in mind that no difficult time will last

and this too will pass and on the other side of it is light and happiness for everybody. We only have to survive these moments and for it we need to do whatever is necessary.

What about the impact of constant campus closures on students?

See, these things will have a long term impact on the development of kids. The effects are usually either neutral or positive or negative. Such traumatic situations might go into the development of kids. Some of them might become good human beings or some might succumb to the pressure and live with lots of fear. So there're all possibilities.

The parents have to play an important role here. They shouldn't inculcate fear into children, rather teach them being cautious without getting fearful. For example, we need to teach children how to cross the road by looking to the right and then left to verify it is safe from both directions. When you believe it safe to proceed, you look left again before proceeding to make sure it is still safe to go. Rather than telling them you will die if you don't learn how to cross the road.

Don't watch television in-front of children, showing Covid-19 related stuff. Just make them responsible and inculcate advisories in their own way to deal with the crises. Allow them to play, meet and have fun within their own bio-bubble.

What will be the mental impact of Covid-19 in the long run?

It'll have long term effects and there's a lot of research regarding the same.

I believe there'll be mental health issues in the longer run where we witnessed more mortality and mobility.

And the areas where it remained under control, the mental health issues will be temporary.

Corona Claims

At Government Medical College (GMC) Anantnag, a man from Sarnal, a woman from Akad, a man from Matipora and a man from Khanabal died of Covid related complications, officials said.

Among others, the victims from Jammu division included a 36-year-old man from Nihalpur Simbal, a 70-year-old woman from Gadigarh, a 65-year-old man from R.S Pura, a 58-year-old man from Udhampur besides two others who were brought dead – a 56-year-old from Ramgarh and 68-year-old from Chatha Old Satwari Jammu.

About the fresh cases detected Friday, officials said that 1009 cases were confirmed from Jammu Division and 1794 from Kashmir Valley, taking the overall tally to 284431.

Giving district wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 382 cases, Baramulla 204, Budgam 223, Pulwama 179, Kupwara 228, Anantnag 207, Bandipora 57, Ganderbal 168, Kulgam 94, Shopian 52, Jammu 320, Udhampur 71, Rajouri 107, Doda 82, Kathua 79, Samba 71, Kishtwar 30, Poonch 92, Ramban 77 and Reasi 80.

Moreover, they said, 3637 more patients have recovered – 1741 from Jammu Division and 1896 from Kashmir. There are 41382 active positive cases – 16142 in Jammu and 25240 in Kashmir. (With GNS inputs)

Decision On

administration to opt for unlocking claiming that the continued lockdown would leave many to starvation.

In a statement issued on Thursday, President Kashmir Retailers Association and General Secretary Joint Coordination Committee of City Center Traders (JCCCC) Farhan Kitab said the lockdown has badly affected the livelihood of people who along with their families are at the verge of starvation.

He said from traders to transporters, the business community is badly affected especially for the city centre shopkeepers.

The Valley is under a strict lockdown for a month following the second wave of deadly virus that has claimed 3795 lives. There are 41382 active positive cases – 16142 in Jammu and 25240 in Kashmir.

Partial restrictions to contain the Covid were imposed on 27 April and a complete curfew was imposed in Kashmir on 29 April.

Last Saturday, the Jammu and Kashmir administration extended the curfew, which was supposed to end on May 23, by another week till May 31 in all 20 districts of the Union Territory amid no letup in the number of fresh coronavirus cases and deaths.

Saving Lives

Covid appropriate behaviour, an official spokesperson said. The meetings, he said, were the latest in the series, where LG took a comprehensive review of the Covid situation across J&K.

Sinha, he said, has been issuing directions from time to time to strengthen the efforts and undertake immediate interventions to tackle the ongoing COVID Pandemic based on the regular assessment of evolving situation and inputs from experts.

"With substantial addition of Medical Infrastructure and stabilizing positivity rate across UT, the way ahead is to minimize health risks through stringent regulations, Covid SOPs and maximize economic health and social security for people," the LG said, as per official spokesperson in the meeting.

During the meeting, he said, the LG sought feedback from Divisional Commissioners, IGP, Deputy Commissioners, and SPs on Covid situation across the UT and directed them to ensure the impactful enforcement of all Covid protocols in their respective jurisdictions.

The official spokesperson said that the LG laid special emphasis on intensifying testing and vaccination and directed the DCs and other concerned officers to make synergized

efforts to augment vaccination progress with focus on priority groups.

He said that the bank employees, Airport & Railway staff, shopkeepers, farmers, service providers would be vaccinated on priority. The LG, he said, also called for ensuring Covid Testing facilities at the Sub-Centre level.

While reviewing the district-wise status of vaccination drive, Sinha, as per the official spokesperson expressed satisfaction on being informed that Jammu, Ganderbal, and Shopian had achieved 100% saturation of 1st dose of vaccination for above 45 age group.

"The Lt Governor asked other DCs to make concerted efforts to achieve 100% saturation in their respective districts at the earliest," he said.

The official spokesperson further said that the meeting was informed that Covid Care Centres have been activated in 80% Panchayats of the UT. He said that the LG Emphasized on proper utilization of CCCs and called for effective functioning of these centres through mobilization of resources.

"Mere development of infrastructure is not going to serve any purpose. We have to ensure that facilities are utilized to their optimum capacities to achieve the desired results on ground," Sinha said, as per the official spokesperson.

"Ensure CCCs linkages with PHCs and other health centres, ample distribution of Covid Kits, Tele-medicines facilities, besides prioritizing functioning of centres established in the peripheries. Speed up training of ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, ANMs and other ancillary staff," he added.

The LG, official spokesperson said also laid emphasis on taking requisite precautionary measures and carefully monitoring areas with higher positivity rate and directed for micro-containment zones to isolate such areas, besides timely monitoring and responsive action to break the spread chain.

"Meanwhile, the Lt Governor also reviewed the installation and functionality of oxygen generation plants, and availability of buffer stock across the UT," he added.

He said that the Principal Secretary to the Government, Industries & Commerce department briefed the LG about the ample availability of oxygen stock in the UT. The LG, he said, called for utilization of buffer stock of oxygen cylinders for oxygen supply in the Covid Care Centres in rural areas as per requirement.

The official spokesperson said that the LG appreciated the efforts of Health department for effective handling of the pandemic situation.

Earlier, he said, the Financial Commissioner, Health & Medical Education Department, Atal Dulloo gave a detailed overview of bed occupancy in hospitals, containment activities, status of vaccination drive under different age groups, district-wise daily and weekly trends of Covid-19 cases, testing & 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 Department; Mukesh Singh, ADGP; Ms. Sarita Chauhan, Commissioner/Secretary to the Government, Labour and Employment Department; 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; Deputy Commissioners and SPs, attended the meeting, in person and through virtual mode.

Two Month Old

He identified the killed militant as Aitmad Ahmad Dar resident of Awend Shopian associated with Lashkar. Dar, he said, was active since March this year and was involved in several militancy cases.

"Arms and ammunition including 01 AK-56 rifle & other incriminating materials were recovered from the encounter site. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe his complicity in other crimes," the police spokesperson said.

He said that Police have registered a case under relevant sections of law and initiated investigations in this regard.

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

Meanwhile, another gun-battle broke out between militants and state forces in Sopore town of Baramulla district on Friday evening.

According to a police spokesperson, around 7:30 pm, a joint party of police and central forces came under fire when they were laying a cordon of a suspected house in Usmanabad village of Warpora in Sopore.

"Militants fired upon our party and escaped from the house during a brief exchange of fire. Reinforcements came and nearby orchard cordoned and search is going on. Further details shall follow," the police spokesperson added.

According to the reports, two militants are believed to be trapped in the area which has been placed under tight siege by the government forces.

Friday's twin encounters came a day after Jammu and Kashmir's Director General of

Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh said that while the Covid pandemic has affected the fight against militancy in the valley, government forces are focussed and the operations against the ultras will be stepped up in the coming time.

Govt Launches

first-aid and emotional support.

Quoting Pole, the official spokesperson said that a team of psychologists, experts shall cater to children in quarantine, isolation and in Covid Care Centres.

"The counselling shall also be given to the children who have their parents or near ones as covid positive, besides also to those children who have lost their family members to the virus," he said.

He said that the panel shall also be available to all children and parents seeking psychological support through phone, audio and video calls.

Giving more details about the service, the official spokesperson said that resource persons can be reached on their contact numbers

Dr Sadaqat will be available on Monday on: 7006519806

DrAjaz on Thursday on 7006314064 and Dr Masood on Saturday between 10 am to 4 pm on 6006175373.

"The Covid Control Room Kashmir has taken various measures to address mental related issues among children and parents arranging tele- consultation of doctors, psychologists and field related experts to reach out the general public in the pandemic," the official spokesperson added.

China Blames

The land once as pristine as its famous Kashmir Sapphires was carved by innumerable scars, cracked by the greed of imperialists and soaked by the tears of people in fear, he tweeted from the article.

China's official position on the Kashmir issue as articulated by the Chinese Foreign Ministry is that it is an issue left over from history between India and Pakistan.

It should be resolved peacefully and properly according to the UN charter, relevant Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements, Chinese officials have said previously.

The Xinhua article noted that, "Tragedy was planned when the British Empire attempted to consolidate their rule and prevent the emergence of the Indian independence movement by applying the same notorious plot that has claimed millions of lives not only in India but also on the vast lands of Africa, Middle East and Asia. The plot is named "divide and rule".

"The imperial past is far from being dead. We should not be surprised when British foreign policy interests and interventions today are perceived by many as "neo-colonial" in their nature," it said.

As long as the bloodshed in Kashmir continues, Britain can never clean itself from its bloody colonial past. Zhao, who is also the Deputy Director General of the Information Department of the foreign ministry, tweeted from the article.

China's relations with the UK deteriorated especially after London took a strong stand against Beijing's move to pass the controversial Hong Kong national security law last year to take firm control over the former British colony.

Zhao, an admirer of Pakistan, who in his official briefings stated Cheen-Pakistan Dosti Zindabad while replying to questions on relations between the all-weather allies, is known for courting controversies.

Dubbed as part of China's new band of wolf warrior diplomats, Zhao's tweet last year alleging US Army may have brought the coronavirus to Wuhan created furore and the Chinese Foreign Ministry later distanced itself.

His yet another tweet showing the picture of an Australian soldier apparently holding a knife to the throat of an Afghan child, also created a furore as the Australian government said the image was doctored.

Govt Hikes Salary

Welfare, he said, in addition to annual increment budget of 5 per cent, for the first time, an additional increment of about 12 per cent has been approved as hike in salary for NHM employees through restructuring and rationalization.

He further said that the exact amount of individual increment in this regard shall be notified by the Executive Committee of State Health Society headed by Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education Department, Atal Dulloo, shortly.

While complimenting the NHM employees for the incentive, Dulloo, as per the official spokesperson said that this endeavour of the government is aimed at to boost the morale of the employees and encourage and appreciate their contribution towards working tirelessly in curbing Covid-19.

"Such perks are always being given by the government to recognize the services of those who put their selfless services for the cause of humanity and set examples for others to follow," he said.

The official spokesperson also quoted Mission Director NHM, J&K, Mohammed Yasin Choudhary, as saying that the salary hike, particularly the salary revision was one of the long pending demands of NHM employees working in the Union Territory.

"It was under consideration of the Government and was actively pursued by the UT administration in the National Programme Coordination Committee Meeting for 2021-22 with the Union Ministry," he said.

Choudhary, as per the official spokesperson also thanked LG, his Advisor Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar and Financial Commissioner, Atal Dulloo, for their efforts in ensuring approval

of this increment in favour of NHM employees for recognition of their services.

"He added that in these tough times of the pandemic, "COVID warriors" of Health and Medical Education Department, including NHM employees, have risen to the challenge and are selflessly providing holistic health care services to counter the spread of coronavirus and treat the infected," he added.

The official spokesperson further said that it is pertinent to mention that the Jammu and Kashmir government in its employee friendly measures had also recently announced grant of loyalty bonus for contractual staff of the National Health Mission (NHM) for the financial year 2020-21.

Mehta Officially

Department of Commerce, Government of India, Arun Kumar Mehta, IAS (AGMUT:1988) is hereby appointed as Chief Secretary, J&K from the date B.V.R. Subrahmanyam relinquishes the charge," reads the order.

BVR Subrahmanyam was on Thursday appointed J&K Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Commerce, Government of India. He was also named Secretary in the Commerce Department with effect from June 30 when the incumbent superannuates.

The union Home Secretary later approved Mehta's appointment as new J&K Chief Secretary and asked the local administration to issue orders to this effect.

City Admin Seals

The cafe on Residency Road was set up by the Mehtas in a joint profit-sharing venture with Haseeb Drabu and his wife, Roohi Nazki, who owns popular tea joint "Chai Jai" in 2016, the report said.

Hizb Militant

Bhat was a native of neighbouring Kulgam district and was living in Shopian from last 8 years.

The police spokesperson also claimed that incriminating material including arms and ammunition have also been recovered from his possession.

"In this regard, a case has been registered and further investigation is in progress," he added.

HC Quashes 3 PSA

Ganie of Koil Pulwama, District Pulwama. "Preventive detention cannot be resorted to when sufficient remedies are available under general laws of the land for any omission or commission under such laws," the court observed while disposing of the petition filed by Ganie.

Referring to Apex Court's judgment V. Shantha v. State of Telangana and others (2017), the court said that the preventive detention cannot be used as an instrument to keep a person in perpetual custody without trial.

"Recourse to normal legal procedure would be time consuming and would not be an effective deterrent to prevent the (detainee) from indulging in further prejudicial activities, affecting maintenance of public order or security of the State, and that there was no other option except to invoke the provisions of the preventive detention Act as an extreme measure to insulate," the court said, adding, "No doubt the offences alleged to have been committed by (detainee) are such as to attract punishment under the prevailing laws but that has to be done under the said prevalent laws and taking recourse to preventive detention laws would not be warranted."

Preventive detention involves detaining of a person without trial in order to prevent him from committing certain types of offences, the court said. "But such detention cannot be made a substitute for the ordinary law and absolve the investigating authorities of their normal functions of investigating crimes which the (detainee) may have committed. After all, preventive detention cannot be used as an instrument to keep a person in perpetual custody without trial.

In all these judgments, the court directed authorities to set them at liberty forthwith provided they are not required in any other case. (GNS)

5 Gamblers Held

playing cards were seized from the accused.

"All three accused have been arrested and shifted to police station," the police spokesperson said.

"A case vide FIR number 38/2021 under relevant sections has been registered in this regard and further investigations taken up," he added.

In a separate raid, police arrested two gamblers from Shadipora in Ganderbal district and recovered Rs 3300 from their possession.

A police spokesperson identified the accused as Mohammad Hanief Guru resident of Latti Authkhuroo and Nazir Ahmad Dar resident of Latti Gund Roshan.

"They have been shifted to Police Station Ganderbal where they remain in custody. Accordingly, a case FIR No. 86/2021 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Ganderbal and investigation has been initiated," he added.

Pesticide Factory

of the biggest in the union territory.

It started moving towards a nearby village but timely action prevented it to spread any further, fire officials said, adding the operation to douse the blaze were on till 5 am.

The exact cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained but it appeared to be a result of a short circuit in the building, they said.

...DOCTOR SPEAKS

'Self Administered Steroids Trigger Mucormycosis'

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Endocrinologist at Government Medical College Jammu, Dr Suman Kotwal has urged diabetic patients to strictly keep their blood sugar levels under check. Diabetes is one major cause of high morbidity and mortality among Covid patients, he says.

Dr Kotwal has advised such patients to religiously follow their medication routines and keep stock of their medicines in advance. Diabetic patients must always have their medicines stocked as it is not advisable for



them to frequently go out into the market for purchases amid widespread Covid infection, he said.

Similarly, in case of medical needs, patients must prefer consulting their doctor telephonically instead of meeting in person.

Reassuring, Dr Kotwal says, "Even if a diabetic person becomes Covid positive, still there is no need to worry. In some cases their blood sugar might rise during treatment, which is later controlled with insulin injections".

"Similarly, some non-diabetic persons may develop diabetes during Covid treatment which needs to be controlled with

medicines and insulin. Most of such patients get rid of the medicines post recovery", underlines Dr Kotwal.

The doctor also shed light on Black Fungus and said that it is not related to Covid directly and may also occur due to high blood sugar, cancer, low immunity or post organ transplant. "It just happens and infects some Covid patients, and persons who have self administered high doses of steroids without doctor's advice. Moreover, even steroids have always been given to patients with a number of non-Covid health issues", he told. In Covid patients, the fungus can infect during treatment or post recovery also.

"Black Fungus is not communicable, ie. It does not infect by simply coming in contact with a person suffering from Black Fungus. Keeping in touch with a doctor and avoiding self medication can largely provide protection from it", informs Dr Kotwal.

The symptoms of Rhino-ocular Cerebral Mucormycosis, the medical term for Black Fungus Infection, includes stiffness or blood stained/ black discharge from nose; pain, bulging (proptosis), restriction in movement, drooping of eye/s, swelling, black lesion around eye/s and loss of vision; and death if in case the infection reaches brain.

All Covid-related queries and doubts are answered on helpline number 0191 2571616. Phone numbers of the Divisional Control Room at 0191-2520982, 2549676, 2674444, 2674115, 2674908 can also be reached for the purpose.

BLACK FUNGUS IS NOT COMMUNICABLE. It does not infect by simply coming in contact with a person suffering from Black Fungus. Keeping in touch with a doctor and avoiding self medication can largely provide protection from it."

Second Covid-19 Vaccination Drive Held At IUST

Observer News Service

AWANTIPORA: COVID-19 Vaccination Drive for teaching and non-teaching staff members of Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) for age groups between 18-44 years started at the University Campus on Thursday.

"The drive is being organised by the University Health Centre in collaboration with Sub-district Hospital Pampore. The University has already issued a notification instructing all the employees aged between 18-44 years to get themselves vaccinated compulsorily during the said drive."

Medical Officer IUST, Dr. Zahida Rasool informed that 131 employees of IUST have been vaccinated on 27th and 28th May 2021. Dr. Zahida also informed that the 2nd drive will also continue during the next week.

Earlier, the University vaccinated 68 teaching and non-teaching staff members aged 45 years and above during the



1st Vaccination Drive held at the University campus on 9th April this year.

Meanwhile Registrar IUST, Prof. Naseer Iqbal expressed satisfaction with respect to the participation of employees during both the vaccination drives. He also thanked the authorities of Sub-district Hospital Pampore for their collaboration in making the drives successful.

Lockdown Violations: 190 Arrested, 92 FIRs Registered

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir police Friday said that during the last 24 hours, it arrested 190 persons, lodged 92 FIRs and also realized fine of 1,22,920/- from 964 people for violating the guidelines/rules throughout

the Kashmir valley.

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



THE RELATIVES OF A PERSON WHO DIED OF covid-19 perform his last rites in Srinagar on Friday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Government Suppressing J&K's Tribals: NC**Condemns Use Of 'Brutal Force' Against GBs In Shopian**

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on Friday condemned the use of "brutal force" by the administration against Gujjar-Bakarwal community during an eviction drive in the Zampahri-Shopian inflicting severe injuries to many and said the measure is a continuing case of oppressing tribals across J&K.

Denouncing the use of brute force against the tribal community during an eviction drive by the forest department at upper reaches of Shopian district, Party's Senior leader and state secretary Sakina Itoo, District President Kulgam Abdul Majeed Bhat Larmi, and Spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar in a joint statement termed the act brutal and incongruous with constitutional norms.

The mammoth of intimidation, and violence, which was let loose in Jammu previously, the leaders said in the statement, has reached Kashmir now to haunt the indomitable and peace loving tribals. "Voicing against the cruelty meted out to the poor tribal families, the leaders stated that it is under a well hatched plan that these peace loving people are subjected to violence and intimidation and the recurrence of such

acts explains it all.

"The gruesome images of tribal men drenched in blood have troubled every person having even a modicum of humanity in

measures in the first place should have mandatory sanction of the tribal affairs department and local community leaders. The need of the hour calls for recognizing

THIS HAS TO STOP. SUCH MEASURES in the first place should have mandatory sanction of the tribal affairs department and local community leaders. The need of the hour calls for recognising the symbiotic relationship of tribals with the forests."

his heart. JK tribals have been feeling under siege ever since the ruling dispensation has had its hands on power in Jammu and Kashmir. These tribals who live in and around forests have managed and conserved the biodiversity of their niches since long. The unwise decision of dislodging them from their niches will affect their lives in numerous ways besides that the dimwitted measure will impact the scientific conservation of forest resources as well. We in our party value conservation but not at the cost of marginalized tribal or forest dwelling communities. There ought to be a balanced approach to protect the people and the forests," they said.

The functionaries said that the incumbent government cannot act blind to the human miseries and go on with its reckless programme of eviction. "This has to stop. Such

the symbiotic relationship of tribals with the forests. The incidents of tribal bashing have become a norm now; not even a day passes without any tribal hutments being forcefully attacked upon by the administration. Why is it that tribals of J&K are receiving a raw deal while as their counter parts in the rest of the country are enjoying cultural, land and property rights under various favorable constitutional provisions. The discrimination speaks volumes particularly at a time when there are restrictions on residential evictions in view of the current global pandemic. It is expected that the incumbent administration will act sensibly to ensure that the poor tribals aren't subjected to injustice," they said.

They also demanded compensation to the injured and strict punishment against the erring officers behind the violence.

Multiple Lockdowns Have Crippled Kashmir's Poor: Tarigami**'Rs 1000 Covid-19 Relief Inadequate'**

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: CPI (M) leader Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami Friday said that the payment of Rs 1000 per month as COVID-19 relief to registered construction workers, Shikarwalas/Ponywalas/ Dandiwalas/Palkiwalas/ Tourist guides is inadequate as a double whammy of unemployment and rising food prices have crippled the poor section of the society in Jammu and Kashmir. A huge number of construction workers who are not yet registered with the Board and migrant labourers have been left out.

In a statement, he said, ever since August 2019, the incomes of people associated with the informal sector, consisting of low wage workers have dwindled sharply due to a major job loss wave. Some of the severely affected people include construction workers, auto and bus drivers, small shop owners and daily wage labourers.

"Hit hard by the lockdown, a majority of these informal workers have no savings and extra income to purchase food at higher prices."

The statement said people asso-

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ciated with the transport industry have been crippled as they had taken the vehicles on loan from the banks for which they have to pay instalments and interest, though they have hardly got any working days in the last almost two years. Similarly, he said, the multiple lockdowns have made the survival of thousands of families who are dependent on the handicrafts sector difficult. People are eking out a tough existence in Kashmir. Thousands of businesses can't pay their staff or keep them on their rolls.

"Similarly, people associated with the tourism industry are finding it hard to earn livelihood since August 2019. With food prices rising, these people are now facing a dual crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"There is a large gap between the government's inadequate re-

lief and the actual situation on the ground which needs to be addressed on priority. A hunger alarm seems to be ringing loud with rising food prices. It could mark the beginning of a dual crisis for the poorest families in J&K."

With lakhs of people in the unorganised sector staring at a loss of livelihood, there is a need to increase the working days under the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA) from the existing 100 days to 200 days. A fund to extend financial assistance to all workers in the informal and unorganised sectors, whose livelihood is affected besides a moratorium on bank loans for a year for small and medium enterprises and retail traders, is the need of the hour, he said.

"The public distribution system (PDS) should be expanded to cover all essential commodities. Free ration through PDS to people, including people living below the poverty line must be provided in this hour of crisis. We demand all jobless be provided at least Rs. 6000 per month for six months."

JAKEDA Installs 2200 Solar Street Lights In J&K

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Gol has sanctioned 19000 Solar Street Lights (SSLs) in favour of J&K with a central financial support of Rs.42.06 crores against the total project cost of Rs 47.84 crores with the remaining project cost of Rs 5.78 crores to be provided by J&K UT.

The project is being implemented by Jammu and Kashmir Energy Development Agency (JAKEDA), Department of Science and Technology under the active support of Principal Secretary, S&T Department, Alok Kumar and directions of Chief Executive Officer JAKEDA, Babila Rakwal to ensure that the Solar Street Lights are installed expeditiously at public places in consultation with the District Administration of J&K.

Out of the total sanctioned quantity, each District in J&K is being provided 950 numbers of SSLs. During the last financial year, 9107 Nos. of SSLs in 12 Districts of J&K were installed by JAKEDA.

During the current financial year, all efforts to install the balance 9893 SSLs within the

remaining time period of two months are being made in the remaining districts of J&K.

In spite of emergence of second surge of Covid-19 Pandemic making the inter and intra District movement of men and material difficult, JAKEDA has managed to install 2200 SSLs within a short span of 45 days with 285 SSLs in Reasi, 206 in Kishtwar, 230 in Ramban & other districts of Jammu Division and 565 SSLs in Kulgam, 499 in Anantnag, 159 in Bandipora & other districts of Kashmir Division, after following all SOPs relating to Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Solar Street Lights, being highly energy efficient, conform to the latest technical specification as per the Ministry's guidelines, and are equipped with Lithium Batteries for better performance and longer life. The SSLs are fully automatic, and operate from Dusk to Dawn without the requirement of switching ON and OFF. The installation of these SSLs shall help in saving 8.4 units of energy annually resulting in saving of Rs.61.32 lakhs annually. The solarization of J&K by installation of SSLs will contribute towards reduction of 840 tonnes of Co2 emission annually.

Positivity Rate, Bed Occupancy On Decline In Kulgam: DC

Observer News Service

KULGAM: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din-Bhat during a press brief on Friday said that the coordinated efforts are showing positive results and the situation is improving day by day in the district with positivity rate and bed occupancy on decline across the district.

He said 65 percent of the population above the age of 45 years already stands vaccinated in the district and efforts are on to cover the rest of the target group. Besides, vaccination for the age group of 18-44 years will be initiated soon, he added.

With regard to availability of Oxygen in the district, Dr Bilal said that the 1000 lpm Oxygen generation plant at District Hospital is functioning properly and adequate bulk cylinders, concentrators are available in the district.

He said to curb the spread of virus there is a robust and aggressive testing mechanism in place across the district.

The DC said that in order to strengthen Covid care in rural

areas Covid Care Centers (CCCs) with capacity of 5 beds have been made functional at 150 panchay-



ats and these CCCs are equipped with Oxygen concentrators and other requisite equipment besides primary Covid related drugs have also been made available there.

He said the establishment of CCCs in the rest of the panchayats will be completed in the next few days.

Meanwhile, the DC appealed people to get vaccinated at an earliest besides strictly follow the Covid related SOPs and guidelines so that spread of this disease is curtailed further.

Engineering Associations Welcome Appointment Of New CS

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Joint Action Committee of Engineering Graduates Association an amalgamation of J&K Civil Engineers Graduates Association (JKEGA), J&K Mechanical Engineering Graduates Association (JKMEGA) and J&K Electrical Engineering Graduates Association (JKEEGA) Friday welcomed the appointment of Arun Kumar Mehta as the new Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir.

A statement issued by the association, praised the new Chief Secretary of the decisions he took as the Financial Commissioner, Finance department towards the development of J&K, while terming them "revolutionary and historic".

"We whole heartedly welcome Arun Kumar Mehta as the Chief

WE WHOLE heartedly welcome Arun Kumar Mehta as the Chief Secretary of J&K and extend our full support and cooperation in taking the Jammu & Kashmir to new heights of the development,"

Secretary of J&K and extend our full support and cooperation in taking the Jammu & Kashmir to new heights of the development," read the statement.

The presidents of JKMEGA Er. Firdous Ahad Bhat, JKEGA Er. Farooq Ahmad Ganie, and JKEEGA Er. Munshi Majid expressed hope that the new Chief Secretary will address the issues of engineers, in particularly the much awaited issuance of SRO for the already approved ACP Scheme.

'Covid Patients Need Compassion Not Just Medicines'

Observer News Service

KATHUA: Ever since the second wave of Covid Pandemic lapped in the suburbs and rural areas of Kathua district, the challenges for Doctors and Paramedics of the Associated Hospital, GMC Kathua increased manifold. The positivity rate in rural areas witnessed a steep rise with the start of May month.

Being the premier healthcare institution of the district, GMC Kathua touched its capacity admission for Covid patients as the second wave turned out to be a lot more contagious as compared to 1st phase of Covid-19 upsurge.

Twenty Six year old Priyanka Kumari, a Staff Nurse working in Gyne, OT of GMC Kathua was asked to switch her duties in Covid Isolation Ward in view of the increasing Covid positivity rate in the district.

Youngest among three siblings, Priyanka Kumari narrates her tale of being on duty at Covid ward. "It requires highest vigil as the ailing patients who are emotionally drained and scared of the deadly disease also need compassion than just medicines" she said.

While expressing her heart out, Priyanka Kumari said that her passion of serving people was her childhood dream and



Nursing was among the top choices she wanted to pursue to fulfill it without any second thought in her mind.

Sharing her experiences of Co-



vid related duties, She said she is grateful to be spending time caring for and being with patients during the first ever Pandemic she witnessed in her life.

She describes what it's like to be on the frontlines of the pandemic, admitting that her fellow nurses at first were little worried and afraid of doing duties in Covid wards but also knew 'this was our calling'.

"It looked quite challenging when we first joined the Covid dedicated duties and went through the routine which was altogether different and demanding. Though dealing with risky situations has always been part of a Nurse's day to day work, but Covid brought daily routines and sacrifices that are different, life altering and far reaching," she added.

Sharing experiences of her short stint of nearly one month in Covid related duties, Priyanka said the six hour shift in Covid ward is an emotional roller

coaster ride when you saw many improving and responding well to the treatment but few of them losing battle at the same time' she said this with mixed expressions on her face.

Daughter of a serving CRPF officer, a native of Phalain Mandal village of Satwari Block of Jammu, Priyanka Kumari has done her schooling in Kendriya Vidyalaya Chandigarh, Pinjore and Hyderabad at different stages, as the family move along with father when and where got new place of posting.

After my schooling we moved back to our native place Phalain Mandal in Jammu from where I pursued my Nursing from Bee Enn Nursing Institute, Chak Bhalwal, Jammu added Priyanka Kumari.

Graduated in Nursing, Priyanka

got the opportunity to serve as ICU Nurse in Government Super Speciality Hospital, Jammu for 3 years on contractual basis, before getting selected as Staff Nurse and posted in GMC Kathua.

"Being single, away from family and staying in isolation after a 6 hours shift in PPE Kits daily sometimes gives you anxiety and a lot of stress. But the cause drives you through as you feel you are required for your services more than before especially when we are in the middle of a pandemic, she added.

During the last two months, I haven't visited my family in Jammu just to minimize the risk of getting Covid infection in transit and that has even cost me a meeting with my father who was on leave at home a few days back.

England-Bound Indian Women's Team Gets First Dose Of COVID-19 Vaccine



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: All members of the UK-bound Indian women's cricket team have been administered the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine ahead of their upcoming away series against England beginning June 16.

The Indian team, which is currently in quarantine in Mumbai, will begin its UK tour with a one-off Test in Bristol from June 16. It will be followed by two T20Is on July 9 and 11 in Northampton and three ODIs beginning June 27.

"All the players of the women's team have got their first dose of vaccination. Most of them got it in their respective cities, while a few who didn't, got their first jabs on Thursday," a BCCI source said.

Spin all-rounder Deepti Sharma on Thursday shared a picture of her taking the jab on Twitter.

"Though I am a little scared of needles, but I still got myself vaccinated today. I urge people to please

get vaccinated as soon as they can! #GotTheDose #We4Vaccine #CovidVaccine," she had tweeted.

The source said most of the players received Covishield vaccine and they will be administered their second dose by the UK health department.

The Indian women's team will depart for UK along with the men's squad, led by skipper Virat Kohli, in a chartered flight on June 2.

The members of Indian men's team, including Kohli, Mohammed Shami, Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah and Rishabh Pant, have taken the first jab of COVID-19 vaccine at different centres in the country.

The players are expected to take their second dose of Covishield in the UK.

Kohli and Co. will face New Zealand in the World Test Championship final in Southampton on June 18 before taking on England in a five-Test series.

WTC Final: India, NZ To Be Adjudged Joint Winners In Case Of Draw Or Tie

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: India and New Zealand will be adjudged joint winners of the inaugural World Test Championship if their final clash in Southampton ends in a draw or tie, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Friday.

According to the playing conditions unveiled by the global body, "A draw or a tie will see both teams crowned as joint winners..."

The ICC has also allocated a Reserve Day to make up for any lost time during the regular days of the Final, scheduled to be played from June 18 to 22, with June 23 set aside as the Reserve Day.

"Both these decisions were made in June 2018, prior to the commencement of the ICC World Test Championship."

The Reserve Day has been scheduled to ensure five full days of play, and it will only be used if lost playing time cannot be recovered through the normal provisions for each day.

"There will be no additional day's play if a positive result is not achieved after five full days of play and the match will be declared a draw in such a scenario," the ICC stated.

In the event of time being lost during the match, the ICC match referee will regularly update the teams and media about the way in which



the Reserve Day may be used.

The final decision on whether the Reserve Day needs to be used will be announced at the scheduled start of the last hour on the fifth day.

While India play at home with SG Test and New Zealand use Kookaburra at home, the final will be played with Grade 1 Dukes balls.

The final will also feature the implementation of three changes to international playing conditions, which were brought into effect with the ongoing World Cup Super League series between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka:

Short Runs – The Third Umpire

will automatically review any call of a 'short run' by the on-field umpire and communicate the decision prior to the next ball being bowled.

Player Reviews – The fielding captain or the dismissed batsman will be able to confirm with the umpire whether a genuine attempt has been made to play the ball prior to deciding whether to initiate a review for LBW.

DRS Reviews – For LBW reviews, the height margin of the wicket zone has been lifted to the top of the stumps to ensure the same Umpire's Call margin around the stumps for both height and width.

BCCI's Special Meeting To Officially Lock In IPL Window, Ranji Compensation

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The BCCI will lock in a three-week window between September 15 and October 15 for the resumption of the currently-suspended IPL in the UAE, when it holds a Special General Meeting (SGM) virtually on Saturday.

The agenda of the meeting is "discussing on the upcoming cricket season in the view of pandemic prevailing in India".

The wider scope of the agenda permits the members to also discuss the ICC T20 World Cup and the much-delayed compensation package for domestic cricketers for the cancelled last Ranji Trophy season.

BCCI also wants to host the T20 World Cup in India and during the June 1 ICC Board meet, it would ask the global body to wait on the COVID-19 situation here before any call is taken.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly is expected to chair Saturday's meeting from Mumbai. The IPL is expected to restart between September 18 and 20 and end on October 10 with three venues in the UAE, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah hosting the matches.

"Obviously, the main issue would be the IPL schedule. We are expecting 10 double-headers and seven single headers apart from four play-off games (2 qualifiers, one eliminator) including the final. The resumption game and final will be held on weekends," a senior BCCI official told PTI on the eve of the meeting.

It is expected that a lot of de-



liberations will also happen on how to procure the services of the overseas players and other logistical aspects including bubble-to-bubble transfer.

"England Cricket Board director of cricket Ashley Giles has already said that England players won't be allowed to play IPL as they would follow the international commitments ahead of ICC T20 World Cup."

"Hopefully, the president and secretary would tell us how the situation of English players will be handled," a franchise official, who would be tracking the developments, told PTI.

The likes of Jos Buttler, Ben Stokes (if fit), Jofra Archer (if fit), Jonny Bairstow, Sam Curran, Eoin Morgan, Moeen Ali are all first team players for their franchises and getting their replacements won't be easy.

The Indian team's commitments in England end on September 14 with the last day of the final Test in Manchester and it would directly fly to Dubai aboard a charter flight after the series ends.

Only Hanuma Vihari and Abhimanyu Easwaran are expected to go home as they don't have IPL contracts for the time being.

Ranji Trophy compensation

Close to 700 senior domestic cricketers (men) have suffered after the cancellation of the Ranji Trophy last season due to the pandemic.

While BCCI had agreed to a compensation package in January last year but the formula to distribute the package is yet to be worked out.

"Only 73 uncapped domestic cricketers currently have IPL contracts. Playing Vijay Hazare and Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy (Rs 35k per match) can't make up for the financial losses that these players suffered," a state unit official said.

"I guess the most feasible solution would be to hand over a lump sum compensation package to the state units and they would accordingly distribute among their players as per their roster from previous season," the senior official said.

Our Preparation Far From Being Ideal, Expected Lot More From Qatar FA: Stimac

Press Trust of India

KOLKATA: Livid with the strict quarantine arrangements in Qatar, Indian football team head coach Igor Stimac on Friday said their preparation is "far from being ideal" for the upcoming World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers.

Already out of contention for a World Cup berth, India will face Asian champions Qatar on June 3 before taking on Bangladesh (June 7) and Afghanistan (June 15) in their remaining group E matches, with an aim to qualify for the 2023 Asian Cup in China.

The Sunil Chhetri-led Blue Tigers, who were originally slated to reach Qatar on May 30, advanced their arrival to May 19. As per the strict quarantine, they are not allowed to train in gym, use the meeting hall or even eat together.

"If I knew that everything will be like it is today, I would never accept to be honest. We could organise such games in such way in India also. At the end we lost possibility of playing two home games," Stimac told reporters during a virtual interaction.

"Here we are now, not in great conditions. This is far away from a proper preparation for the World Cup qualifiers, but it is what it is. This is not a proper football work which needs to be obtained before the World Cup qualifiers."

Frustrated with the arrangements, Stimac continued: "I'm well

aware that Qatar is future host of the World Cup, and we all know about the great facilities for football teams.

"But, as a coach, personally I expected a lot more from this organisation. I know that we changed all our plans due to the pandemic. I say a big thank you to Qatar government for allowing us to come over here."

Under the current circumstances, the Indian players are forced to practice on the corridor, in front of their respective rooms, the 53-year-old Croatian World Cupper said.

"I didn't expect this. I expected as a coach that we're going to have a possibility of using the gym."

"We are doing our morning sessions in the hall in front of our rooms, and our players are eating delivery food, which is left in front of our rooms."

"That's not proper preparation for a football players, I'm quite sure that the Qatari team is not in the same position."

Stimac said they are forced to go through all this despite being tested COVID-19 negative three times.

"We were tested three times already, all the tests are negative. Why we don't have a proper meeting hall, so we can discuss and analyse our opponents, why we don't have a possibility of spending more time together, eating together."

"Instead of that we have one chance going out in the evenings for the training session, that's all."

Couldn't Sleep, Had To Pullout Of IPL: Ashwin Recalls His Family's Fight With COVID

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: Ravichandran Ashwin had "sleepless nights" inside the IPL bio-bubble when most of his family members were suffering from COVID-19 and said he "had to" leave the tournament midway to help his close ones fight the deadly virus.

Ashwin is now back in another bubble, this time with the Indian team which leaves for a 104-day UK trip on June 2.

"I couldn't sleep for almost 8-9 days. Since I couldn't sleep, it was really stressful for me. I was playing matches without getting any sleep. And since I found it really taxing, I had to quit IPL and go home midway."

"In fact, when I left around at that time, I had thoughts on whether I will be able to play cricket thereafter. But still, I did what was required at that point of time," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

The IPL was eventually suspended after multiples cases were found in its bio-bubble. Talking about the ongoing 14-day quarantine in Mumbai, Ashwin gave an idea of Indian team's life in the protected environment.

"It's really difficult, guys. It might look from the outside that we are



staying at a luxurious five-star hotel. But it is not that easy. Like I said earlier, it is not 7 days, but 14-days quarantine," the star spinner said.

"So, basically, we came here on 19th and we are leaving to England on only June 2 from Mumbai. So, basically, we will finish our 14-day quarantine here in India. And we will have a test here every two days once," Ashwin said.

Ashwin also explained that bubble breach doesn't mean that someone has entered the bubble.

"Many of you would have heard about the term bio-bubble breach. Bio-bubble breach doesn't mean someone from outside has entered the bubble. This is a virus and we still don't know how it enters."

While most of the Indian players have received their first jabs, Ashwin has got two jabs of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Ashwin also narrated the experience of reaching Mumbai bubble from his Chennai residence.

"The way we reached Mumbai in itself was a different experience. With each passing day, the struggle is only getting worse. Hopefully, you will get joy as we play. Seven days quarantine, three tests in seven days and after that, we can practice. It is difficult, but when compared to what people are going through, it's nothing," he said.

"From Chennai, we took one charter flight. Before taking the charter, we had to take three (RT-PCR) tests.

There were three tests on May 14th, 16th and 18th and we (his family) left from Chennai on May 19."

"From Chennai, next we landed in Hyderabad. Fielding coach R Sridhar, Indian women's captain Mithali Raj and others also joined us. The flight that took off at 2 pm from Chennai, landed in Mumbai at 6 pm on May 19th."

Ashwin also recollected how the weather impacted their chartered flight.

"The flight was there in the runway for a while and the reason was that was due to the heavy rains on that particular day, the bus that was supposed to pick-up one of the players got stuck."

"And to arrange another bus, the driver should have been in the bubble and they should also sanitize the bus and since these problems were also there. It took one to one and half hours and after that, we got picked in another bus. We came here and checked-in at the hotel."

After seven days of room quarantine, Ashwin is now allowed to hit the gym.

"So, I have my done my first gym session on the 25th. They have made the equipment available in our rooms too. The gymnasium has been made ready for us. Everyone have been allotted different time slots."

Japan Extends Virus Emergency With Safe Olympics At Stake

Agencies

TOKYO: Japan extended a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and other areas for 20 more days on Friday, with infections still not slowing as it prepares to host the Olympics in just over 50 days.

Cases remain high and medical systems in Osaka, the hardest-hit area in western Japan, are still overburdened, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said in announcing the decision.

The current state of emergency in the capital and eight other metropolitan areas was to end next Monday, but hospitals in some areas are still overflowing with COVID-19 patients and serious cases have recently hit new highs.

The 20-day extension covers nine areas ranging from Hokkaido in the north to Fukuoka in the south. A 10th area, the southern island prefecture of Okinawa, is already under emergency status through June 20.

Olympic organizers must decide at about that time whether to allow any fans at all, after overseas spectators were banned months ago. A plan to prioritize vaccinations for Japanese athletes is ex-

PCB Gets Permission To Land Chartered Flights From India In Abu Dhabi

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is all set to hold the remaining PSL matches in Abu Dhabi next month after getting permission from UAE authorities to land its chartered flights from Mumbai and Johannesburg carrying members of the broadcasting crew, players and officials.

The sixth edition of the Pakistan Super League appeared to be in doubt till Thursday when the UAE authorities had not issued permission to the PCB for landing of chartered flights from India and South Africa.

landed in Abu Dhabi from Karachi and Lahore.

"The players, officials and other stakeholders have already entered quarantine at their hotels so now the PCB is in a position to announce the fresh schedule of the remaining 20 matches of the PSL," the official said.

He said now there were no hurdles in organizing the league in Abu Dhabi.

"We are still awaiting some 20 visas for some players and officials of some franchises and we will get them tonight and they will also leave by tomorrow on a chartered flight."



SOURCE: ICC TWITTER

"The Abu Dhabi sports council has now written a letter to its immigration authority to allow the landing of the chartered flights from Mumbai and Johannesburg," a PCB official said.

He said after that clearance, chartered flights will be allowed to fly for Abu Dhabi. The PCB faced a long delay getting visas for the Indian and South African broadcasting crew members but finally got visas for them on Thursday before the landing permission issue cropped up.

On Thursday, two chartered flights carrying around 250 players, officials, PCB employees and official broadcasters and their staff

Those still awaiting visas include former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, who leads the Quetta Gladiators franchise and some other players as well.

A reliable source said the PCB was set to bear a lot of heavy expenses on hosting the matches in Abu Dhabi but they have convinced the franchises to take a small cut on their share from the league earnings for season six.

The PSL 6 matches are held in Abu Dhabi after the PCB had to postpone the league in early March in Karachi due rising Covid-19 cases among players and officials with just 14 matches completed at that time.

Naseem Shah To Re-Enter Pakistan Super League Bio-Bubble

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board has apparently compromised on its COVID-19 protocols and allowed fast bowler Naseem Shah to re-enter the bio-secure bubble before returning to play in the country's premier Twenty20 league.

The 18-year-old Shah was expelled last Monday from the remainder of Pakistan Super League after arriving at a team hotel in Lahore with an outdated negative test for COVID-19. The last 20 games of the postponed tournament are being played in the United Arab Emirates.

The PCB's protocols required all players traveling to Abu Dhabi to present a negative test taken not more than 48 hours prior to arrival at the team hotel. Shah presented a report on Monday from a test that was conducted on May 18.

But after meeting with franchise owners, the PCB allowed Shah to return to the team hotel after returning another negative test COVID-19. Shah will then have to clear two more COVID-19 tests before boarding the last charter flight to Abu Dhabi for the tournament.

Shah is supposed to be the key



player for Quetta Gladiators in the PSL. He rose to the fame with his pace when he made his test debut against Australia in November 2019 and then grabbed a hat trick in a test match against Bangladesh at Rawalpindi last year. He has played in nine test matches and grabbed 20 wickets.

The PCB has not yet announced the schedule of the remaining 20 PSL games in Abu Dhabi. The league was postponed in March when several players and support staff among the six franchises tested positive for COVID-19.



pected to begin around then, according to media reports.

The Olympics are scheduled to start July 23 after a one-year postponement due to the pandemic, and worries about new variants and Japan's slow vaccination rollout have triggered calls from the public, medical experts and even a sponsor to cancel the games.

Experts have warned that the variants are infecting more people, leaving them seriously ill and flooding hospitals.

Japan has lagged on vaccinations due to bureaucratic and

planning missteps and shortages. Only 2.3% of the population has been fully vaccinated, and the current phase targeting older adults is not scheduled to finish before the games start.

Still, Suga and his government are determined to host the Olympics. The International Olympic Committee has also said the games will go ahead even if host city Tokyo is under emergency measures.

Japan has reported about 730,000 coronavirus cases and more than 12,700 deaths.