



P3 CITY

CHAI JAALI-MAHATTA CAFE DISPUTE REACHES COURT

A local court on Saturday issued an order restraining owners of Mahatta Café from making “defamatory statements” against former Finance Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Haseeb Drabu in connection

P6 THINK

G-7 SUMMIT: REALITY AND EXPECTATIONS

The upcoming G7 Summit in Cornwall, UK from 11 to 13 of this month is perhaps the first international event, in the backdrop of the continuing Covid pandemic, when the leaders from the world's wealthiest...



P5 STATE

VACCINATION PANACEA AGAINST COVID-19: ADV KHAN

Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan Monday reviewed arrangements put in place amid the 2nd wave of Covid -19 pandemic in Budgam...



J&K Sees Lowest Number Of Cases After 2 Months



The relaxation in corona lockdown drew large crowds to Srinagar's marketplaces on Monday causing frequent traffic jams. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Firdaus Ali

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases in Jammu and

Kashmir reported a considerable decline on Monday as 977 more people, the lowest in two-months,

tested positive for the virus even as the deadly infection claimed lives of 16 more people ● More On P10

PM Announces Free Vaccines For 18 Plus



The central government will provide free coronavirus vaccines to states for inoculation of all above the age of 18 from June 21, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Monday and asserted that vaccine supply would be increased significantly in the country in the coming days. The Centre has decided to buy 75 per cent of jabs from vaccine makers, including 25 per cent of the state quota, and give it for free to state governments, the prime minister said in an address ● More On P10

After Rs 77 Crore Disclosure, Unemployed Youth Await Exams, Employment



File Photo

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: After a noted RTI activist revealed that the

successive governments in Jammu and Kashmir have generated a whopping Rs 70 crore revenue ● More On P10

Board Junks Over-Charging Allegations

The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) on Monday refuted allegations of overcharging from aspirants alleging that an attempt was being made to divert attention from their good work. Reacting to the news items published in a section of media and some social media platforms regarding alleged ● More On P10

Task Force Formed For Covid Affected Children

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday constituted a task force in each district for providing care and protection to children infected and affected by COVID-19. An order issued by the commissioner secretary of the General Administration Department said the committees would comprise seven members in each district. As per the order, the committees will be headed by respective district development commissioners. The chief medical officer, additional superintendent of police, district social welfare officer and the chairman of the child welfare committee will be its members. The district child protection officer will be the member secretary of the committees, the order read. The task force will provide care and protection to children infected by COVID-19 or having parents who have contracted the disease. ● More On P10

FOLLOW UP

Wildlife Dept Hires Local Hunters To Kill Leopard

Zaid Bin Shabir

SRINAGAR: Belying the tall claims of being self-sufficient and self-reliant in dealing with wild animals, the wildlife department has roped-in five local professional hunters to catch or eliminate the man-eater leopard that mauled a five-year old girl to death in Central Kashmir's Budgam district last week. ● More On P10

Govt Rubbishes Rumours Of Administrative, Political Changes

Muhammad Raafi

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government officials on Monday brushed aside the rumours of any possible administrative and political changes in the Union Territory. Rumours are rife in Jammu and Kashmir, for the past few days, particularly in the Kashmir valley which has created a lot of uncertainty among the people.

The rumours gained ground after the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's meetings with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Home Secretary AK Bhalla in Delhi. A senior administrative official told Kashmir Observer that the LG's meetings were a routine exercise and the current round of meetings was to discuss the situation in J&K, besides other regular administrative work. ● More On P10



Special Covid-19 vaccination drive for priority groups (18-44 Years)

KASHMIR
08.06.2021

Details of Vaccination sites for priority groups (18-44 years)

GANDERBAL		
Sl. No.	Vaccination Centre Name	Category
1	SDH Kangan	Service Providers, Journalists, Shopkeepers, Raday Wallas & Roadside Vendors.
2	PHC Lar	
3	PHC Wakura	
4	PHC Kullian	
5	Phc Ganiwan	
6	PHC Manigam	
7	PHC Safapora	
8	Sub Centre Youngora	
9	PHC Gutlibagh	
10	PHC Kachan	
11	PHC Tulamulla	
12	Sub Centre Dab	
13	PHC Batwina	
14	PHC Shuhama	
15	DH Ganderbal	
16	PHC Sonamarg	
17	PHC Kondbal	
18	MMC Watlar	
19	PHC Nunner	
20	PHC Chundina	
21	PHC Babanagari	
22	PHC Gund	
23	PHC Chattergul	
24	Sub Centre Wussan	
25	Sub Centre Kurag	
26	NTPHC narayanbagh bagh	
27	Sub Centre kurhama	
28	Sub Centre Saloora	

SRINAGAR		
Sl. No.	Vaccination Centre Name	Category
1	GMC Srinagar & Associated Hospital	High Risk Group
2	SKIMS Soura	
3	JLNM Rainawari	
4	JVC Bemina	
5	UPHC Zakura	
6	UPHC Lal Bazar	
7	HWC Buchpora	
8	HWC Zoonimar	
9	HWC Sangeen Darwaza	
10	HWC Hawal	
11	UPHC S.R Gunj	
12	UPHC Narwara	
13	NTPHC Habba Kadal	
14	MMC Noorbagh	
15	SDH Hazratbal	
16	UPHC Nishat	
17	UPHC Harwan	
18	CHC Gousia	
19	NTPHC Rainawari	
20	PHC Chanapora	
21	NTPHC Chatterhama	
22	UPHC Batamaloo	
23	UPHC Khonmoh	
24	UPHC Pantha Chowk	
25	UPHC Humhama	
26	PHC Laloo	
27	NTPHC Jawahar Nagar	
28	Sub Centre Natipora	
29	UPHC Lasjan	
30	UPHC Maisuma	

Sl. No.	Vaccination Centre Name	Category
31	UPHC Mehjoor Nagar	High Risk Group
32	Sub Centre Trauma Lawaypora	
33	UPHC Qamarwari	
34	Sub Centre Bemina	
35	PHC Bemina (Khumani Chowk)	
36	New Secretariat	
37	Sub Centre Krishbal	
38	Shaheen Public School Ganderpora	
39	UPHC Pather Masjid	
40	Sokhalipora Community Centre	
41	UPHC Palapora	
42	NTPHC Habba Kadal	
43	UPHC Narwara Eidgah	
44	Nayabat Office Noorbagh	
45	Ingenious School Malbagh Hazratbal	
46	Crescent Public School Habak Naseem Bagh	
47	Commercial complex Parray Pora chowk	
48	Hostel Building Near Ahle Hadees Masjid Majeed Bagh	
49	Rawal Pora Eidgah Wanbal Near Railway Bridge	
50	Jamia Masjid Main Road Hyderpora	
51	Govt School Housing Colony Sanat Nagar	
52	Station at Sobo Hotel Parimpora Near General Bus Stand Adda	
53	Al-Hilal Masjid Mansoor Colony Bemina	
54	SDA Complex Bemina	
55	Soliah Public School (Rajbagh)	
56	Muslim Public School (Rajbagh)	
57	Boys Hr. Sec School (Old Hospital) Jawahar Nagar	
58	Ramzan Hospital Rajbagh Bund	
59	Floriculture Park Karan Nagar	
60	Marriage Hall Nalbandpora	
61	Common Wealth Public School Chattabal Veer	



Shri Manoj Sinha
Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor

To protect yourself and your loved ones/co-workers, Follow the FIVE



Use mask correctly



Wash hands with soap and water frequently and thoroughly or use hand sanitizer



Maintain 6 feet (2 gaj) physical distance



If you see any symptom, promptly get yourself tested



If you see any symptom, promptly get yourself tested

Covid Appropriate Behaviour even after Vaccination

- High Risk Group includes Shopkeepers, Hotel Staff, Service Delivery Persons, Drivers, Construction Workers, Lawyers, Journalist, Govt. employee on Covid/Active field duty, College/University going Students.
- Only eligible beneficiaries may come to the venue after vetting by concerned departmental officer.

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**KASHMIR
OBSERVER**
Tuesday| 08-06-2021

Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Office of Sub Divisional Magistrate Pattan

Phone: 01954231455

Email: sdmpattan1@gmail.com

Subject:- Implementation of PMAY-Housing for all (HFA-U).

NOTICE

Regarding the subject matter, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla has constituted the District Level Technical Monitoring Committee and Sub Divisional Level Monitoring Committees vide Order No. 42/DCB of 2021 dated 09-04-2021 and endorsement No. DCB/AQ/PMAY-U/43-58 dated 09-04-2021 for implementation of PMAY-Housing for all (HFA-U). In this regard, Sub Divisional Level Monitoring Committee, Pattan has verified the list of Sub Division Pattan and the findings are enclosed with the notice as Annexure "A". Moreover, general public is hereby informed through this medium of notice, if anybody is having any objection about the verified list, he/she may file his/her objection to the office of undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice in local newspaper.

No: SDMP/2021-22/400-402

Dated:-03-06-2021

Space donated by Kashmir Observer

Sd/-

(Syed Faheem Bihagi KAS)
Sub Divisional Magistrate Pattan

S.No	Annexure_id	Beneficiary_Name	Father_Name	Beneficiary_Code	Eligible	Ineligible
1	7C01800005012136	ABIDA IBRAHEEM	SHAMSHAD	01800005930780064	eligible	
2	7C01800005012136	AB AHAD NAJAR	GH AHMAD NAJAR	01800005930730006	eligible	
3	7C01800005012136	ab aziz goji	jumma goji	01800005930650001	eligible	
4	7C01800005012136	AB HAMEED GANAYE	GH MOHD GANAYE	01800005930680008	eligible	
5	7C01800005012136	AB HAMEED SOFI	GH RASOOL SOFI	01800005930730007	eligible	
6	7C01800005012136	AB HAMID SOFI	NOOR UD DIN SOFI	01800005930770001	eligible	
7	7C01800005012136	AB majeed bhat	gh qadir bhat	01800005930670009	eligible	
8	7C01800005012136	AB MAJEED DAR	ABDUL AHAD DAR	01800005930780040	eligible	
9	7C01800005012136	AB MAJEED SADA	AB AHAD SADA	01800005930770001	eligible	
10	7C01800005012136	AB MAJEED SOFI	GH MOHAMMAD SOFI	01800005930730008	eligible	
11	7C01800005012136	AB MAJEED ZARGAR	WALI MOHD ZARGAR	01800005930730009	eligible	
12	7C01800005012136	AB QAYOM KHANDAY	GH KHANDAY	01800005930660003	eligible	
13	7C01800005012136	AB RAHMAN GORI	GHULAM RASOOL GORI	01800005930660008	eligible	
14	7C01800005012136	AB RASHID BABA	SANAULLAH BABA	01800005930780041	eligible	
15	7C01800005012136	ab rashid man	habibullah man	01800005930770002	eligible	
16	7C01800005012136	Ab Rashid Sheer Gori	Ghulam Mohd Sheer Gori	01800005930650002	eligible	
17	7C01800005012136	AB RASHID SHEER GORIE	GH RASOOL SOFI	01800005930650014	eligible	
18	7C01800005012136	AB RASHID WANI	GH AHMAD WANI	01800005930770002	eligible	
19	7C01800005012136	AB REHMAN TELI	AB AZIZ TELI	01800005930750008	eligible	
20	7C01800005012136	ABDUL GAFFAR GORI	JUMMA GORI	01800005930650002	eligible	
21	7C01800005012136	ABDUL HAMID NAZROO	HAI MOHD ISMAIL NAZROO	01800005930770002	eligible	
22	7C01800005012136	abdul majeed sheer gojree	abul rashid sheer gojree	01800005930650003	eligible	
23	7C01800005012136	ABDUL MAJEED SHEER	ABDUL KHAULQ SHEER	01800005930650004	eligible	
24	7C01800005012136	ABDUL RAHEEM GORI	GH AHMAD GORI	01800005930670001	eligible	
25	7C01800005012136	ABDUL RAHIM TELI	GH RASOOL TELI	01800005930650021	eligible	
26	7C01800005012136	ABDUL RAHMAN MALLA	MOHAMMAD RAMZAN MALLA	01800005930780005	eligible	
27	7C01800005012136	ABDUL RASHID SADA	GH RASOOL SADA	01800005930720003	eligible	
28	7C01800005012136	ABDUL SATAR SHEER GORIE	MOHD JUMMA SHEER GORIE	01800005930650005	eligible	
29	7C01800005012136	ABD HUSSAIN	GH MOHD HUSSAIN	01800005930780066	eligible	
30	7C01800005012136	AJAZ AHMAD	ALI MOHAMMAD	01800005930780043	eligible	
31	7C01800005012136	ajaz ahmad gojree	moht subhan goji	01800005930650006	eligible	
32	7C01800005012136	AJAZ AHMAD WANI	BASHIR AHMAD	01800005930780067	eligible	
33	7C01800005012136	ajaz fathima	jaffer	01800005930680001	eligible	
34	7C01800005012136	AJAZ HUSSAIN WANI	ALI MOHAMMAD	01800005930780068	eligible	
35	7C01800005012136	akeel abas	muzaffar shan	01800005930680039	eligible	
36	7C01800005012136	AKHER MEHMOOD BHAT	GHULAM HASSAN BHAT	01800005930780069	eligible	
37	7C01800005012136	ALI MOHAMMAD DAB	GHULAM HUSSAIN DAB	018000059307800128	eligible	
38	7C01800005012136	ALI MOHAMMAD DAR	GHULAM AHMAD DAR	01800005930780057	eligible	
39	7C01800005012136	ALI MOHAMMAD HAMAM	MOHAMMAD QASIM AHMAD	01800005930780019	eligible	
40	7C01800005012136	ALI MOHAMMAD MACRAY	GHULAM AHMAD MACRAY	01800005930780017	eligible	
41	7C01800005012136	ALI MOHAMMAD PABA	GHULAM AHMAD PABA	01800005930780010	eligible	
42	7C01800005012136	ALI MOHD KHAN KHAN	MOHD SUBHAN KHAN	01800005930770005	eligible	
43	7C01800005012136	ali mohd shah	GH MOHD SHAH	01800005930670002	eligible	
44	7C01800005012136	ALTAF HUSSAIN MALLA	HASSAN	01800005930780092	eligible	
45	7C01800005012136	AMEED HUSSAIN MIR	JAFAR MIR	01800005930780093	eligible	
46	7C01800005012136	anjay ABASS	ALI MOHAMMAD	01800005930680066	eligible	
47	7C01800005012136	ARIF AHMAD LULOO	GH AHMAD LULOO	01800005930650007	eligible	
48	7C01800005012136	ASGAR DAR	HASSAN DAR	01800005930680040	eligible	
49	7C01800005012136	ashiq hussain	mohammad yousuf malla	01800005930680041	eligible	
50	7C01800005012136	ASHIQ HUSSAIN SHAH	SHAMAS UD DIN SHAH	01800005930670001	eligible	
51	7C01800005012136	ASHIQ SULTAN BHAT	GHULAM AHMAD SULTAN BHAT	01800005930680009	eligible	
52	7C01800005012136	AZI BEGUM	GHULAM AHMAD CHOPAN	01800005930780046	eligible	
53	7C01800005012136	BASHIR AHMAD BHAT	SHABAN BHAT	01800005930780004	eligible	
54	7C01800005012136	BARKAT ALI MIAN	MOHD MAGBOOL MIAN	01800005930770023	eligible	
55	7C01800005012136	BARKAT ALI MIR	GHULAM MOHAMMAD MIR	01800005930780005	eligible	
56	7C01800005012136	bashir ahmad bhat	ab abad bhat	01800005930680001	eligible	
57	7C01800005012136	bashir ahmad gojree	abul gaffar gojree	01800005930660004	eligible	
58	7C01800005012136	bashir ahmad gojree	moht subhan goji	01800005930670019	eligible	
59	7C01800005012136	BASHIR AHMAD MIAN	MOHD SIDIQ MIAN	01800005930770003	eligible	
60	7C01800005012136	bashir ahmad mian	GH MOHAMMAD	01800005930770004	eligible	
61	7C01800005012136	BASHIR AHMAD MIR	GHULAM AHMAD MIR	01800005930780096	eligible	
62	7C01800005012136	BASHIR AHMAD NAJAR	SAIF UD DIN NAJAR	01800005930650019	eligible	
63	7C01800005012136	BASHIR AHMAD NAJAR	GH NABI NAJAR	01800005930770001	eligible	
64	7C01800005012136	BASHIR AHMAD NAJAR	GHULAM AHMAD NAJAR	01800005930780011	eligible	
65	7C01800005012136	bashir ahmad zargar	GH MOHD ZARGAR	01800005930770002	eligible	
66	7C01800005012136	bashir ahmed najar	ghulam ahmed najar	01800005930680013	eligible	
67	7C01800005012136	BASHIR AHMED QADRI	SANA ULLAH QADRI	01800005930650023	eligible	
68	7C01800005012136	BILAL AHMAD BHAT	MOHAMMAD ISHAQ BHAT	01800005930780097	eligible	
69	7C01800005012136	BILAL AHMAD BHAT	GH RASOOL	01800005930780098	eligible	
70	7C01800005012136	BILAL AHMAD BHAT	AB AHAD BHAT	01800005930690004	eligible	
71	7C01800005012136	BILAL AHMAD GANE	WALI MOHD GANE	01800005930690005	eligible	
72	7C01800005012136	BILAL AHMAD SHAH	NOOR UD DIN SHAH	01800005930670004	eligible	
73	7C01800005012136	BILAL AHMAD SOFI	GH MUSTAFA SOFI	01800005930680084	eligible	
74	7C01800005012136	DILSHADA BEGUM	AB RASHID MIR	01800005930670005	eligible	
75	7C01800005012136	farooq ahmad bhat	GH MOHAMMAD	01800005930670006	eligible	
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77	7C01800005012136	FAROOQ AHMAD GANIE	MOHD ASAD GANIE	01800005930650025	eligible	
78	7C01800005012136	FAROOQ AHMAD GORI	MOHD RAMZAN GORI	01800005930650008	eligible	
79	7C01800005012136	farooq ahmad goji	GH MOHD GORI	01800005930650020	eligible	
80	7C01800005012136	farooq ahmad man	gh mohd man	01800005930770001	eligible	
81	7C01800005012136	farooq ahmad najar	bhairol mohd najar	01800005930730003	eligible	
82	7C01800005012136	FAROOQ AHMAD SHEER GORIE	ABDUL BASHIR SHEER GORIE	01800005930650009	eligible	
83	7C01800005012136	FAROOQ AHMED DAR	AB AHMAD DAR	01800005930680011	eligible	
84	7C01800005012136	Gayaz ah khanday	GH RASOOL KHANDAY	01800005930770005	eligible	
85	7C01800005012136	FAVAY AHMAD MALLA	ABDUL AHMAD MALLA	01800005930770006	eligible	
86	7C01800005012136	Gayaz ahmad qadir	gh nabi qadir	01800005930650024	eligible	
87	7C01800005012136	FAYAZ AHMED SHAH	SANAULLAH SHAH	01800005930670007	eligible	
88	7C01800005012136	FEROZ AHMAD PALA	ABDUL AZIZ PALA	01800005930660009	eligible	
89	7C01800005012136	FIRIA HASSAN MIR	MOHAMMAD JAFFAR MIR	01800005930780099	eligible	
90	7C01800005012136	FIRDOOSA BEGUM	GHULAM AHMAD GORI	01800005930780070	eligible	
91	7C01800005012136	FIRDOUS AHMAD TELI	GH MOHD UD DIN TELI	01800005930750001	eligible	
92	7C01800005012136	GAZAN FAR ALI	GHULAM RASOOL MALLA	01800005930780010	eligible	
93	7C01800005012136	GH MHAD DIN SOFI	GH MOHD SOFI	01800005930770001	eligible	
94	7C01800005012136	GH MOHAMMAD SHEKH	GH MOH UD DIN SHEKH	01800005930770001	eligible	
95	7C01800005012136	GH MOHD NAJAR	HAZIR MOHD NAJAR	01800005930770001	eligible	
96	7C01800005012136	gh mohd tel	AB AZIZ TELI	01800005930770024	eligible	
97	7C01800005012136	GH MOHI UD DIN TELI	AB AHAD DAR	01800005930680016	eligible	
98	7C01800005012136	GH MOHI UD DIN TELI	AB AHAD NAJAR	01800005930770004	eligible	
99	7C01800005012136	gh nabi kalso	AB REHMAN	01800005930720006	eligible	
100	7C01800005012136	GH NABI LONE	AB AHAD LONE	01800005930680002	eligible	
101	7C01800005012136	gh nabi najar	gh mohd najar	01800005930780010	eligible	
102	7C01800005012136	gh nabi para	mohd ramzan para	01800005930680012	eligible	
103	7C01800005012136	GH NABI PARA	GHULAM AHMAD PARA	0180000593078		

‘Chai Jaai-Mahatta Cafe Dispute’ Court Restrains Mahatta Cafe Owners From Making Defamatory Statements

Drabu Files Suit
Claiming Damages

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A local court on Saturday issued an order restraining owners of Mahatta Café from making “defamatory statements” against former Finance Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Haseeb Drabu in connection with Chai Jaai-Mahatta Cafe dispute.

Drabu has filed suit for Rs 5 Crore in damages ‘by way of recompense for slander’.

Additional District Judge Srinagar Sudhir Kumar Khajuria, in an order, said, “...non-applicants (Anita Mehta, wife of late Jagdish Mehta and Dushyant Mehta, son of late Jagdish Mehta) are restrained from making libelous /defamatory statement against the applicant/plaintiff (DR Haseeb A Drabu),” who filed the case through Advocate Shariq J Reyaz.

“The instant application for grant of interim relief has been presented today along with the main suit after being assigned to this Court by learned Principal District Judge, Srinagar, for disposal under law after, after having been presented through virtual mode by the learned counsel for the applicant/plaintiff. It has been averred in the application for grant of a temporary injunction that the non-applicants/ defendants be restrained from making disparaging/ defamatory statements against the applicant/ plaintiff and



also restrains from persisting with the tort of libel/ slander committed as joint tortfeasors,” reads the court order.

Drabu had approached the court seeking an injunction restraining Mehtas from making any kind of statements against him.

As also, a claim of damages for li-

bel after reports had emerged that the plaintiff threatened Mehtas over the property dispute.

As per the order, “In the main suit, the plaintiff is seeking relief of damages by way of recompense for the stand/libel and permanent injunction restraining the defendants from indulging into slanderous/

libelous statements against the plaintiff.”

However, the court order says that the non-applicants shall be at liberty to approach this court for modification, cancellation, discharge, or variation of the order by or before the next date of hearing on 12, 6, 2021.

“It is to be made clear that the applicant shall comply with the requirements as laid down in Proviso to Rule 3 of Order 39 CPC,” the order said.

Earlier, Anita Mehta had accused former JK Finance Minister, Haseeb Drabu, of a land grab attempt.

Mehta had approached the press, and alleged that the owners of Chai Jai were using political power and threatening them.

Mehta had made the allegation after Mahatta cafe in Srinagar was been sealed by the Jammu and Kashmir administration amid the property dispute, and for allegedly violating COVID norms.

Mahatta cafe is owned by the Mehta family which has been in Kashmir for about a hundred years spanning three generations.

Chai Jaai was set up by the Mehtas in a joint profit-sharing venture with Haseeb Drabu and his wife, Roohi Nazki, in 2016. The Mehtas set up ‘Cafe Mahatta’ while Drabu and Nazki set up a tea house, ‘Chai Jaai’.

Increased Suicides In Kashmir Manifestation Of Sordid Anti-Youth Policies: Omar

Chairs Meeting Of Party
Functionaries In Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah on Monday expressed concern over the soaring unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir and increased incidents of suicide among youth.

He was speaking during a meeting of Party’s constituency in-charges of North Kashmir’s Baramulla District at party headquarters Nawa-e-Subha, Srinagar.

He said the increased occurrence of suicides in Kashmir is a physical manifestation of the sordid anti youth policies of the incumbent government pushing already aggrieved educated and skilled youth towards wall.

He said the successive clamp down and Covid induced lock downs have further compounded the woes of J&K youth by choking the already constrained job sector. He said that there are thousands of unemployed Medics, Para Medics, Engineers, Graduates and Post Graduates waiting for job openings. The situation, he said, has become

much worse as the industrial sector, which is supposed to absorb the unemployed youths, continues to struggle.

He also said that what little opportunities were provided by local tourism, manufacturing, handicraft and transportation sectors have also been clogged by the predatory impact of tumultuous situations since August 2019 in the shape of successive lock downs and weather vagaries.

“The economy of J&K, it goes without saying, is at the brink of collapse. There is no sector of Jammu & Kashmir’s economy — be it tourism, horticulture, transport, or trade — that hasn’t suffered losses in the past two years. Our local Economy is already on its deathbed due to the ravaging deluge of 2014 followed by the demonetization and then successive lockdowns, the Series of occurrences over the years also had a backbreaking impact on the people. The ongoing crisis has diminished all hopes of economic revival,” he said, adding that the recently announced economic package is insufficient to bring the ailing economy of JK back.

Congress Demands Restoration Of J&K’s Statehood With Constitutional Guarantees

Holds Party Meeting In Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Congress on Monday reiterated it’s demand of restoration of Jammu and Kashmir’s Statehood with constitutional guarantees, stating that the move was bound to restore the lost glory, besides infusing confidence among the people, who were feeling cheated and betrayed by the BJP Govt.

The Party said the more delay in restoring statehood was bound to cause more disconnect between Centre and J&K People, who were feeling hurt after the Centre’s move to downgrade the historical and full-fledged State into two Union Territories without their consent, the Centre has to address that disconnect, at right earnest, keeping in view the urges and aspirations of the people.

In a meeting of Senior Party leaders held at Srinagar Par-

ty office on Monday, the J&K Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) President Ghulam Ahmad Mir urged the Centre Govt to fulfill its commitment of restoring Statehood to J&K without any further delay, as the people of J&K were eagerly waiting for the day when their just rights, which have been snatched without evolving consensus or seeking their consent were to be restored with other constitutional guarantees to win their lost trust.

“I believe that early restoration of Statehood will indeed go a long way in taking away J&K out of the quagmire and confusion created after August 5 2019, which should be the top on the agenda of the Centre Govt, as the decision of downgrading J&K will continue to the main source behind anguish and trust deficit in J&K, unless and until the decision was revoked,” JKPCC President said.

NIT Signs MoU With ESES, USA To Curb Plastic Pollution

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Engineers for Sustainable Energy Solutions (ESES), Kentucky, United States of America aiming to curb plastic pollution.

The MoU was signed by Director, NIT Srinagar Prof. (Dr.) Rakesh Sehgal and ESES was represented by Prof. Jaffery Seay, Coordinator ESES and Professor of Chemical Engineering, University of Kentucky, Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

The scope of collaboration on academic and research activities in MoU includes working jointly to combat the rising issue of plastic waste pollution and its disposal in modern society which is threatening economies, ecosystems, and human health.

Director, NIT Srinagar Prof. (Dr.) Rakesh Sehgal said it is indeed a matter of great pleasure as two technological institutions are coming together to sign the historic MoU.

“It is a welcome step between NIT Srinagar and Engineers for Sustainable Energy Solutions (ESES). It will not only resolve the problem of plastic waste in our campus but we can also implement this technology in surrounding communities and minimise the waste to convert useful energies,” he said.

Prof Sehgal congratulated the stakeholders for coming together to work jointly for mitigating the plastic pollution.



He said that the institute and UT of J&K are largely going to benefit from the partnership in the future. The students and faculty members shall be promoted to attend the mutual exchange programmes, he said.

“We will constitute a group of students who will take up this kind of technology and make the community surrounding NIT campus aware about this initiative,” he said.

Registrar NIT Srinagar, Prof. Kaiser Bukhari appreci-

ated the efforts of the institution in fostering partnerships with various research and other organisations.

On the occasion, Prof Jeffrey R. Seay said it is a welcome step by NIT and our organisation ESES. We are excited to work with students at NIT Srinagar. It is a happy and positive movement for all of us, he said.

Prof Seay said although MoU is only a piece of paper, and in future success is expected when we will work together on more projects.

ACB Conducts ‘Surprise Check’ Of Srinagar Passport Office

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Director Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Anand Jain on Monday rejected the claims that they conducted a raid at passport office Srinagar and stated that it was just a “routine joint surprise check.”

However, Regional Passport Officer (RPO) Srinagar, BB Nagar questioned the ACB exercise.

He said the ACB should have sought details and the same would have been shared with them within a shortest possible time.

Jain said that the ACB didn’t conduct any raid at passport office Srinagar. “It was just a routine surprise check, which is being conducted in every department,” he said. (Agencies)

AAC Pays Tribute To Moulvi Mushtaq On 17th Anniversary

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Awami Action Committee (AAC) on Monday paid tributes to its member and sociopolitical activist Shaheed-e-Masjid Moulvi Mushtaq Ahmed on his 17th anniversary.

The AAC in a statement said that the commemorative function by the organisation to pay tribute to him could not take place in wake of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic restrictions.

Besides, Awami Action Committee patron and All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq continues to be under arbitrary house detention

since 5th August 2019.

AAC appealed to people to pray for a magfirah for Shaheed-e-Masjid Moulvi Mushtaq and all martyrs of Kashmir since 1931.

AAC said that Late Mushtaq was an extremely kind and compassionate soul, who helped the poor and needy in all manner throughout his life. “And throughout his life he believed in and strived for the party’s basic ideology of peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue. He even bore the hardships of prison and interrogations in jail for his beliefs, when in October 1965 he along with Shaheed e Millat Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq was arrested and spend more than two years in jail.”

DIAL-EMMA



- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS

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



PRAYERS

FAJR	3: 35
ZUHR	12:30
ASR	5:29
Magrib	7:43
ISHA	9:24

This Day In History

- 452 - Italy invaded by Attila the Hun
- 536 - St Silverius begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 793 - Vikings plunder St Cuthbert's monastery on Lindisfarne
- 979 - Louis V de Luie, crowned King of France
- 1191 - King Richard I of England arrives at Acre in modern day Israel to join the Siege of Acre during the Third Crusade.
- 1405 - Richard le Scrope, Archbishop of York and Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Norfolk, are executed in York on Henry IV's orders.
- 1551 - Pope Julius III excommunicates Duke Ottavio Farnese of Parma
- 1624 Earthquake strikes Peru
- 1632 - Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, conquers Sittard
- 1663- Battle at Amegical: English & Portuguese fleet beats Spanish
- 1690- Siddi general YadiSakat, razes the Mazagon Fort in Mumbai.
- 1694- English troop landing at Brest attack (300 killed)
- 1783- Laki Volcano in southern Iceland begins 8-month eruption
- 1786- Commercially made icecream 1st advertised (Mr Hall, NYC)
- 1789- James Madison introduces a proposed Bill of Rights in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- 1815- 39 German states unite under Act of Confederation
- 1824- Washing machine patented by Noah Cushing of Quebec
- 1405 Richard le Scrope, Archbishop of York and Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Norfolk, are executed in York on Henry IV's orders.
- 1551 Pope Julius III excommunicates Duke Ottavio Farnese of Parma
- 1624 Earthquake strikes Peru
- 1905- US President Roosevelt sends identical notes to Japan and Russia urging them to negotiate and end hostilities, offering his personal services
- 1936- 1st parking meters are invented
- 1937- World's largest flower blooms in NY Botanical Garden, 12' calla lily
- 1940- Discovery of element 93, neptunium, announced
- 1940- Last British troops leave Narvik Norway
- 1941- British & French troops overthrow pro-German Syria
- 1944- Allies occupy Port-en-Bessin Normandy
- 1946 Sukarno calls for anti colonial defiance in Indonesia
- 1949 Siam changes name to Thailand
- 1959- 1st official "missile mail" lands (Jacksonville, Fla)
- 1965- US troops ordered to fight offensively in Vietnam
- 1965- USSR launches Luna 6; it missed the Moon by 99,000 miles
- 1966- Topeka, Kansas is devastated by a tornado that registers as an "F5" on the Fujita Scale: the first to exceed US\$100 million in damages. Sixteen people are killed, hundreds more injured, and thousands of homes damaged or destroyed.
- 1969- Nixon says 25,000 US troops would leave Vietnam by end of August
- 1971- North Vietnam demands US end aid to South Vietnam
- 1974-US & Saudi Arabia sign military-economic contract
- 1975- USSR launches Venera 9 for Venus landing
- 1988- Nippon Airways announces that painting eyeballs on Jets cut bird collisions by 20%
- 2004- Transit of Venus (between Earth & Sun) occurs.
- 2012 - A bus bombing in Pakistan kills 18 and injures 35 people.
- 2017 - Ex-FBI chief James Comey testifies to a US Senate committee that US President Donald Trump told "lies plain and simple"
- 2017 - UN states Islamic State forces have shot and killed hundreds of fleeing civilians during battle for Mosul, Iraq in past two weeks
- 2017 - British General Election results in a hung parliament, Prime Minister Theresa May and the Conservative party lose their majority
- 2018 - WhatsApp rumours of child kidnappers in India prompt two men to be beaten to death by a mob in Karbi Angong district, Assam
- 2018 - World's most powerful supercomputer, Summit, can process 200,000 trillion calculations per second, launched at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Tennessee, by IBM and NVIDIA

From KO Archives

Advani Quits In Jinnah’s Defence

NEW DELHI - Just two days after his remarks on Muhammad Ali Jinnah, L K Advani on Tuesday resigned as the president of the Bharatiya Janata Party. His resignation came a day after the top RSS brass demanded that Advani withdraw his utterances. Returning home on Monday, Advani had brushed aside all criticism and described his visit as “an unforgettable week in my life”. He said he welcomed a debate on the remarks about Jinnah.

Significantly, Advani wrote the resignation letter just before leaving Karachi on Monday.

RSS has been demanding that he withdraw his statements in Pakistan specially that Muhammad Ali Jinnah was secular.

Hours after the midnight demand of the Sangh Parivar founthead that he “review” the statements made in Pakistan during his weeklong visit.

Advani called Sanjay Joshi., RSS pointsman in-BJP to his residence this morning and handed over to him a letter announcing his resignation as party President.

The party made this disclosure in a press statement along with which it released a letter written by Advani to Joshi significantly “just before” leaving Karachi yesterday.

“I have decided to request the party to relieve me of Presidency,” the letter said.

(Kashmir Observer, 08 June, 2005)

Taliban Says Afghans Who Worked For Foreign Forces Will Be Safe

Agenceis

Taliban says people who worked for foreign forces in Afghanistan will be safe as long as they show "remorse" and should not leave the war-ravaged country.

"They shall not be in any danger on our part... None should currently desert the country," a statement released by the armed group said on Monday.

"The Islamic Emirate would like to inform all the above people that they should show remorse for their past actions and must not engage in such activities in the future that amount to treason against Islam and the country."

The statement came as the United States and NATO forces are continuing to pull out, after US President Joe Biden set September 11 as the deadline to end Washington's 20-year military involvement in the country.

Thousands of Afghans worked with the international forces in the past 20 years as interpreters, security guards, and helpers in other capacities.

They fear retaliation from the Taliban once the foreign forces have left. Many have applied for special visas to leave the country.

Several countries – including the US, Germany and Britain – have programmes to resettle their local staff. The applications of about 18,000 Afghans seeking a special immigration visa are currently pending at the US embassy in Kabul, according to embassy data.

Thousands of others have already been resettled to the countries they have worked with.

Last week, the Taliban also tried to calm foreign embassies after the Australian mission shut down in Kabul.

The group said it would provide a "safe environment" for these missions to work even after foreign forces leave the country.

According to No One Left Be-

hind, a US non-governmental organisation, about 300 people who worked as local staff for the US military or their family members have been killed since 2016.

In the past, the Taliban said Afghans working with the "invaders" are "traitors" or "slaves". The group called on these Afghans to "show remorse for their past actions" and says they should not engage in such activities in the future.

"We viewed them as our foes when they were directly standing in the ranks of our enemies," the statement added.

"But when they abandon enemy ranks and opt to live as ordinary Afghans in their homeland, they will not face any issues."

It is questionable whether the local staff will trust these statements. Twitter users who support the Taliban also routinely express ideas about how the local staff should be dealt with after the troops have withdrawn.

Many of those are not in line with Monday's statement. They say, among other things, that one can never forgive those who used to work for the foreigners.

Over the past two decades, dozens of Afghan translators have been killed and tortured in targeted assaults by the Taliban.

In recent weeks, many of these Afghans have staged demonstrations in Kabul, demanding that the foreign forces and embassies that they worked with should relocate them outside of Afghanistan.

"They are tracking us," Omid Mahmoodi, an interpreter who worked with US forces between 2018 and 2020, told AFP news agency last week.

"The Taliban will not pardon us. They will kill us and they will behead us."

Another interpreter, Omar, who worked with the US embassy for about 10 years, feared that without leaving the country he would not evade the Taliban for long.



Rohingya on Bangladesh Island Feel Trapped, Fear Monsoons: HRW

Agenceis

Rohingya refugees moved to a Bangladesh island fear they will be exposed to terrible conditions during the upcoming monsoon season, and are struggling with "inadequate" health and education facilities, a Human Rights Watch report said.

About 18,800 refugees have been moved from the Cox's Bazar region – where approximately 850,000 people live in squalid and cramped conditions after fleeing Myanmar – to the low-lying silt island of Bhasan Char in the Bay of Bengal.

A spokesman for the prime minister's office told the AFP news agency that another 80,000 Rohingya would be moved to the island soon.

The Bangladesh government has insisted the relocation is voluntary, and that the island is safe from cyclones and its facilities are far better than the Cox's Bazar camps.

Commodore Abdullah Al Mamun Chowdhury, the director of Bhasan Char project, has assured that the island has enough preparation to tackle the monsoon and tidal surge.

"Bhasan Char has a total of 120 cyclone shelter centres. Each of these centres can accommodate 1,000 people and 200 cattle during a storm. Those are also being constructed in a systematic manner. I don't think any of the refugees living here are in danger," he told Al Jazeera.

Chowdhury also said that all the Rohingya refugees who have come to live in Bhasan Char have done so willingly. "They are not being forced to come here."

But Human Rights Watch said, after interviewing 167 refugees, that they had been moved "without full, informed consent" and prevented from returning to the mainland.

The refugees also spoke of a shortage of health facilities and education for their children, the 58-page report said.

Others feared the monsoon season starting in June could expose them to high winds and flooding on the island.

Human Rights Watch acknowledged that Dhaka had been "generous and compassionate" in sheltering the Rohingya – many of whom fled Myanmar after a brutal military crackdown in 2017 – but that their rights should be protected.

"The Bangladesh government is finding it hard to cope with over a million Rohingya refugees, but forcing people to a remote island just

creates new problems," Bill Frelick, HRW's director of migrant and refugee rights, said in a statement.

"International donors should assist the Rohingya, but also insist that Bangladesh return refugees who want to return to the mainland or if experts say island conditions are too dangerous or unsustainable."

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen hit back at the report, telling AFP that "whatever resources we have, we have tried to provide the best of services to these people".

"Their nations are very developed... if they have so much sympathy, let them take them back to their country," Momen said of the New York-based Human Rights Watch.

"I am sorry we cannot have better facilities because we are not a rich country. We cannot afford to provide more things."

On Friday, a boat filled with dozens of Rohingya landed off the Indonesian coast after a month-long journey – the latest in a wave of arrivals from the cramped camps in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh police have also arrested Rohingya trying to flee Bhasan Char, while thousands protested against conditions on the island last week during a visit by the United Nations refugee agency.

Hamas Releases Audio Allegedly Of Israeli Soldier It Holds

Agenceis

Al Jazeera Arabic aired audio of an unidentified person who purported to be an Israeli soldier being held captive by Hamas's armed branch, the al-Qassam Brigades.

In the audio clip played on Sunday in an episode of the investigative series Tip of the Iceberg, the person said he "wonders if and hopes that Israel still exists. And if so, I wonder whether the leaders of the country think of its captured soldiers and are concerned with their release".

He added: "I die every day anew," saying he hoped to be with his family soon. "Please help," he pleaded.

It was the first time the al-Qassam Brigades disclosed a recording of this kind.

Hamas has said it holds two Israeli soldiers – Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul – who were captured during the 2014 war, and two former soldiers – Hisham al-Sayed and Avera Mengistu – who entered Gaza under unclear conditions, according to reports.

Since their capture, Hamas has not disclosed the fate of the four, but Israel claims two soldiers were killed during the war and Hamas only holds their remains.

Following the release of the programme, some Israeli commentators said the man heard in the recording was Mengistu, an Israeli prisoner of Ethiopian origin. Israeli news Channel 12 also reported that Israeli defence officials were trying to ascertain whether it was in fact Mengistu.

Israeli media reported, however, that Mengistu's mother believed the voice heard in the audio recording was not her son's.

"I can say unequivocally that it's not my son, that's not his voice," Agarnesh Mengistu told Israel's Kan public broadcaster. "I'm waiting for my son, and I hope to see him soon as I have been promised."

Israel's government coordinator for prisoners and missing persons Yaron Blum dismissed the release of the footage as a "cheap manipulation by Hamas".

Blum said Israel was "fully aware" of the condition of the soldiers, refuting claims by Hamas that the two soldiers could be alive.

Gilad Shalit footage Tip of the Iceberg also aired previously undisclosed footage of former Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit from his time in Hamas captivity. He was held by Hamas between 2006 and 2011 after being abducted in a border operation.

The video footage showed Shalit doing daily activities including working out, shaving, tying his shoelaces and playing with a ball.

The report featured members of the al-Qassam Brigades allegedly involved in Shalit's capture on June 5, 2006, and exclusive documents from the minutes of the negotiations on the prisoner exchange process five years later.

"I started firing and throwing grenades at the inside of the tank. We reached the tank, and a terrified soldier came out of the turret and surrendered. We were ordered to take him," said the unnamed Hamas member reportedly involved in Shalit's capture along with six others.

Marwan Issa, deputy commander of the al-Qassam Brigades, told Al Jazeera that after Shalit's capture a number of mediators from the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Egypt contacted them to release Shalit.

Spain Opens Borders To All COVID-19 Vaccinated Travellers

Agenceis

MALAGA, SPAIN: Spain opens its borders to vaccinated travellers from all over the world on Monday, hoping an influx of visitors will revitalise its all-important tourism sector which has been battered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Malaga airport was expecting around 20 different flights on Monday morning alone, from places around Europe such as Berlin, Lille, Frankfurt and London.

Spain will also begin allowing cruise boats into its ports again from Monday.

'Disappointing' British decision Britain's decision to keep Spain on its amber list was, however, "disappointing", the health minister said.

Spain had put several measures in place to lure British tourists to its shores, such as allowing them to enter without having to present a PCR test from late May. The Spanish tourism minister said Friday that she did not understand the British government's refusal to allow certain areas of Spain where Covid-19 cases are low, like the Canary Islands, on to its green list.

Against the backdrop of uncertainty, major travel operator TUI has cancelled all its flights to Spain until June 13. London will not revisit its decision for another three weeks, precious time for those in the hospitality sector hoping to recover some of the losses of 2020, when visitor arrivals dropped by 77 percent compared to the year before.

Heavily dependent on its tourism industry, Spain was one of the Western economies worst hit by the pandemic, seeing a 10.8 percent fall in its GDP in 2020. The Spanish government has set an objective of drawing 45 million travellers by the end of the year.

Hospital Patient In Pakistan Dies After Security Guard Performs Surgery



Agenceis

Lahore: A woman died after an ex-security guard at a Pakistani hospital posed as a doctor and performed surgery on her, police said Monday.

Shameema Begum, aged 80, died on Sunday, two weeks after Muhammad Waheed Butt attempted to treat her back wound at a public hospital in the eastern city of Lahore.

"We can't keep up with what every doctor and what everyone is doing at all times. It's a large hospital," explained an administrative official from Lahore's Mayo Hospital, who did not want to be named.

He said it was unclear what type of surgery the imposter had performed in the operating theatre, where a qualified technician was also present.

Pakistan's public hospitals, where patients are required to pay some money towards treatment, can often be inefficient and chaotic.

Begum's family paid Butt for the operation, and two further

home visits to dress her wound.

But when the bleeding and pain worsened, her family returned her to the hospital, where they discovered what had happened.

Her body is being kept for an autopsy to ascertain whether her death was a result of complications from the botched surgery.

"The guard has been charged and is in police custody," Lahore police spokesman Ali Safdar told AFP.

"Butt had posed as a doctor and made home visits to other patients in the past also."

Mayo Hospital staff said Butt was fired two years ago for trying to extort money from patients.

Earlier in May a man was arrested for posing as a doctor at Lahore General Hospital and extorting money from patients in the surgical ward.

In 2016 it was revealed a woman posing to be a neurosurgeon conducted operations for eight months alongside qualified doctors at Lahore's Services Hospital, the second-largest health facility in Pakistan.

Covid-19 Crisis Makes Electricity Too Costly For Millions In Africa, Asia

Agenceis

KUALA LUMPUR: The economic toll from the Covid-19 pandemic has left more than 25 million people in Africa and Asia unable to afford electricity, threatening a global goal to provide power to everyone by 2030, international agencies warned on Monday.

Two-thirds of those affected were in sub-Saharan Africa, deepening disparities in the region's access to electricity, according to an annual global report tracking progress on sustainable energy.

Millions struggled to pay for essential electricity services to power lighting, fans, televisions and mobile phones as the Covid-19 crisis hit jobs and incomes in 2020, the report said. This threatens progress in the last decade, which saw more than a billion people gaining access to electricity since 2010, making 90% of the world's population connected in 2019.

But the pandemic has now put the UN-backed goal to ensure all have electricity by 2030 "in jeopardy", with

the number of people without power in Africa rising in 2020 after falling for the last six years, the report said.

"Access to electricity is critical to development, especially in the context of mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and supporting human and economic recovery," said Demetrios Papathanasiou, global director for energy and extractives at the World Bank.

About 759 million people still live without electricity, half of them in fragile and conflict-torn countries, he noted.

This could exacerbate broader inequalities, he added, as electrification of health facilities is vital to support vaccine deployment and the pandemic response in developing nations.

"Lack of access to reliable energy affects the quality of public health and will require additional efforts to establish the data, communications, logistics and reliable cold chain to administer vaccines," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Under current and planned policies, an estimated 660 million people would still lack access to power

in 2030, said the report released by the International Energy Agency, International Renewable Energy Agency, U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Bank and World Health Organization (WHO).

About a third of the world's population – or 2.6 billion people – still had no access to clean cooking methods in 2019, despite gains in large parts of Asia, the report showed.

The problem was most acute in sub-Saharan Africa, where about 900 million people, or 85% of the region's population, used smoky cooking fuels like kerosene, coal and wood.

The largely stagnant progress on clean cooking is responsible for millions of deaths each year from breathing in smoke and toxic emissions, with women and children especially vulnerable to household air pollution, the agencies said.

Maria Neira, the WHO's environment, climate change and health director, said scaling up clean energy is key to protecting human health and promoting healthier populations, particularly in rural areas.

NEWSMAKERS

Iranian Muslim Scholar Who Helped Found Hezbollah Dies Of COVID

TEHRAN: Ali Akbar Mohtashami-pour, a Muslim scholar who as Iran's ambassador to Syria helped found the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah and lost his right hand to a book bomb reportedly planted by Israel, died on Monday of the coronavirus. He was 74.

A close ally of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Mohtashami-pour formed alliances with armed resistance groups across the Middle East in the 1970s.

After the Islamic revolution, he helped found the paramilitary Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iran and, as ambassador to Syria, brought the force into the region to help form Hezbollah.

In his later years, he slowly joined the cause of reformists in Iran, hoping to change the Islamic Republic's system of governance from the inside.

He left Iran following the disputed 2009 re-election of then-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"If the whole people become aware, avoid violent measures and continue their civil confrontation with that, they will win," he said at the time, though Ahmadinejad ultimately would remain in office. "No power can stand up to people's will."

Mohtashami-pour died at a hospital in northern Tehran after contracting the virus, the state-run IRNA news agency reported on Monday.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani offered condolences for the passing of Mohtashami-pour.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Mohtashami-pour offered a variety of "revolutionary services" that ultimately led to his injury in the "terrorist act".

Rouhani referred to him as an im-



portant ally of Imam Khomeini and said Mohtashami-pour dedicated his life to "achieving the high goals of the revolution and the Islamic establishment" inside and outside Iran.

Prophet's descendant

The Muslim scholar, who wore a

black turban that identified him in Shia tradition as a direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), had been living in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq, over the last 10 years after the disputed election in Iran.

Hardline judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, now considered the leading candidate in Iran's presidential

election next week, offered condolences to Mohtashami-pour's family.

"The deceased was one of the holy warriors on the way to the liberation of Jerusalem and one of the pioneers in the fight against the usurping Zionist regime," Raisi said, according to IRNA.

Born in Tehran in 1947, Mohtashami-pour met Khomeini as the Muslim scholar was in exile in Najaf after being expelled from Iran by Reza Pahlavi.

In the 1970s, he crisscrossed the Middle East speaking to armed groups, helping form an alliance between the future Islamic Republic of Iran and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as it battled Israel.

Once arrested by Iraq, Mohtashami-pour found his way to Ayatollah Khomeini's residence in exile outside of Paris. They re-

turned, triumphant, to Iran amid the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In 1982, he was deployed to Syria, then under the rule of strongman Hafez al-Assad.

While ostensibly a diplomat, Mohtashami-pour oversaw the IRGC's operations in the region.

Lebanon, then dominated by Syria, which deployed tens of thousands of troops there, found itself invaded by Israel in 1982 as Israel pursued the PLO in its territory.

Iranian support flowed into the communities occupied by Israel – it helped create a new group called a Hezbollah, or "the Party of God".

The US blames Hezbollah for the 1983 bombing of the US embassy in Beirut that killed 63 people, as well as the later bombing of the US Marine barracks in the Lebanese capital that killed 241 US soldiers and

another attack that killed 58 French paratroopers. Hezbollah and Iran have denied being involved.

Bombing

At the time of the assassination attempt on him, Israel's Mossad intelligence agency had received approval from then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to pursue Mohtashami-pour, according to Rise and Kill First, a book on Israeli assassinations by journalist Ronen Bergman.

They chose to send a bomb hidden inside a book described as a "magnificent volume in English about Shia holy places in Iran and Iraq" on Valentine's Day in 1984, Bergman wrote. The bomb exploded when Mohtashami-pour opened the book, tearing away his right hand and two fingers on his left hand.

Officials Directed To Hold Monthly Meetings For Redressing Issues Of Tribals

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Farooq Khan Monday stressed upon all the Deputy Commissioners to at least hold a meeting each month to look into the issues and obstacles hindering affairs and projects concerning the tribal population of their districts.

He emphasised upon them to assign priority to the issues of this population so that they are resolved immediately. He asked them to sensitise all their sectoral officers about the vitality of such matters so that this section of the population also rises to the ladder of holistic progress registered throughout nation simultaneously.

Advisor Khan reviewed the progress made so far in each of the projects and Tribal Sub Schemes (TSS) taken up under the Tribal SubPlan (TSP) with the Special Central Assistance (SCA).

The meeting was attended by Secretary Tribal Affairs, Shahid Iqbal Choudhary; Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Aijaz Asad; Additional PCCF; Directors of Horticulture; Directors of Sheep Husbandry; MD J&K Housing Board; Chief Engineers of PWD, JKPC and CPWD.

All other Deputy Commissioners and Jammu based officers attended the meeting through video conferencing.

Advisor Khan asked all the DCs to first complete all the pending projects and submit utilization certificates against each of such projects. He further directed to frame DPRs for all the projects identified under several central schemes or Capex budget at an earliest so that work on these projects is started in the ensuing work season.

Khan also urged all the officers to take up the issues they

face with the concerned administrative department so that these issues are resolved forthwith. He asked each of the DCs to prioritize these issues so that a substantial change is seen on ground regarding the overall development of this chunk of population.

Khan impressed upon the officers that this population is generally resource less. These pertain to their day to day matters therefore deserves their utmost attention for making their lives easy. He asked them to review the establishment of residential schools, hostels, employment & income generation units coming up for this population in their areas.

He asked them to facilitate this population in every manner. Make seeking of education, scholarship, medical aid and employment affordable for them. He urged the DCs to make the movement of the nomadic population easy and protect their rights guaranteed by the law.

The Secretary Tribal Affairs asked the DCs to submit the DPRs of projects as per the proposed format so that the necessary Administrative Approval and Technical Sanction is accorded to them. He asked them to establish the required seasonal schools in their districts so that the class work starts there. He urged them to look for alternate accommodations where the projects would take time in completion.

The Secretary asked the DCs to identify land for all the new residential schools, hostels, research institutes wherever requisitioned. He asked them to simplify acquisition of scholarships for tribal students as per new GoI guidelines. He directed the executing agencies to pace up work on construction of Tribal Museum and Directorate office.

J&K Receives Nine Oxygen Generation Plants From Germany



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole Monday received fresh consignment of nine new medical oxygen plants to be installed at various health facilities in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Div Com along with other officers received the consignment at Srinagar Airport.

Sharing the details, Div Com said that out of nine oxygen generation plants, five would be installed in Kashmir, while the four plants would be installed at various health facilities in Jammu division.

He said five oxygen plants with generation capacity of 4000 LPM shall be installed at CHC Kupwara, DH Pulwama, Children Hospital Bemina with 1000

capacity LPM each, while as 500 LPM generation capacity shall be installed at CHC Chanapora and Trauma Hospital Bijbehara.

He said the State-of-the-Art plants imported from Europe shall enhance the health infrastructure and enable the medical authorities to tackle any covid related exigencies efficiently.

The Div Com appreciated the role of all concerned including Indian Air Force, Custom Authorities and Civil Aviation for their efforts in ensuring timely arrival of the consignment to J&K.

He said that though the normal installation takes 15 days time, however, the Mechanical Department which has been working tirelessly shall ensure its installation in 10 days time of these five oxygen plants to further augment supply of oxygen in the Valley.



Jammu and Kashmir's capital city Srinagar witnessed sizeable movement of traffic and trade foot-fall as markets opened partially on Monday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Vaccination Panacea Against Covid-19: Adv Khan

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan Monday reviewed arrangements put in place amid the 2nd wave of Covid -19 pandemic in Budgam.

Speaking on the occasion, Advisor Baseer Khan said the aim and objective of today's visit is to have an interaction with all stakeholders who are critical in fighting war against COVID-19 pandemic. He said, support and Cooperation from the public proved pivotal in achieving success and containing 1st wave of Covid-19 and same alertness and dedication need to be shown in dealing with 2nd wave of Covid-19. He said a proactive and aggressive approach has been initiated by the administration in tandem with the civil society and other social organisations including religious leaders which has brought down the incidence of positive cases substantially.

He also emphasised on relentlessly pursuing the objective in order to give a final blow to this pandemic.

Commenting upon the availability of resources, the Advisor said there is no dearth of resources, whether it is oxygen, medical or any other resource. With the active intervention of the Prime Minister and Lieutenant Governor, the UT has received overnight 9 high quality oxygen plants from Frankfurt Germany and now in addition to that 9 more plants have been received.

He said Covid care centers set up at Panchayat level across U.T of J&K is a bold and effective decision to enhance bedding capacities in rural areas which shall play a significant role in stopping spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

The Advisor also said that COVID-19 in J&K has been systematically dealt with; infrastructure wherever necessary has been raised and resources have been mobilized in unprecedented manner. The Advisor further said that the public needs to be made aware about the advantages of tele-consultations and tele-medicine as the initiative is showing enormous results as a large section of society as well as patients are getting benefited through this initiative.

The Advisor directed District Administration to remain in state of alert to meet any challenges amid Covid-19. The Advisor further emphasized upon aggressive testing and reiterated that the vaccination process is a panacea and permanent solution to curb the Covid-19 pandemic. He urged people to enthusiastically go for vaccination.

The Advisor urged upon the Religious heads, Civil society to use their influence and approach in spreading the message and make people aware about the importance of adhering to SOPs like wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, avoiding unnecessary venturing out and gatherings. The Advisor on the occasion hailed cooperation and

support of the general public, particularly during the current wave as they seem to follow all instructions in letter and spirit.

While suggesting the measures taken to improve the electricity in the district Budgam, the Advisor divulged that Rs 21 Crore have been allotted to District Budgam under Barbed wire Scheme to improve electricity supply in District.

The Advisor reiterated that the way people presently are following all instructions and are implementing guidelines strictly, in coming days, there will be enormous change in ground situation, eventually defeating the pandemic successfully. The Advisor on the occasion appreciated and hailed the sincere efforts and resilience shown by all covid-19 warriors. He said everybody is on the forefront while facing the unprecedented challenges.

During the program DDC chairman Budgam Nazir Ahmad Khan raised the issue of non-functioning of some already existing PHCs, besides nonpayment of incentives to doctors and paramedics who are on internship presently engaged with Covid-19 care duties. The Advisor assured the DDC Chairman that the matter shall be taken up with the Lieutenant Governor at an earliest. The Advisor said despite lockdown measures, wage employment will continue as well as construction work, subject to all SOPs and guidelines strictly adhered.

Two Female 'Covid Warriors' Felicitated

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Director Health Services Kashmir, Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather Monday felicitated two Covid warriors, both females, for their extraordinary and dedicated work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A spokesperson of Director Health Services Kashmir, said two Covid warriors namely Babli Rani, who is a government teacher and Tabasum Ara, a female multiple purpose worker (FMPHW).

The spokesman said Babli Rani, who is working as a government teacher, was deputed for Covid duty last year. Originally hailing from Jammu, she is posted at Wakura area of central Kashmir's Gander-

ernor J&K, Manoj Sinha himself.

As per the spokesman, news about her performance was aired on national as well as local media.

Similarly, Tabasum Ara is working as FMPHW in district hospital Pulwama. She has been doing vaccination work and has been a part of the surveillance team. She has done more than 7000 vaccinations and has been going to far off places doing the surveillance work.

"She did not take even a single break. Her work has been appreciated by all including the top government officials," the spokesman said. "She is an inspiration for health care workers."



bal district.

Since she was deputed for Covid duty she has performed more than 10000 corona tests in the last one year. She works with the sampling team of Block Medical Officer (BMO) Wakura.

Since the Covid pandemic, she continuously stays here. Her work has been appreciated by the Lieutenant Gov-

Both the Covid warriors were hailed and appreciated by Director Health Services Kashmir, Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather in his office chamber at Bemina Srinagar.

The director appreciated BMO Wakura, Dr Javid Ahmed Zargar and BMO Pulwama, Dr Irfana Gani and congratulated them for their excellent and dedicated work.

'Notorious' Drug Peddler Arrested In Budgam

Observer News Service

Budgam: Jammu and Kashmir Police Monday said that it arrested a notorious drug peddler in central Kashmir's Budgam district.

A police spokesperson said that officers of Police Station Khag at a checkpoint established at Dadoora Crossing Khag intercepted Shabir Ahmad Wani son of Mohammad Abdullah Wani, a

resident of Dalwash Khag.

"During checking, officers were able to recover 300 grams of Charas from his possession. He has been arrested and shifted to a police station where he remains in custody."

Accordingly, he said, a case FIR Number 41/2021 under relevant sections of law stands registered at Police Station Khag and investigation has been initiated.

Teenager Drowns In Budgam

Observer News Service

Budgam: An 18-year-old boy is feared dead after he drowned while taking bath in Nilnag Lake in Chadoora area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district on Monday afternoon.

Officials said that the boy

identified as Faizan Ahmad Parray son of Mohammad Ashraf Parray, a resident of Kathair-Gund area of Chadoora drowned when he was taking bath.

They said that after receiving the information a rescue operation was launched to trace the boy.

Motorcyclist Dead, Pillion Rider Injured In Kulgam

Observer News Service

Kulgam: A motorcyclist died while as a pillion rider was injured in a road accident near Aharbal area of Damhal Hanjipora in South Kashmir's Kulgam district Monday afternoon.

A police official said that the

deceased was identified as Suhaib Ahmad Magray son of late Javid Ahmad Magray and pillion rider Sahil Iqbal Magray son of Mohammad Iqbal Magray of, a resident of Wato.

"Both the injured were rushed to a nearby healthcare facility, where Suhaib Magray succumbed to his injuries," he said.

Totally Shot In Arm: Tale Of Weyan, First 100 Percent Vaccinated Village

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Village Weyan in Bandipora district of Jammu & Kashmir has become the first village of the country, where entire populations above 18 years have been vaccinated. This national record is attributed to 'J&K Model' under which the administration decided to reach out to the people, instead of people coming to the vaccination centre, a government statement said on Monday.

Dr. Bashir Ahmed Khan, Chief Medical Officer, Bandipora said due to difficult terrain the vaccinators had to walk around 18 KMs on foot to reach this village.

"It's a village of Nomads having no access to the internet so the health officials decided to take a difficult journey in this north Kashmir village and save precious lives. There is no route and it is a very dangerous trek but we didn't

rest until the last eligible person got the vaccine dose," Dr. Bashir Ahmed Khan, Chief Medical Officer, Bandipora said further adding that the village is at a distance of 28 KMs from Bandipora town and initial 10 KMS by journey is by road up to a place called Athwatoo, then 18 KMs by foot located on the hills.

"Entire populations above 18 years were vaccinated, with a total 362 beneficiaries. It is pertinent to mention here that the people of the village go to the upper reaches along with cattle during summer so it was important to reach out to them before they move out," Dr. Bashir Further observed.

"J&K Model" has adopted a 10-point strategy to vaccinate the entire eligible population at an accelerated pace. Despite initial vaccine hesitancy, the current achievement is more than 70% for those above 45 years of age, which is just double of the national average.

The first strategy is booth-level man-



agement involving preparation of the eligible population list followed by "Vaccine on Wheels" - reaching out to people in far-flung areas.

State Immunization Officer Dr Shahid Hussain said the maximum number of session sites in a day with well-coordinated vaccination efforts is also paying

the dividend.

"We have also worked out prior micro planning and execution at each session site and involved Police and Media in crowd management and awareness. We have constituted in every district a dedicated team of health care workers, who are ready to work even during holidays and weekends. Coordination between various departments, like Utilization of services of teachers and Booth Level Officers as verifiers and their training by Directorate of Health and Family Welfare as another key feature of J&K model," Dr Shahid Hussain said.

Dr. Shahid observed that despite having difficult terrain (Shopian, Ganderbal) and poor mobile connectivity, the teams were relentless in vaccinating far reaching corners of the district and deploying influencers such as religious leaders, local elders to counter vaccine hesitancy among people.

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K O V I E W

Focus on vaccination

There is fresh optimism in air on Covid-19 front following a marked decline in infections in India over the last week. On Monday, India recorded 1.06 cases, a drop of 12c percent from Sunday. Similarly, the positivity rate, which is the number of positive cases identified per 100, has dropped to 6.33 percent. During March and April the positivity rate had climbed to over 10 percent.

As a result, several states across the country are taking cautious steps towards reopening the economy. This is important as the beleaguered Indian economy will be further set back by a prolonged lockdown. Over the past few years, Indian economy has been performing well below even some sub-saharan countries. The advent of the pandemic last year and the consequent lockdown dealt a body blow to what was then a nascent recovery.

The decline in infections is a positive development. There is hope now that the daily caseload will progressively reduce like last year. But the consequent improvement in the situation would mean little if there is no corresponding expansion in the vaccination. More than 23 crore vaccine doses have so far been administered in India under the mega inoculation plan. However, many states continue to face shortage of the two vaccines currently being used.

Going forward, the government also needs to invest in a world class healthcare infrastructure to increase the capacity of the hospitals and the medical personnel to deal with the pandemic. There is also the need to continue to increase testing. And this has to be done alongside the measures to reopen the economy. Considering the terrible state of the economy, the state governments across India can hardly afford to extend the lockdown. The trick is to upgrade healthcare, expedite vaccination, enforce strict adherence to SOPs in public and run an advertisement blitz to create more awareness about the contagion.

In J&K, the situation on the vaccination front is not encouraging. The administration has failed to step up the drive. More so, at a time when due to the virulence of the second wave, people are coming forward to get jabs. The vaccine hesitancy that had earlier held back the inoculation drive has now given way to a frantic race to get vaccinated. And understandably so. The inoculation is now the only credible defence against the contagion as highlighted by prime minister Narendra Modi in his speech on Monday. And sooner the government vaccinates people against the infection, earlier we could return to a normal life. The poor sections of the society who have been most impacted by the pandemic need the pandemic to ease to return to their jobs.

O T H E R O P I N O N

Speed Over Optics

The Centre's 'liberalised' policy of allowing vaccine companies to strike deals with States and private hospitals has borne limited fruit. While the age group of 18-44 years accounts for the bulk of vaccines being administered, attempts by States to negotiate deals with international vaccine companies have come to naught. In spite of opening vaccination for all adults, there were fewer doses administered in May — around six crore — as opposed to 7.7 crore doses administered in April. The Health Ministry has said that close to 8 crore doses were available in May (counting wastage and stocks with States) and that 12 crore will be available in June for the Centre, States and private hospitals. Over 22 crore doses have been administered so far. There is large variability within and among States regarding vaccination. It is in this context that State Chief Ministers, cutting across party divisions, are now demanding that the Centre be the sole buyer of vaccines. The Supreme Court too has expressed its dissatisfaction over the existing system that puts States in competition with each other and the Centre, almost like another competitor, for vaccine supplies. The Centre has tried to project that it was the clamour from States that forced it to abstain from being the sole purchaser of vaccines, but it was the Centre's miscalculation that there would not be frantic public demand this calendar year and that the output from the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech would be sufficient for India.

International arrangements such as COVAX were premised on India being a large supplier to Africa and several countries around the world with no vaccine development facilities. Now that the Government has prevented the Serum Institute of India from honouring its supply commitments, it is unclear if international suppliers would trust India's demand for large supply. The unpredictability in policy also weakens India's ambit of negotiations now that it seems desperate to increase short-term vaccine supply. Moreover, given that vaccines are the most sought-after goods, it is unlikely India would be prioritised so late in the day. There is optimism of increased and significant supply from Bharat Biotech and SII by August. At this stage, it appears that the Centre has few options other than waiting for its domestic suppliers to hike production. Increased supply from abroad is unlikely in the near future, even if resources for procurement are not a constraint. It must however heed the States' core demand that they be given a greater say in deciding how best to distribute the vaccine. The Centre can be a monitor of and an adviser to the process; and if it becomes the sole buyer, it can spell out a transparent distribution policy. But it ought to prioritise speedy administration over optics.

The Hindu

G-7 Summit: Reality and Expectations

The forthcoming G-7 summit may set the pitch for the world's new technological, developmental and economic growth and leadership

Asad Mirza

“There is a lot of optimism ahead of the gathering in Cornwall. US and UK government sources have briefed that the G7 will demonstrate that “the West ain't over just yet”. The optics are bound to be promising. For the US it'll give a chance to prove that “America is back”, while for the UK it'll help to give a boost to its ‘Global Britain’ strategy



The upcoming G7 Summit in Cornwall, UK from 11 to 13 of this month is perhaps the first international event, in the backdrop of the continuing Covid pandemic, when the leaders from the world's wealthiest countries -the US, Japan, Germany, UK, France, Italy and Canada, will be meeting with leaders from India, Australia, S. Africa and S. Korea face to face for the first time in the last one-and-a-half year.

The leaders from the most advanced nations of the G7 meet regularly to try to determine the course the world will follow, with their own interests taking a backseat.

Expectations from the Summit

There is a lot of optimism ahead of the gathering in Cornwall. US and UK government sources have briefed that the G7 will demonstrate that “the West ain't over just yet”. The optics are bound to be promising. For the US it'll give a chance to prove that “America is back”, while for the UK it'll help to give a boost to its ‘Global Britain’ strategy.

On the agenda are the autocratic challenge from Russia and China, climate change, the global vaccine rollout and trade. In addition Myanmar, Indian democracy and its minorities, instability in Sahel region, Israel-Palestinian conflict and change of guard in Israel are also expected to occupy the agenda.

A move, spearheaded by Biden, to set a minimum global corporate tax rate to help states reclaim resources lost to tax havens seems promising. Also the British proposal to transform the G7 into a “D10” of democracies has been achieved, the participation of guests from India, Australia, South Korea and South Africa will reinforce a sense that the West is open to alliance-building again.

Meanwhile, the G7 finance ministers reached a “historic” deal on taxing multinational companies, last week in London. They agreed to counter tax avoidance through measures to make companies pay in the countries where they do business., besides ratifying a global minimum corporate tax rate to counter the possibility of countries undercutting each other to attract investments.

UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak described these as “seismic tax reforms” and said that it will help create a fairer tax system fit for the 21st century.

Preparations for the Summit

The foreign ministers from D-10 met face-to-face for the first time in two years in May earlier, following a coronavirus-extended pause, to prepare for the summit and in the communiqué issued after the meeting listed 82 points which will try to grab the attention of G7 or D10 leaders. In addition the issues discussed were NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan, Iran, China and the threat posed by Russia.

Meanwhile, Britain's Foreign Office has said a key part of the June summit will be plans to boost girls' education and women's employment after the Covid pandemic would be a key topic.

G7 nations are expected to sign up to new global targets that aim to get 40 million more girls into school in low and lower-middle-income countries by 2026. The aims also include getting 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10. The countries are setting up a \$15-billion fund, to be administered by developing countries over the next two years.

However, the trade unionists and the wider environment movement in the UK have sounded the bugle against G7's inability to take any concerted action on climate change. In a statement they asserted that the vaccine apartheid response to the Covid threat might be replicated in their approach to the climate crisis.

They further assert that if the world's wealthiest countries continue to move too slowly to curb their own carbon emissions, continue to invest in and boost fossil fuel energy and production, fail to make a just transition at home while denying the global South the resources it needs to deal with climate impacts, their pretensions to “global leadership” will fail the test.

A \$100 billion a year transfer to the developing world to make transition possible was pledged at Copenhagen and built into the Paris Agreement to be met by 2020. But it has not been done.

They further assert that this commitment is a tiny fraction of the \$3.8 trillion that global banks have invested in fossil fuels since the Paris Agreement, and less than a tenth of the combined G7 military budget of \$1,043bn last year.

Post-summit Scenario

British PM Boris Johnson plans to use the G7 Summit to increase cooperation between the world's democratic and technologically advanced nations. Between them, the 10 leaders represent more than 60% of the people living in democracies around the world.

The UK will also host several meetings throughout the year between government ministers from the G7, both virtually and in different locations across Britain. These meetings will cover economic, environmental, health, trade, technology, development and foreign policy issues.

Observers are of the view that post-summit the western world may be transformed into one where it may lose its supremacy and China may pull ahead of the West technologically and economically, secondly the West could reassert itself by investing in green industries to renew its economies and societies in the backdrop of the lessons learnt from the Covid pandemic and thus China might be neutralised, thirdly a more Eurasian Europe may emerge, due to the eclipse of both the US and UK and it'll be drawn towards Asia's growing economic influence.

For India, the summit offers a chance to further reinforce its relationship with the UK by signing a trade treaty and for Mr Modi to establish a rapport with Mr Biden to ensure a fruitful bilateral relationship, and to some extent this seems possible.

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

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Women and Pandemic

This refers to the news story “Plague in Pandemic: Kashmir Witnessing Surge in Women Abuse” published in Kashmir Observer online on 03 June 2021. The news story brings forth the concern regarding the growing incidents of sexual offences-rape and molestation-against women in Kashmir. Even though the increasing number of cases is a cause of concern, there seems no major change in the trend of the reported number of cases for both rapes as well molestation. The increase in the number of the registered cases during the pandemic, therefore, cannot be called “significant” or “startling”. They are just a

part of the increasing trend of sexual crimes against women in Kashmir.

The women rights activist quoted in the story has blamed the rise in the number of cases on the “frustration” that has been built over the last two-three years upon the people of Kashmir. People in Kashmir have indeed been virtually locked down ever since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. However, is that the reason for the highest number of reported cases in almost 11 years mentioned in the story. If the numbers from 2020 are taken into consideration in isolation, then yes, one might infer that lockdown has contributed to the increase but when

viewed along with data available for the previous 10 years, it might appear just another year with its own share of the increase. In fact, the number of reported rapes for the year 2020 and 2013 are very close.

The number of reported and all the unreported cases of sexual crimes against women in Kashmir is gut-wrenching. However given the available data for the 11 years, it would be unwise to blame the pandemic for the increase. That would be exonerating our society and its patriarchy of all their crimes against women in un-pandemic times.

There has indeed been what the United Nations termed a “shadow pandemic”- an abrupt increase in

physical and sexual violence against women during pandemic and lockdown. However this violence on women is mostly inflicted by their intimate partners inside their homes and the pandemic/lockdown leaves them without any recourse, essentially leaving them at the mercy of their abuser. Since the laws in Jammu and Kashmir do not acknowledge marital rape and other marital sexual abuses as crime, the number of reported cases of rapes and molestation as mentioned in the news story must not include the “shadow pandemic” cases.

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On Education: A One -off Event or an Open -Ended Journey?

Wajahat Qazi

A positive return on skill development then warrants a philosophical approach and premise that can only be attained through vigorous ,open ended education, not merely formally but on a self inspired basis. But, there is a dark side here: highly educated individuals can get alienated from their respective societies

The onset and massification of education are a somewhat recent phenomenon. Till only a few decades ago or even more , education was the preserve of the elite. As the state, in generic and general terms, enhanced its remit, education, for most of these entities, became a necessity. The vast territories of states needed to be governed; for this the techne was married with logos and a typical bureaucrat/ bureaucracy created. This is not the only and sole reason for the spread of education but a major one. All in all an educated mind is one that is able to hold more than one view(s), be able to think, can be relatively more open and tolerant. Education also, from a utilitarian perspective, opens up career paths and options to people. Skill development, From an economics perspective, an educated stock of people (human capital) also leads to economic development if not economic growth.

But is education a linear one- off event or an open- ended journey?

Ideally it starts with an event- as in enrolling at school or university and should be a never ending process, leading to a sophisticated , subtle and fine society. But, in practice. In the main, this is not so. Mostly, education is seen and viewed in utilitarian terms- that is, it should lead to a profession, skill, or , in prosaic terms, a career. While the importance of a utilitarian aspect of education cannot be denied, but, in the final analysis, this approach and focus is a dull and narrow one. It can lead to a society where techne stands divorced from logos(knowledge) creating a plethora or an army of merely skilled professionals.

In the nature of a functional need for and by society and the economy, this marketization of education has almost become an imperative. But this approach privileges skill. A veritable skill premium exists in global markets for skilled professionals. However , in terms of the input, education is a requirement for skill development but being skilled does not necessarily mean being educated. To rattle off a few attributes of being educated, these are a cultivated and refined mind, sophistication in outlook and perspective, an empathetic, sensible and sensitive world view, among other things. These are attributes that are not correlated with skill(s). Having said this, there is a silver lining in the marketization of education: given the demands of the knowledge economy and the ongoing , putative IVth Industrial Revolution , life long skill development is now an exigent need. A degree, the ultimate symbol , in conventional terms, now has a shelf life. If employment is the yardstick for gauging the relevance of a degree, it now no longer suffices for long term employment. The corollary here is that an individual has to consistently and constantly upgrade himself or herself , an allied benefit is



continuous education. This is because, nowadays, a job or a profession requires 'soft' skills that can perhaps only be acquired through education.

There is a flip side to skill development as well. It lies in fetishizing skill at the expense of philosophy behind. Because the world is headed to a condition where technology assumes primacy, if there is no philosophical underpinning of either education and skill development, then a manic focus on either can lead to unthinking , uncritical , members of society , where means become the ends. An insalubrious outcome, this can only have negative social and even political outcomes that reduce social welfare.

A positive return on skill development then warrants a philosophical approach and premise that can only be attained through vigorous ,open ended education, not merely formally but on a self inspired basis. But, there is a dark side here: highly educated individuals can get alienated from their respective societies. This estrangement can be mutual: society can also look askance at the highly educated. If this alienation deepens, then these individuals can either become reclusive or embittered.

What is the way out? Perhaps only through sharing the virtues of education is the answer. An endeavour that requires patience , sharing of education and imparting it to the less privileged can not only create meaning for the one transmitting education but also lead to social returns that lead to wider and broader social welfare. It does not require a person to be a saint. To the contrary, it has utility in the sense that not only the pool of knowledge gets widened but the educated person staves off ennui and alienation by doing so.

Education, or more accurately, good education, not only has practical benefits but it is a virtue, something that is amplified by the nature and drift of the contemporary world. So that this world has equipoise, balance and a vigorous philosophical underpinning over its direction, it is exigent that education becomes broad based. The onus for this lies on the highly educated!

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Artificial superintelligence beyond our control poses great risk

Daron Acemoglu

The reign of the dinosaurs was brought to an end 65 million years ago by an asteroid that crashed into what is now the town of Chicxulub in Mexico. Although this lump of rock and metal was not particularly large — probably about 10 kilometres across — it struck the Earth at more than 60,000 kilometres per hour, generating an explosion billions of times greater than that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, and killing all life within 1,000 kilometres.

If a similar asteroid or comet were to crash into Earth today, it would cause another mass-extinction event, wiping out most species and human civilisation as we know it. This distant possibility is an example of a natural existential risk: an event not caused by humans that leads to the extinction or near-extinction of our species.

But there are also anthropogenic — human-created — existential risks. As the University of Oxford philosopher Toby Ord argues in his thought-provoking new book, *The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity*, it is these risks that should most concern us now and in the coming century.

Risk and Reward

Ord recognises that science and technology are humankind's most potent tools for solving problems and achieving prosperity. But he reminds us that there are always dangers associated with such power, particularly when it is placed in the wrong hands or wielded without concern for long-term and unintended consequences.

More to the point, Ord argues that anthropogenic existential risk has reached an alarmingly high level, because we have developed tools capable of destroying humanity without the accompanying wisdom needed to recognise the danger we are in. He notes that the eminent twentieth-century astronomer Carl Sagan issued a similar warning in his 1994 book, *Pale Blue Dot*, writing:

"Many of the dangers we face indeed arise from science and technology — but, more fundamentally, because we have become powerful without becoming commensurately wise. The world-altering powers that technology has delivered into our heads now require a degree of consideration and foresight that has never before been asked of us."

For Ord, this gap between power and wisdom could decide humanity's future. On one hand, we could disappear entire-

ly or suffer a collapse that wipes out most of the hallmarks of civilisation (from antibiotics to art and writing). But, on the other hand, Ord sees in humankind the potential for long-term flourishing on a cosmic scale: with both wisdom and technological ingenuity, humans could well outlive this planet and launch new civilisations across space.

This far-reaching vision of flourishing weighs heavily in Ord's reckoning, because he recognises that there may not be any other intelligent life forms in the universe. If we are indeed alone, a mass-extinction event that wiped out everyone on this planet would also eliminate all of the potential for intelligent, purposeful existence everywhere.

Based on this reasoning, Ord arrives at what mathematicians and economists would call a "lexicographic preference ordering". In a situation where we care about multiple criteria, a lexicographic order assigns overwhelming importance to one criterion in order to provide clarity when two options are being compared. For example, in a lexicographic order between food and shelter, one would always prefer whichever option offers more food, regardless of how much more shelter the other option offers.

Ord's philosophical stance is equivalent to a lexicographic order because it implies that we should minimise existential risk, whatever the costs. A future in which existential risk has been minimised trumps any future in which it has not been minimised, regardless of any other considerations. After establishing this basic hierarchy, Ord then proceeds with an expert overview of different types of anthropogenic existential risk, concluding that the greatest threat comes from an artificial superintelligence that has evolved beyond our control.

When progress isn't progress

One can date science-driven existential risk at least to the controlled nuclear chain reactions that enabled atomic weapons. Though we have established some institutions, regulatory tools, norms, and other internalisation mecha-

nisms to ensure that we do not misuse science, nobody would argue that these are sufficient.

Ord suggests that today's inadequate institutional framework may be a temporary phenomenon that could be addressed in due time, so long as we survive the next century or so. "For we stand at a crucial moment in the history of our species," he writes. "Fuelled by technological progress, our power has grown so great that for the first time in humanity's long history, we have the capacity to destroy ourselves..." And, in fact, in writing his book, Ord "aspires to start closing the gap between our wisdom and power, allowing humanity a clear view of what is at stake, so that we will make the choices necessary to safeguard our future".

However, I see no evidence that this is really feasible. Nor is there any sign that our society and leaders have shown any wisdom when it comes to reining in the destructive power of technology.

One can identify many examples contradicting the idea that we are becoming more "civilised", let alone better at controlling anthropogenic risks or cultivating collective wisdom. If anything, controlling our bad behaviour and adapting to the constant changes wrought by scientific discovery and technological innovation will remain a constant struggle.

This raises problems for the rest of Ord's argument. Why should trying to eliminate future existential risks be given a superordinate priority over all other efforts to ameliorate the ills and suffering that our current choices are generating now and in the near term?

For the sake of argument, suppose we could significantly reduce the probability of our own extinction by enslaving the majority of humankind for the next several centuries. Under Ord's lexicographic ordering, we would have to choose this option, because it minimises existential risk while still preserving humanity's potential to flourish fully at some point in the distant future.

Not everybody will be convinced by this argument. Count me among

the unpersuaded.

The age of demonic machines?

To clarify the choice further, consider the main existential risk that Ord focuses on: the potential misuse of artificial intelligence. Ord estimates that there is a one in 10 chance that humanity will fall prey to an evil superintelligence (which he calls, euphemistically, "unaligned AI") in the next 100 years. By contrast, his estimated existential risk to humanity from climate change is one in 1,000, and one in a million in the case of collisions with asteroids or comets.

Even if many other experts would not assign quite so high a probability to the threat of superintelligence, Ord is not alone in worrying about the long-term implications of AI research. In fact, such concerns have become commonplace among many technology luminaries, from Stuart Russell of the University of California, Berkeley, to Microsoft founder Bill Gates and Tesla founder Elon Musk.

These figures all believe that, notwithstanding the existential risks, AI will bring many net benefits. But while Ord is well enough informed about these debates to know that even this last proposition is actually rather shaky, his lexicographic stance leads him to ignore most of the non-existential risks associated with AI.

But if one accepts that our scope of attention is finite, this weighing of priorities is problematic. My own assessment is that the likelihood of superintelligence emerging anytime soon is low, and that the risk of an evil superintelligence destroying our civilisation is lower still. As such, I would prefer that the public debate focus much more on the problems that AI is already creating for humanity, rather than on intriguing but improbable tail risks.

Back to now

As I have argued here and elsewhere, the current trajectory of AI design and deployment is leading us astray, causing a wide range of immediate (albeit

prosaic) problems. Far from being inevitable or reflecting some inherent logic of the technology, these problems reflect choices being made (and imposed on us) by large tech companies — and specifically by a small group of executives, scientists, and technologists within these companies (or within their orbit).

One of the most visible problems that AI is causing is incessant automation, which is displacing workers, boosting inequality, and raising the spectre of future joblessness for large swathes of the labour force. Worse, the obsession with automation has come at the expense of productivity growth, because it has led executives and scientists to overlook more fruitful, human-complementing uses of innovative technology.

AI is also being designed and used in other problematic ways, none of which inspire hope for humanity's moral progress. Democratic politics has been defiled not just by an explosion of algorithmically amplified misinformation, but also by new AI technologies that have empowered governments and companies to monitor and manipulate the behaviours of billions of people.

This development represents a double whammy. Democratic politics is the primary means by which a society can rein in misbehaviour by political and economic elites, yet it is precisely this process that is being undermined. If we cannot hold elites accountable for the damage they are causing because democracy itself has been impaired, how can we possibly escape our current predicament?

We are not helpless. The costs that AI is inflicting can be addressed, because, unlike the existential risks that Ord focuses on, they are tangible and easy to recognise. But first, we must call more attention to the problem in order to generate pressure on governments and companies to acknowledge the risks that are materialising now. Besides, a tech sector that is bent on automation and anti-democratic manipulation and surveillance is hardly a good foundation upon which to address longer-term risks.

Though we should not dismiss more speculative risks to humanity out of hand, we cannot afford to ignore the threats that are right in front of us. We may reach a precipice at some point, but we are already sliding down a slippery slope.

Project Syndicate

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Fuel Price Rise For 2nd Straight Day Takes It To New Highs



Agenceis

Fuel price rise in the country continued on Monday with oil marketing companies (OMCs) increasing the pump rate of both petrol and diesel for the second consecutive day.

Accordingly, the retail prices of petrol and diesel increased by 28 paise and 27 paise per litre to Rs 95.31 and Rs 86.22 per litre respectively in Delhi on Monday.

In the city of Mumbai, where petrol prices crossed Rs 100 mark for the first time ever on May 29, the fuel price reached new high of Rs 101.53 per litre on Monday. Diesel price also increased in the city to reach Rs 93.57 a litre, the highest among metros.

Across the country as well petrol and diesel prices increased between 24-28 paise per litre on Monday but its retail prices varied depending on the level of local taxes in different states.

Mumbai is not the only city to have unique distinction of petrol breaching the Rs 100 per litre mark. Thane reached the mark few days back while few other cities in Rajasthan (including Jaipur) Madhya Pradesh and

Maharashtra, having the highest VAT levels on auto fuels in the country, have already been selling normal petrol for over Rs 100 a litre for past several days.

Ganganagar in Rajasthan has the highest level of petrol prices at Rs 106.29 a litre while diesel price there as well is closing on the century mark remaining at Rs 99.23 a litre. While Rajasthan in general has high retail prices of fuels due to high VAT rates, Sri Ganganagar, a small city in the state near the India-Pakistan border, has the most expensive auto fuel in the country due to higher freight it had pay to get fuel at stations.

Premium petrol price has already crossed the Rs 100 per litre mark in several parts of the country through increase in the retail rates in the month of January and February.

With Monday's price hike, fuel prices have now increased on 20 days and remained unchanged on 18 days since May 1. The 20 increases have taken up petrol prices by Rs 4.91 per litre in Delhi. Similarly, diesel has increased by Rs 5.50 per litre in the national capital.

Trade Bodies Meet DC Srinagar, Offer Suggestions On Opening Of Markets



KO NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR:- Members of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) led by Nasir Hamid Khan, former Senior Vice President Chairman General Trade Committee, KCC&I Monday participated in the meeting regarding opening of shops and business establishments convened by the Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar Mohammad Aijaz Asad.

All major trade bodies and associations also participated.

"Despite the endeavour of the Government towards bringing the economy on track, the grim situation caused by the second wave of Covid had frustrated all such efforts (sic)," said Nasir.

He stated that in April when the second wave had started, the LG had "expressed the intention of the Government to continue to manage both tourism and the Covid situation". "But the serious situation which developed after that had understandably forced the abandonment of any such plans. The worsening situation had inflicted further damages to the business community and the lockdown-induced stress was not only financial but physical and mental as well," he said.

The suggestions put forth regarding the opening of markets were:

1). Widening of the essential activities category by including Automobile Service Centres, Books and Stationery Shops, Departmental Stores and Supermarkets, Bak-

eries, Restaurants sector in it and permitting those dealing in perishables to be open round the clock.

2). Situation permitting so, allowing opening of shops on alternate days.

3). With shopping areas having minimal customer movement like the Polo View Market and other similar zones dependent on tourism, there should be permission to open for five days in a week till the time the tourist inflow increases at which time the administration may take a call keeping in view the Covid pandemic management.

4). Holding of special vaccination camps in the market areas for persons connected with the shops and business establishments.

Fayaz Ahmad Punjabi, President (JCCCC) stated that the members of the business community, unlike salaried and other sections of our society, were facing a three dimensional threat which apart from saving themselves from Covid also included providing sustenance to their families in the face of zero business activities and facing harassment by the Banks and financial institutions who appeared to be oblivious to the pitiable condition of the business community and were even as on today deducting installments from the accounts of guarantors' of borrowers.

He also appealed to the Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar for early operationalisation of the parking area constructed by the adminis-

tration as vehicles were even today being towed away by the traffic authorities.

All the participating associations presented their views and suggestions for the unlocking mechanism to be adopted by the administration.

DC Srinagar while appreciating the cooperation shown by the business community in fighting the Covid pandemic stated that the Government was fully aware about the prevailing conditions and sufferings of the business community.

He stated that while the COVID positivity rate in Delhi and Jammu had reduced to manageable percentages, the position in Srinagar although steadily improving was still hovering around a dangerous mark which could go either way and waste all the efforts put in for controlling it.

He thanked the members and leaders of the business community for their patience and cooperation and assured them that the Government was as eager as them to resume normal business activities.

He said that the suggestions given by the participants would be considered and a new plan for the current week announced and shared by all of them soon. Regarding the banking issue, the DC stated that he would be taking up the issue with the concerned bank authorities and invited the participants for a joint meeting in the coming days to discuss the alleged harassment by financial institutions.

France Fines Google 220 Million Euros Over Online Ad Dominance

Agenceis

PARIS, France: France's competition regulator on Monday fined Google 220 million euros (\$267 million) after finding it had abused its dominant market position for placing online ads, the latest move by European authorities to take tougher stances against US tech giants.

The penalty is part of a settlement reached after three media groups -- News Corp, French daily Le Figaro and Belgium's Groupe Rossel -- accused Google of effectively having a monopoly over online ad sales.

The Autorite de la Concurrence determined that Google gave preferential treatment to its own ad auction service AdX and Doubleclick Ad Exchange plat-

form, a real-time auction platform.

Clients trying to place ads on internet sites or mobile apps using rival platforms often found they were paying more than those using both of Google's ser-

vices, since regrouped under the Google Ad Manager brand.

The regulator said Google did not contest its findings and has committed to operational changes including improved interoperability with third-party ad placement providers.

"It is the first ruling in the world to scrutinise the complex algorithmic processes for the auctions that determine online 'display' advertising," the authority's president Isabelle de Silva said in a statement.



Chinese Exports Jump As Pandemic Wanes In US, Other Markets

Agenceis

China has reported its exports and imports surged in May on growing demand as the pandemic was waning in the US and other key markets, though the pace of growth is leveling off. Customs data released Monday showed exports rose 28 per cent from a year earlier and imports soared 51 per cent--at the fastest annual pace in over a decade. Total exports climbed 40 per cent in the first five months of the year from a year earlier. They were up 29 per cent from the same period in 2019.

China has led the global recovery from the pandemic, which is still raging in many parts of the globe but receding in some places, mostly where vaccinations have been widely deployed.

Chinese manufacturers benefited from strong demand for protective gear and other products as other countries battled COVID-19, gaining market share from competitors.

The base level boost from last year's slump is fading, however, and the \$263.9 billion in Chinese exports in May was about level with the previous month. China's imports of \$218.4 billion in May were 1.2 per cent lower than in April.

Beijing's politically sensitive trade surplus with the United States rose 14 per cent to \$31.8 billion, while the surplus with the European Union fell 43 per cent to \$12.7 billion.

China's total trade surplus in May was \$45.53 billion, down 26.5 per cent from a year earlier.

While the increase in exports was robust in May, it was lower than some economists had forecast and analysts said one reason might be delays at ports in southern China, the main shipping hub, due to increased precautions to fight an outbreak of coronavirus cases.

Shortages of semiconductors that are plaguing many industries have likewise hit exports of electronics. Demand for products that surged while people were staying home due to the pandemic, such as toys and furniture, also weakened, Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a commentary.

"Headline trade growth remained elevated last month. But trade volumes dropped back in levels terms and, while supply constraints are partly to blame, there are signs that demand may be peaking, too," he said in a report.

A key factor behind last month's rapid increase in imports was rising prices for oil and other commodities needed to fuel the country's industries. But it also reflects demand for the inputs needed to make so much of what China exports.

The recovery in demand is helping neighboring countries in Asia that supply many such goods, such as electronics components. Imports from the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations soared nearly 54 per cent from a year earlier, to \$33.1 billion. Exports to the region, where many countries are contending with their worst coronavirus outbreaks so far, rose 40% to \$39.2 billion.

Cherry Rates Skyrocket Amid Lockdown, Inclement Weather

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Amid lockdown and unfavourable seasonal changes, cherry rates have doubled in comparison to the last year.

Talking to a news agency, a fruit dealer Athar Mir said that the production of cherry as compared to last year is less due to inconsistent weather conditions.

"Various areas were affected due to hail and fluctuating weather. Cherry fruit requires a constant temperature for proper and perfect growth," Mir said. "Last year cherries cost at Rs 75 per kg and this



year it is Rs 150 per kg."

Notably, street vendors are facing hardships as two days open

in a week is not in favour of selling cherry's on carts because of its short lifespan--(KNO)

S H O R T T A K E S

Director Horticulture (P&M) visits Ganderbal

KO NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR: The Director Horticulture (P&M) Vishesh Mahajan conducted an extensive visit to Ganderbal where he reviewed the departmental activities and took stock of operationalisation of the Zazna Mandi. During the visit, the Director had a detailed exchange of ideas with the local growers and traders about their issues and the departmental support.

Some of the issues raised by the growers were attended to by the Director who announced that the possession letters for shopsites in the Zazna Mandi will be handed over very soon so that the mandi can be made operational at an earliest. Earlier the allotted land was properly demarcated.

The Director impressed upon the allottees to start the construction of the shopsites as early as possible and complete it within the next three months. During the interaction, the growers requested that the state land adjacent to the mandi may be included into the present Mandi land so that a futuristic problem could be taken care of. The Director assured to take up the matter with higher ups at the earliest.

On the issue of non availability of the electricity in the Mandi premises which is a basic necessity to operationalise it, The Director asked the department Engineering wing to get in touch with the power development department and process for the same may be initiated so that the issue is resolved forthwith.



Airtel's New Brand Campaign Reinforces India's Preference For Network Quality

As per TRAI, 2 in every 3 new mobile customers in India chose Airtel during September 2020 – February 2021

New Delhi, 7 June 2021: Bharti Airtel ("Airtel"), India's leading communications solutions provider, today rolled out a new brand campaign to showcase the disproportionate customer preference for its world-class network and differentiated services. Watch the TVC here: <https://youtu.be/hGuqEavJPVU>

As per data published by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), 2 in every 3 new mobile customers chose Airtel over other networks during September 2020 – February 2021. During this period, over 25 mn customers joined the Airtel network, underscoring the strength of brand.

Shashwat Sharma, Chief Marketing Officer, Bharti Airtel said: "We have one and only one guiding principle – customer obsession. And it's gratifying to see customers reward Airtel for constantly listening to them and innovating to serve them even better, especially at a time when the pandemic has redefined the normal. Today, Airtel has the highest number of active mobile subscribers in India and more importantly we believe we are leading in the hearts of customers."

The campaign has been conceived by Taproot Dentsu. Commenting on the film, Pallavi Chakravarti, Executive Creative Director, Taproot Dentsu said, "When it comes to India's telco of choice, winds of change have been brewing slowly, steadily and surely. And today, Airtel's numbers are doing the talking. Our campaign is a reflection of this simple truth, told simply."

Airtel has built a 5G ready network and consistently led network performance metrics in surveys by multiple global platforms. As per Opensignal, Airtel's mobile network offers the best video and gaming experience in India. To boost this experience even further, the Company has started deploying the additional 355.4 Mhz spectrum it acquired in the recent auctions for a sum of Rs 18,699 cr.

Airtel has also been ahead of the curve in introducing a wide range of solutions to simplify and improve customer experience. From Airtel Wi-Fi calling to Safe Pay and One Airtel plans, the company has been relentless in innovating to solve customer pain points. Airtel's world-class digital platforms – Airtel Thanks, Wynk Music and Airtel Xstream brings to customers all the digital content and Airtel services they require.

Twitter Seeks More Time From Govt To Comply With New IT Rules



Agenceis

Social media platform Twitter is learnt to have approached the government seeking more time to comply with the new IT rules.

According to sources, the micro-blogging site has said that it intends to comply with the rules but needs more time due to the pandemic situation in India.

"Twitter has written to Meity seeking more time to comply with the IT rules. It has expressed its intent to comply with the rules but has been unable to do so because of the pandemic," a source told PTI.

The response from Twitter comes after the government, last week, issued a strongly-worded final notice to the company regarding its non-compliance with the new rules.

When contacted, a Twitter spokesperson said Twitter has been and remains deeply committed to India, and serving the vital public conversation taking place on the service.

"We have assured the Government of India that Twitter is making every effort to comply with the new guidelines, and an overview on our progress has been duly shared. We will continue our constructive dialogue with the Indian Government," the spokesperson said.

In its notice, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) had said that Twitter's refusal to comply with the rules demonstrated the micro-blogging site's "lack of commitment and efforts towards providing a safe experience for the people of India on its platform".

"Despite being operational in India for more than a decade, it is beyond belief that Twitter Inc has doggedly refused to create mechanism that will enable the people of India to resolve their issues on the platform in a timely and transparent manner and through fair processes, by India based, clearly identified resources," the ministry had said.

The new IT rules for social media companies that came into

effect last month mandate large platforms like Facebook and Twitter to undertake greater due diligence and make these digital platforms more accountable and responsible for the content hosted by them.

The rules also require significant social media intermediaries -- providing services primarily in the nature of messaging -- to enable identification of the "first originator" of the information that undermines the sovereignty of India, the security of the state, or public order.

Under the rules, significant social media intermediaries -- those with over 50 lakh users--are required to appoint a grievance officer, a nodal officer and a chief compliance officer. These personnel have to be residents in India.

Further, social media companies will have to take down flagged content within 36 hours, and remove within 24 hours content that is flagged for issues such as nudity and pornography.

As per the ministry's notice, though with effect from May 26, 2021, "consequences follow" given Twitter's non-compliance with rules, "as a gesture of goodwill, Twitter Inc is hereby given one last notice to immediately comply with the rules, failing which the exemption from liability available shall stand withdrawn and Twitter shall be liable for consequences as per the IT Act and other penal laws of India".

However, the notice did not mention about a specific date for the micro-blogging site to comply with the rules.

Non-compliance with the rules would result in these platforms losing their intermediary status that provides them immunity from liabilities over any third-party data hosted by them. In other words, they could be liable for criminal action in case of complaints.

According to the central government, the new rules are designed to prevent abuse and misuse of platforms, and offer users a robust forum for grievance redressal.

DESPITE BEING OPERATIONAL IN INDIA FOR MORE THAN a decade, it is beyond belief that Twitter Inc has doggedly refused to create mechanism that will enable the people of India to resolve their issues on the platform in a timely and transparent manner and through fair processes, by India based, clearly identified resources."

Flipkart Introduces QR-Based Pay On Delivery For Consumers

Flipkart on Monday launched a contactless, QR-code based payment facility for all its pay-on-delivery shipments. Consumers who earlier opted for cash on delivery can now use this facility, scan the QR code attached to their purchase and make a digital payment for their order through any UPI app at the time of delivery, the company said in a statement.

"While the pandemic has urged several consumers to make a shift to online shopping, some trust deficit during checkout remains in pockets. With 'pay-on-delivery' technology, we want to ensure that customers have peace of mind with their payments and at the same time can shop within the safety of their homes," said Ranjith Boyanapalli, Head, Fintech and Payments Group at Flipkart.

The number of UPI-based payments has witnessed a steady rise over the years.

The pandemic has also accelerated the adoption of UPI payments, with 2.64 billion transactions recorded in April this year -- a 100 per cent increase over the previous year, according to data by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

The new QR-based payment facility by Flipkart is expected to further reinforce consumer trust in digital transactions, enhance consumer safety and contribute to an overall increase in the adoption of digital commerce.

"The payment constructs and in-house fintech innovations of Flipkart are empowering new-to-internet customers and helping bring the next 200 million users to the platform," the company said.

With a registered customer base of over 300 million, Flipkart is offering over 150 million products across more than 80 categories.

Delhi Metro Resumes Services After 4 Weeks; Many Penalised For Not Wearing Mask

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Metro resumed services on Monday after a hiatus of four weeks in view of the improved Covid-19 situation in the national capital, albeit with 50 per cent seating capacity and no provision for standing travel for commuters, officials said.

DMRC services were fully suspended since May 10 in view of the Covid-induced lockdown in Delhi. It was first imposed on April 19, and successively extended by the city government.

According to a senior DMRC official, the line utilisations performed

till about 8 PM was around 4.5 lakh on Monday, adding this was in view of the drastically reduced capacity owing to adherence to guidelines issued by the government on June 5.

Also, about 4,000 smart cards were sold, he said.

Journey or line utilisation is calculated by the number of corridors passengers use to reach their destinations.

Metro services initially ran partially, catering only to people from the field of essential services, but from May 10, it was suspended in view of the rising cases amid the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

On Monday, trains started plying in the morning, with the scheduled starting time for services being 6 AM.

Only half of the available trains were inducted into service with a frequency ranging from nearly five to 15 minutes on different lines, officials said.

The move comes in the wake of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announcing various relaxations on Saturday, allowing Metro trains to operate with half capacity and shops in markets and malls to reopen on odd-even basis from June 7 as he asserted that the city's economy needs to be revived in view of improving COVID-19 situation.

Delhi recorded 231 fresh COVID-19 cases, the lowest in over two-and-a-half months and 36 fatalities on Monday, while the positivity rate stood dipped to 0.36 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here.

"The number of trains will be inducted in full strength in a graded manner by Wednesday and thereafter, services will be available as per normal frequency which was available before the lockdown," the DMRC had earlier said.

Passengers will be allowed to travel by sitting only on alternate seats with

no provision for standing travel till further directions, officials said.

"To ensure compliance with Covid appropriate behaviour inside Metro premises, around 15 Metro stations were intermittently closed briefly during morning and evening peak hours," the senior official said.

Special nine flying squads were also deployed to randomly check inside trains for any kind of violations and counsel people to refrain from doing so for their own and everyone's safety, the DMRC said.

"Till 8 pm, 84 passengers were advised to get down from coaches for

travelling in standing position, 73 were penalised for not wearing mask and 106 were counselled to follow social distancing and wear mask properly," the official added.

"In order to ensure social distancing and compliance to 50 per cent seating inside trains, public is also advised to take extra time for their daily commute and exhibit Covid appropriate behaviour outside the stations also while waiting for their turn to enter the station," the DMRC had said in a statement soon after the CM had announced relaxations in lockdown norms.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

J&K Sees Lowest

in the Union territory during the last 24 hours.

For the first time since April 8, J&K reported less than a thousand cases, officials said Monday. Out of the new 977 new cases, they said 689 were confirmed from the Valley and the remaining 288 from Jammu division thus taking the total number of people infected since the outbreak of virus in J&K to 301467. The lowest number of 808 cases was reported in J&K on April 8.

Giving district-wise details, the officials said that Srinagar reported 161 cases, Baramulla 44, Budgam 103, Pulwama 95, Kupwara 107, Anantnag 66, Bandipora 35, Ganderbal 42, Kulgam 28, Shopian 8, Jammu 100, Udhampur 34, Rajouri 29, Doda 36, Kathua 7, Samba 18, Kishtwar 17, Poonch 12, Ramban 22 and Reasi 13.

Regarding the 16 fatalities, officials said, seven more people died of Covid-19 in Jammu Division and nine others succumbed to the virus at various healthcare facilities in the Valley.

Moreover, they said, 4178 more patients have recovered, 1178 from Jammu Division and 3000 from Kashmir. There are 23524 active positive cases—8723 in Jammu and 14801 in Kashmir.

Also, one fresh confirmed case of mucormycosis (black fungus) has been reported today, bringing the cumulative number of confirmed cases to 16 in J&K.

PM Announces

to the nation.

Private sector hospitals can continue to procure 25 per cent of vaccines, but their service charge would be capped at Rs 150 per dose over a fixed price of the vaccine, Modi said. The change in the government's vaccine strategy comes days after the Supreme Court asked the Centre to place on record all relevant documents and file notings reflecting its thinking culminating in the COVID-19 vaccination policy, and states questioning the central government over the alleged shortage of vaccines.

Justice D Y Chandrachud had questioned the vaccine procurement policy and also raised the issue of the digital divide questioning the policy of mandatory registration on CoWIN App for jobs.

"It has been decided today that the central government will take over the 25 per cent doses assigned to states and this will be implemented in the next two weeks. From June 21 (International Day of Yoga), the Centre will provide free vaccines to states...Till now, crores of people got free vaccines, now 18 years segment will be added to this," Modi said.

"For all people, whether it is the poor, the lower middle class, the middle class, or the upper-middle class, under the central government programme, everyone will get free vaccines," the prime minister said.

While BJP leaders and ministers lauded Prime Minister Modi for the new vaccination policy, many others on social media were seen crediting the Supreme Court and Justice Chandrachud for the change in the strategy. Opposition Congress asked the government to stop creating confusion with changing policies and demanded that every citizen should get Rs 6,000 in their accounts along with free vaccination.

Modi said the Centre and states will make necessary preparations in the coming two weeks as per new guidelines.

While elaborating on the reasons for the change in the vaccination policy, Modi said as the corona cases started declining, questions arose about the lack of choice for states and some people questioned why the central government is deciding everything.

Flexibility in lockdown and one-size-does-not-fit-all type of arguments were forwarded and the Centre took steps taking all such demands into account, he said.

Noting that starting from January 16 to April end, India's vaccination programme was run mostly under the central government, Modi said free vaccination for all was moving forward and people were showing discipline in getting vaccinated when their turn came.

In the midst of all this, demands for decentralization of vaccination were raised, priority to certain age groups was questioned and many types of pressures were exerted and certain sections of media took it as a campaign, he said in an apparent attack on opposition parties and the state governments run by them.

After a lot of deliberations, it was decided that states' demand should be taken into account and 25 per cent of vaccine procurement was given to them from May 1 for which they made efforts, Modi said.

However, he said, the states soon realised that what kind of difficulties come in such a big work and by the passage of two weeks in May, some states started saying openly that the earlier system was better.

"Gradually many state governments started advocating this... It was a good thing that in time the states came forward again with the demand for reconsideration. On this demand, we also thought that the people of the country should not suffer and their vaccination should be done smoothly, for which, the old system which was in place before May 1 will be brought back," he said.

Later, top official sources said India is on track to achieve its target of vaccinating the entire adult population by December as it will have a supply of 187.2 crore vaccine doses by the year-end, almost enough to account for full vaccination against Covid of 94 crore estimated 18-year plus population.

While India will have 53.6 crore doses between January and July, the availability of vaccines will increase to 133.6 crore doses between August and December with more firms supplying jobs and ramping up of production from the existing companies, they said.

In another major announcement, the prime minister said a decision has been taken to extend Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna till Deepawali.

This means that till November, 80 crore people will continue to get a decided amount of free foodgrain every month.

During the pandemic, the government is standing with the poor for all his needs as his friend, the prime minister asserted.

As several states take cautious steps towards unlocking and easing of restrictions with a decline in COVID-19 cases, the prime minister said vaccination is like a protection shield against the virus and asserted that vaccine supply would be increased significantly in India in the coming days.

Modi said seven companies are producing various vaccines against the coronavirus in the country and trials of three more vaccines is at an advanced stage.

The process of procuring vaccines from companies of other countries has also been expedited, the prime minister said.

Amid concerns expressed by experts recently over children being affected by the virus, Modi said trials of two vaccines are being carried out in this direction.

Modi said research is continuing on a nasal spray vaccine which, if successful, can significantly boost India's vaccination drive, he said.

India proved its mettle by making two made-in-India COVID-19 vaccines in a short time and over 23 crore doses have already been administered, the prime minister said.

Modi said that globally, vaccine producing companies and countries are far less than what is the global demand for the vaccines and in such a scenario, made in India vaccines were critical for India.

The Prime Minister pointed out that in the past, India used to get vaccines decades after they were developed abroad, and asserted that this always resulted in a situation in the past where India could not even start vaccination while other countries used to finish the vaccine work.

Modi said that by working in mission mode, "we raised the vaccination coverage from 60 per cent to 90 per cent in 5-6 years".

"We not only enhanced the speed but also widened the ambit of vaccination," he said.

This time, the prime minister, said India warded off all the apprehensions and through clean intentions, clear policy and constant hard work, not just one but two made-in-India vaccines for COVID were launched in India.

Modi also asserted that efforts are being made on a war-footing to fight the COVID-19 pandemic at various levels and production of essential medicines was ramped up.

India is fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic on multiple fronts and new health infrastructure has been created across the country, he asserted.

India has gone through a lot of pain during this battle and many lost their loved ones, he noted and extended his condolences to the bereaved families.

The prime minister also warned against people who are spreading rumours against vaccination and said such people are playing with the lives of people and there was a need to stay vigilant against them.

Modi has addressed the nation a number of times since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, the last being on April 20, during which he has offered suggestions to the people and also outlined various measures his government has been taking to deal with the situation.

Task Force Formed

The order stated that the committee will compile details of all adults who have died due to COVID-19 and find out any children orphaned or in need of care and protection.

To produce such children before the Child Welfare Committee, which shall decide their rehabilitation such as adoption, foster care, sponsorship etc and institutionalisation as the last resort as per the provisions of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, it said.

The order said the committees will place such children in temporary shelters, whose parents are undergoing COVID-19 treatment and are left without relative(s) or guardian(s) to take necessary care.

The committees will provide psychological and counselling support to children infected/affected due to COVID-19 as well as children of COVID-infected/affected parents.

To ensure timely referral of children infected with COVID-19 to treatment centres along with ensuring their nutritional support during post treatment period and to identify and

design one registered child care institution in each district and make arrangements for such institutions as COVID care centres exclusively for children, the order read.

The government ordered that the district-level task force should meet every week, and as and when required, for providing intervention programmes for care and protection of these children.

The district collector shall be responsible for conveying the meeting of the task force and submit a status report once in 15 days to the government, the order read. (PTI)

After Rs 77 Crore

from tens of thousands of unemployed youth, hundreds of aspirants are battling for the pending exams and employment.

"J&K Services Selection Board (SSB) has been taking us for a ride since long now," said Kulsum, whose name recently figured in the tentative selection list.

"Already the board took a lot of time to conduct the exam and now we don't know how long we have to wait for the final selection list."

Like Kulsum, Danish is also awaiting his exams for which he nearly deposited Rs. 2000 early this year.

"SSB should sense the gravity of the situation on the ground and come to the rescue of students," the postgraduate degree-holder who applied for Class IV exam said.

"They can at least rise above this Covid lockdown alibi and go for the online exams. While being digital is the need of the hour, the aspirants can't be held hostage by the lockdown-derailed offline exam system of Kashmir."

These voices are speaking in unison after the disclosure was made by the government through an right to information (RTI) application moved by activist Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat.

The noted activist had sought the details of total revenue generated by SSB from March 2016 till September 20 last year by inviting applications for various vacancies in the government departments.

The reply given by the Public Information Officer, J&K Services Selection Board, Jammu vide letter SSB/Adm/RTI/D-01/2020/28 dated April 27, 2021.

"The total revenue collected by the J&K services selection board from March 2016 to September 20, 2020 on account of various kinds of fees from job aspirants is Rs 770947432," reads the reply from SSRB, a copy of which lies with the Kashmir Observer.

To another question seeking year-wise break up of revenue, the SSB says that from March 2016 till December same year, an amount of Rs 53,233,733 was collected by the job aspirants as fee for applying for the vacancies. Similarly in 2017, SSB generated revenue of Rs 161442645, in 2018 Rs 27,770,5480 in 2019 Rs 60,738,410 and from January 1, 2020 to September 2020, an amount of Rs 21,827,164 was earned by SSB through application forms and fees.

According to the RTI reply, the recruitment agency has not conducted written tests of at least 50 advertisements issued in 2018 for filling over 150 various vacancies, including supervisor, caretaker and junior assistants in the social welfare department after withdrawing the notices in pursuance of the instructions conveyed by the General Administration Department.

The SSB has not also given the reason for not conducting the exams saying "The information does not cover under the preview of section 02-F RTI Act 2005"

Like hundreds of aspirants "left in lurch" by the SSB authorities, is Manchand Singh, a resident from Jammu city.

He did his B.Tech from Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU) Rajouri before moving to Pune where he completed his Masters in engineering from Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University (BVDU). He was among the top ten in the M Tech batch.

When he returned to his hometown, he started looking for employment opportunities to earn his bread and butter.

In 2017, Singh says like other friends and engineering graduates and post-graduates, he applied for a post of Assistant Professor in the Government College of engineering and technology advertised by the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC).

"With each form we submitted a fee of Rs 1000. Nearly four years have passed, but the vacancies have not been filled and nor does anyone know about the status of the recruitment process," Singh said.

Since 2017, Singh said, he has applied for many posts advertised by SSB and other recruitment agencies from time to time.

On December 24, 2020, SSB advertised 580 posts in four departments of Science and Technology, ARI and training, Law, justice and parliamentary affairs and public works (R&B) department.

Barely over a month later on February 3, 2021, SSRB issued another advertisement to fill 927 vacancies in various government departments, including Jal Shakti, Horticulture, Law, justice and parliamentary affairs, Hospitality and protocol department and information department.

"I applied on both occasions for the post of junior engineer. And with each form, I paid a

fee of Rs 350. I am clueless about the process," he said.

"Earlier, the government would conduct only single exams to fill posts of junior engineers in different departments. Now, department wise recruitment has been started. And it means, we have to pay fee every time we apply for departmental vacancies. This is sheer injustice," he adds.

Board Junks

'over-charging' of examination fee from candidates, an JKSSB spokesperson said that prima facie the "unfair and out of context criticism" appears to be an attempt to deflect attention from the widely hailed efforts of the JKSSB in ensuring high standards of transparency in recently held examinations, besides declaring time bound results, amid all the odds and difficulties caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

The JKSSB Board, the spokesperson said being one of the largest and prime recruiting agency for the government of J&K for non-gazetted positions, has fixed Rs 350/- as application/examination fee from candidates for conduct of written test of all categories of posts in the year 2015 and pertinently, the same has not been revised for the past 6 years.

"The fee so charged is utilized for meeting the expenses for online application development, conduct of examination and other incidental charges like remuneration of invigilator staff/Magistrates/Observers, hiring of vehicles for Centre Magistrates/ Centre Observers/ transportation of examination material to and fro the examination Centres, Videography of Examination Centres etc," he said.

The spokesperson further said that the board keeps conducting examinations regularly and makes payments to various stakeholders as per the laid down norms and parameters. He said that the application/examination fee charged by the JKSSB is one of the lowest as compared to sister recruiting and testing agencies of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, like Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) and the Board of Professional Entrance Examination (BOPEE).

Drawing comparison, the spokesperson said that BOPEE charges an amount of Rs 1200 for Common Entrance Test (CET) for admission to B.E /B.Tech (Engineering) courses in various Govt & Private Colleges of J&K UT, an amount of Rs 500/- for admission to CET for (10th based) Para-Medical Diploma (FMPHW/MMPFW) courses and Rs 1000/- for admission to CET for (12th based) Para-Medical Diploma Courses. Similarly, he said, the J&K Public Service Commission charged Rs 1000/- application fee for general category candidates and Rs 500/- from reserved category candidates for recently advertised posts.

"Therefore, the alleged claim that the application/examination fee fixed by J&K SSB is punitive is misleading, out of context and gross exaggeration, having no connect with existing reality. Further, the Board does not receive budgetary support/grant, other than administrative expenses from the UT Government, either for meeting shortfalls regarding conduct of examination or introduction of transparency related services," the spokesperson said.

He said the comparison of JKSSB - a UT level recruiting agency with a national level recruiting body like Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is not only inapplicable but misleading, in as much as that varied factors including relative cost of examination, budgetary grant provided by the Government, etc govern the quantum of fee to be charged from candidates. It is also asserted that the application/examination fee charged by the JKSSB presently is realistic and reasonable and if the circumstances permit, the Board will not hesitate in reducing the application/examination fee in future in the interest of aspirants.

The JKSSB spokesperson further said that the Board while taking cognizance of the fact that the ongoing pandemic has severely impacted the economy and as relaxation/ relief to the unemployed youth of the Union Territory, decided to charge only one time application fee for all such identical posts which have been advertised vide different advertisement notifications and for which Board intends to conduct a single examination.

"Moreover, the Board notifies tentative answer key of all the question paper(s) and gives reasonable opportunity to candidates for submitting representation before finalizing the answer key(s) free of cost unlike J&K BOPEE, which charges an amount of Rs 1000/- for the same," he added.

Wildlife Dept

The five local hunters engaged by the Wildlife Department are the foot soldiers of Non-Profit Trust, Social Reforms Organisations (SRO) Batamalo, reports and officials said Monday.

The five-member team of hunters is led by Manzoor Ahmed who like other members of his team has been repeatedly called by the Wildlife Department whenever such incidents where eliminating or catching vicious beasts turns quite difficult. The team of hunters is

currently scattered in around 12 Kms from the place of incident where the girl was killed on Friday last.

Since past 72-hours, Manzoor and his team and the sharpshooters from the Wildlife Department have baited the beast with all kinds of traps in order to ensure repeat of minor girl's killing but the man-eater is nowhere to be seen

"I'm sure this operation will come to an end because Manzoor Sahab and his team have been involved in several such incidents where the wild beast continues to run from the traps for days but in the end, these 5 hunters nab down the man-eater," Mohammed Afaaq Sayeed, the founding member of SRO told Kashmir Observer

He said that these volunteers-cum-hunters were directly called by the officials of the Wildlife Department to provide their professional skills in assisting the department's sharpshooters to catch or eliminate the man-eating leopard.

He also added that since past three days these hunters from SRO have been assisting the Wildlife professionals in surveying the Ompora jungles but so far they haven't spotted the wild beast.

Following the killing of a five year old girl, the Budgam authority headed by the Deputy Commissioner Shahbaz Ahmed Mirza had declared the leopard as a 'man-eater' and had directed the Wildlife Department to eliminate the leopard as soon as possible.

"We have directed our teams to try their best in tranquilizing the leopard but if there is no way of catching it alive, we've ordered our hunters to eliminate the "man-eater" on spot," Rashid Naqash, the regional Wildlife Warden Kashmir told Kashmir Observer.

But the calling in of local hunters has raised eyebrows among the locals and substantiating their allegations that the Wildlife Department's incompetency in tackling the man-animal conflict in Budgam specifically in Ompora was the prior reason behind the five year old girl's death.

But refuting all such allegations, Wildlife Warden, Wetlands, Ifshana Diwan told Kashmir Observer that since Friday morning she has received several panic calls from the locals of Ompora and that was the main reason why the local hunters were engaged.

"Calling in local hunters is the only way to assuage local panic. When a human death occurs, as in Ompora case, fears start gripping the local populace and allegations start pouring against the Wildlife Department, so hiring more professional hunters helps to take quick action against the man-eater and also calms down the growing allegations and panic among the public," she added.

Govt Rubbishes

However, the officials did not rule out changes in bureaucracy, and decisions on holding of Amarnath pilgrimage, besides the delimitation process in the Union Territory.

Although there has not been any official statement, however, official sources said, the meetings were overdue as the top central leadership was either busy in elections in other parts of the country, or the meetings were delayed due to the rising coronavirus situation in the country.

The meeting in the national capital has triggered a series of speculations and rumours in Kashmir with people apprehending shift in the present situation. While some speculate the possibility of the restoration of the statehood, there are also rumours about the bifurcation of the Union Territory. However, officials outrightly rejected the bifurcation of the UT and did not comment on the restoration of statehood.

"It is a political decision," the officials said.

The meetings in Delhi are also expected to take a call on the Amarnath yatra, which is scheduled to begin later this month.

However, in April, in view of the massive spike in the coronavirus cases, the process of registration for the pilgrimage was suspended.

Another government official, however, said that the administration is exploring options of going ahead with "a limited" annual pilgrimage to the cave shrine in south Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Spokesperson Abhiram Pankaj told Kashmir Observer that the troops arriving in the valley had gone on election duty to other parts of the country and they were being redeployed.

He said that there is no confirmation about the Amarnath yatra yet.

"We do not know if the yatra will be held or not. There is no clear indication." He said that the "troop movement" has most likely to do with the Amarnath yatra.

The official quoted above said with the elevation of Arun Mehta as Chief Secretary, the position of Secretary Finance requires to be filled up and this exercise is set to cause reshuffle at the senior level.

Besides, the change of police guard is also on cards. The current Director General of Police Dilbagh Singh is about to complete three years in office in September this year. Singh is expected to be picked for a top position at a central agency or paramilitary force, he said.

Would Be Cool To Walk Out With Virat For WTC Toss, Says Kane Williamson



Press Trust of India

LONDON: Fierce rivals on the pitch and close friends off it, New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson thinks it would be "quite cool" to walk out for toss alongside his Indian counterpart Virat Kohli in the inaugural ICC World Test Championship final starting June 18 in Southampton.

Both Kohli and Williamson are looking for that elusive ICC silverware under their leadership and the Black Caps skipper is aware that it won't be easy against a "world class Indian fast bowling attack".

"...we have played against each other in so many different levels and competitions and have known each other fairly well. So, it will be quite cool walking out there, doing the toss and having a bit of contact in the first Test Championship Final," Williamson told the ICC's official website when asked about his rivalry with India captain since their U-19 days in 2008. Williamson said that he is well aware of India's bowling depth and their recent historic series win in Australia.

"Yeah, they have got a fantastic attack. Brilliant, obviously a brilliant side. Throughout we have seen the depth they have as well, certainly saw that in Australia as well.

"A lot of strengths in their fast bowling and spin department. So yeah, a brilliant side, ranked right up the top, which is fair enough and an exciting opportunity for us to be involved in the final taking on the best," the New Zealand skipper said.

Playing with Dukes ball in a different set-up where there would be forecast of rain is something that Williamson is keeping in mind.

He expects the Southampton pitch to have less grass cover in days leading up to the final.

"Mow it a bit, give it a roll maybe! I do not know the team yet, let us see what the conditions are. What we have seen so far is pretty much rain, every day. It is nice to be

outside to be honest, just getting some experience facing the duke in different conditions."

New Zealand's primary worry against India will be to choose between a No.7 batsman or an all-rounder and the skipper says that all cards are on the table.

"Yeah, I guess we will have to assess conditions and make those decisions. That is obviously what we try and do every time, whenever we get to a different venue and work out what might suit us," he said.

The stylish batsman said that their heartbreaking ODI World Cup final defeat to England on boundary count is of no relevance going into the WTC final.

"No, I do not think so, certainly not something that the guys have spoken about. I guess being a different side really with a different format as well," he explained.

"The match you mentioned was a very memorable one and obviously it had some controversy and it had everything, and people loved watching it, at the end of the day. Hopefully, it is a great spectacle, and we get a decent crowd, and it is a really good game!"

Williamson also mentioned that bouncer specialist Neil Wagner will play a pivotal role against India as the enforcer.

"His ability to bowl long spells and keep applying pressure for long periods of time has been something that has made him so successful at the international level. He is a big member of our side and a big character in our team. It is always great to have him along."

The soft-spoken skipper didn't forget to mention that New Zealand's success has a lot to do with the set-up that was created when Brendon McCullum was captain and Mike Hesson, the chief coach.

"Obviously, Baz and Mike Hesson took over and gave the team a strong direction that was huge in creating a much-improved environment," he said.

BCCI May Push Back IPL 2021 Final To October 15 To Reduce Double Headers

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The BCCI brass is exploring the option of using the full window of Indian Premier League by pushing the final back to October 15 in order to reduce the number of double headers in the UAE's searing September heat.

As had been first reported, the tournament will start on Sunday, September 19 and while the final was tentatively planned for October 10, the BCCI as well as the Emirates Cricket Board are mulling stretching the lucrative T20 event till October 15.

"September 15 to October 15 is the window. Initially, BCCI was thinking of having 10 double headers. But, in third and fourth week of September, having 10 afternoon matches can be physically exhausting for player in such short window," a BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

"So if October 15, which is a Friday is zeroed in on, it's basically start of weekend in India and in Dubai, it's a holiday which will allow fans to come in and enjoy a high-profile game of cricket. It



serves dual purpose. Also, the number of double headers could be reduced to five or six, instead of 10," the source said.

Currently, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, vice-president Rajiv Shukla, acting CEO Hemang Amin, treasurer Arun Dhumal, joint secretary Jayesh George and IPL chairman Brijesh Patel are in the UAE to finalise the arrangements. Secretary Jay Shah is back in India after a series of meetings with the Emirates Cricket Board

officials and a recce of the venues.

The Indian team's last Test in England is in Manchester and if it goes the distance, then it will finish on September 14. The next day, the Indian contingent of IPL players will be flown via a charter flight from Manchester to Dubai.

They might have to undergo a three-day hard quarantine in the UAE but that could be waived off since they will be entering from the UK bio-bubble.

India's Limited Overs Tour Of Sri Lanka To Start On July 13

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: A second string India squad will play three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals in Sri Lanka between July 13 to 25, broadcaster Sony announced on Monday.

Indian selectors are expected to pick plenty of fringe players for the limited overs tour with Shikhar Dhawan and Hardik Pandya in the fray for leading the side. A fully fit Shreyas Iyer is another captaincy option. Sony Sports announced the schedule via social media.

"Indian waves will crash against the Sri Lankan shore with #jeetneKIZid," the channel tweeted with the schedule.

The ODIs will take place on July 13, 16 and 18 while the T20Is will be played on July 21, 23 and 25.



The venues for the games are not yet announced.

It will be a rare occasion that two India squads will be playing in different countries at the same time. The Virat Kohli-led squad will be preparing for the

five Tests against England at the same time.

The Test squad is already in the UK for the World Test Championships final against New Zealand from June 18 while the England series begins on August 4.

ECB Suspends Ollie Robinson For Abusive Tweets As A Teenager

Agencies

LONDON: England fast bowler Ollie Robinson was suspended from international cricket pending an investigation into discriminatory tweets he posted from 2012-13.

Robinson will not be available for the second test against New Zealand starting Thursday, the England and Wales Cricket Board said on Sunday.

Robinson made his test debut in the first match of the series at Lord's, taking seven wickets across New Zealand's two innings and also hitting 42 in England's first innings.

The tweets he posted when he was 18 and 19, which were racist and sexist in nature, resurfaced during the first day of the test and Robinson was close to tears as he issued an apology after stamps.

Robinson will leave the England camp immediately and return to his county, England said about the Sussex bowler.

India's Olympic Contingent To Receive 2nd Dose Of COVID Vaccine After 4 Weeks

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The gap between two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for Olympic-bound athletes and officials has been set to four weeks by the Ministry of Health, informed Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President Narinder Batra on Monday. Batra has communicated the same to national sports federations.

"All NSFs whose Athletes have Qualified for Tokyo Olympics. Letter has been issued by Ministry of Health Government of India, that in the case of Tokyo Bound Athletes and officials, the 2nd dose of vaccination will be done after 4 weeks of 1st dose of Vaccination," Batra said in a statement.

Last month, a government panel had recommended that the dosage interval of Serum Institute of India's Covishield vaccine be increased to 12-16 weeks. However, the gap between the two doses of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is four weeks. The IOA on Sunday had said 120 athletes and 27 para-athletes have so far received at least one dose of the vaccine. The body said that there are 62 fully-vaccinated athletes, including four para athletes.

From among coaches and support staff members, 114 have received their first shots while 37 are fully vaccinated.

The body had also urged five Olympic-bound sportspersons, who have recovered from COVID-19 in the recent past, to take their first dose of the vaccine as soon as possible.

The Tokyo Olympics will open on July 23.



Kohli Is Successful Because He Never Deviates From His Process: Rashid Khan

Press Trust of India

ABU DHABI: Star Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan feels the reason behind Virat Kohli's batting success is that the Indian skipper never deviates from his process, irrespective of the quality of delivery bowled at him.

The leg-spinner feels Kohli's strong suit is that he has faith in his batting abilities and is not compelled into playing any shots he is not confident, giving due respect to the good balls.

"If there is any other batsman, he will come under pressure if you bowl well to him. He will play a shot which is not his strength like a sweep, a slog sweep or any other different stroke," Rashid said on the Youtube show 'Cricast'.

"[But] Virat will follow his own process. He goes with his mind. He has his own style and he goes with that. He doesn't do anything different. I think that is why he is very successful. He has a process.

"He will respect good balls. He will punish loose balls. He has great self-belief. Some batsmen don't have self-belief. That is why they struggle. He believes in his own strength," Rashid added.

Rashid, who is a vital cog in the Sunrisers Hyderabad bowling attack in the Indian Premier League, is eager to play under the leadership of former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

"I have dream that I play under MS Dhoni. Because the experience playing with him, under him is very important. For a bowler, the role of wicketkeeper is very important and I don't think there is anyone better than him to explain you things.

Rashid also recalled the advice the veteran wicketkeeper-batsman gave

him. He will play a shot which is not his strength like a sweep, a slog sweep or any other different stroke," Rashid said on the Youtube show 'Cricast'.

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Rashid also recalled the advice the veteran wicketkeeper-batsman gave

him recently.

"Every time after our matches, the discussions that I have with him has helped me.

"Last time he told me 'You have to be careful while fielding, you slide, throw the ball when it is not necessary, you get aggressive. Because there is only one Rashid and people want to see you more, what will happen if you get injured? Keep this in mind, I tell (Ravindra) Jadeja the same thing.'"

Rashid is also in awe of India's white ball vice-captain Rohit Sharma's ability with the bat and the extra second that he always has.

"I agree he has more time. He has got a lot of time. I have seen very few players who have a lot of time. It is natural for some players to have more time.

"The way he pulls even if it is 145 plus or 150 kmph, the way he hits, it seems the ball is 125 or 130 kmph. He has got great time. He doesn't hit too many powerful shots. He believes in his timing."

Rashid, who was a part of the currently-suspended IPL, is completing his quarantine ahead of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), starting here on Wednesday.

Harbhajan Singh Offers Apology For Instagram Post Featuring Bhindranwale

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Veteran Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh on Monday unconditionally apologised for a social media post in which he shared a picture of Khalistani militant Jamail Singh Bhindranwale to pay homage to those who died in 'Operation Bluestar' of 1984.

The 40-year-old off-spinner said he posted a WhatsApp forward on the 37th anniversary of the operation without realising that the man in the picture was Bhindranwale.

"I just wish to clarify and apologise for an Instagram post yesterday. It was a WhatsApp forward that I



posted in a haste and without even realising the content used and what it signified and stood for," he said in an apology note posted on Twitter.

"That was my mistake I accept, and at no stage do I subscribe to the views

in that post or support the people whose picture were carried. I am a Sikh who will fight for India and not against India.

"This is my unconditional apology for hurting the sentiments of my nation. In fact any anti-national group against my people, I do not support and never will," he added.

Operation Bluestar was an Army operation that was carried out in 1984 to flush out militants from the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Bhindranwale was the leader of that insurgent movement and was killed along with several other people during the operation.

"I have given my blood and sweat for this country for 20 years and will never ever support anything that is anti-India," Harbhajan asserted.

England Captain Joe Root Feels Ollie Robinson Has Shown 'Genuine Remorse'



Press Trust of India

LONDON: England's new fast bowler Ollie Robinson's eight-year-old racist and sexist tweets were completely "unacceptable" but he has shown "genuine remorse", skipper Joe Root said while pushing for inclusivity in the country's cricket set-up, starting from the top.

Robinson, who made an impressive Test debut with a match-haul of 7 wickets against New Zealand at Lord's, has been suspended by the country's apex cricket body for some of his tweets dating back to 2012-13, for which he has already tendered an unconditional public apology.

"In regards to the stuff that's happened off the field, it's not acceptable within our game. We all know that. He addressed the dressing room straightaway. He obviously spoke to you guys and other media outlets straight away, fronted up to it," Root said after the drawn first Test.

"He showed a lot of remorse from that point onwards. You can see it's very genuine from how he's been around the group and the team."

The skipper said that he was shocked and didn't know initially how to react.

"I couldn't believe them (the tweets), personally. I didn't really know how to take it on the surface. I think the most important thing is Ollie is part of this dressing room and we had to support him. We had to try and do everything that we could to give him an opportunity to learn and understand he has to do better," he said.

Root acknowledged that this is a lesson for one and all and it starts right at the top.

"I think it's a great lesson for everyone within our game that we can all do more."

"We all have to keep looking to educate ourselves, trying to bet-

ter the environment for everyone, trying to be as inclusive as we can, keep making everyone feel comfortable to play what a wonderful sport we have."

The England cricket team is one of the most diverse in nature and Root wants that structurally, it becomes more inclusive in its outlook.

"It starts with us players at the top of the game. We set out the week with that moment of unity and we're doing a lot of work behind the cricket that we want to make big change in the game and we want to make it more inclusive, more diverse.

"I think the most important thing is we keep trying to do everything we can to better our sport, that we keep learning and we keep finding ways of making our game as best as we can."

While the issue could have been handled better, Root is unequivocal in his viewpoint that this shouldn't have happened in the first place.

"We can look back about how this could have been handled better, but the fact is it shouldn't have happened. And if we continue to keep trying to better the game right now, then in years to come this shouldn't be an issue.

"This shouldn't be something that happens within cricket. We've got to move forward from this, learn from this and do everything we can to make sure it doesn't happen again."

After the first day's play at Lord's last week, Robinson had regretted posting the tweets and apologised.

"I deeply regret my actions, and I am ashamed of making such remarks. I would like to unreservedly apologise to anyone I have offended, my teammates and the game as a whole in what has been a day of action and awareness in combating discrimination from our sport."

R Ashwin Feels Sorry For Suspended England Pacer Ollie Robinson



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Senior India spinner R Ashwin feels sorry for England pacer Ollie Robinson, who has been suspended for racist and sexist tweets posted back in 2012, and has called his punishment "a strong indication of what the future holds in this social media generation."

Robinson, who made his England debut in the first Test against New Zealand which ended in a draw on Sunday, was suspended from international cricket pending an investigation after his tweets, posted when he was a teenager, resurfaced on the opening day of the match at Lord's in London.

"I can understand the negative sentiments towards sorry #OllieRobinson did years ago, but I do feel genuinely sorry for him being suspended after an impressive start to his test career," Ashwin said on his Twitter handle.

"This suspension is a strong indication of what the future holds in this social media Gen."

Robinson took seven wickets in the match and also hit 42 in England's first innings. But he will not be available for selection for the second Test starting at Edgbaston on Thursday. He will leave the England camp immediately and return to his county, Sussex.

The 27-year-old issued an apology on Wednesday, admitting to posting "racist and sexist tweets" as a teenager. He had expressed "deep regrets" about his actions while stating "I'm not racist and I'm not sexist."

Former India Test opener Wasim Jaffer responded to Ashwin's tweet with a cheeky post. "I am just glad I found Twitter after I retired," Jaffer tweeted.

Batting coach Graham Thorpe has said that going ahead, England could start reviewing the social media history of the players before their selection in the national team.

Robinson's offensive tweets targeted Muslims and Asians and he has said he is "ashamed" of them.

The screenshots of his posts resurfaced on numerous social media platforms after lunch interval on Day 1 of the first Test between England and New Zealand at Lord's.

Got Both Jabs? You Might Not Need A Covid-Negative Report To Fly Domestic

Agenceis

Amid a steady decline in the number of Covid-19 infections and the second wave of the virus ebbing in most parts of the country, the Centre is contemplating to allow fully vaccinated air passengers to travel within the country without a negative Covid test report, senior government officials said on Monday.

Central ministries, including the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, are currently discussing the matter with various other stakeholders, they added.

The development comes in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi assuring citizens that the Covid vaccine supply in India will increase in the coming few weeks.

The Centre has decided to buy 75 per cent of jabs from vaccine makers, including 25 per cent of the state quota, and give it for free to state governments, the prime minister said, earlier today.

Modi further said private sector hospitals can continue to procure 25 per cent of vaccines, but their service charge would be a maximum of Rs 150 per dose over the fixed price of the vaccine.

Asserting that in the fight against coronavirus, vaccine is like a protection shield, Modi urged people to spread awareness about vaccines.

In the backdrop of these developments, domestic airlines, which have already taken a major hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have told the civil aviation ministry that state-level requirements for negative Covid tests for travel are hampering the growth of air travel and the fully-vaccinated passengers should be allowed to travel without Covid-negative reports, the officials said.

Domestic air travel had reached around three lakh passengers per day by the end of February. However, the second wave of the pandemic has reduced it to around 85,000 passengers per day.

To conserve cash and survive

this tough time, all Indian airlines have taken measures such as cutting the employees' salaries, firing employees and renegotiating leases with aircraft lessors.

Since health is a state subject, the Centre is discussing with the states a way through which domestic air passengers, who have got both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, can be allowed to travel without the test reports, the officials said.

The Centre is also in talks with other aviation stakeholders such as airlines, airports etc. on how it can be done, they added.

While the government is considering allowing domestic air travel without Covid test reports for those who have got both doses of the vaccine, it has opposed a similar measure for international travel.

At a G7 meeting of health ministers on June 4, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan expressed India's "concern and strong opposition" to allow vaccine passports for international travel at this juncture of the pandemic.

"With vaccine coverage as a percentage of population in developing countries still low compared to developed countries, such an initiative could prove to be highly discriminatory," he said.

Meanwhile, on May 28, the airlines were asked by the Centre to operate only 50 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights from June 1, instead of 80 per cent permitted earlier.

The decision was taken "in view of the sudden surge in the number of active COVID-19 cases across the country, decrease in passenger traffic and passenger load factor (occupancy rate)", the civil aviation ministry said in an order.

When the government resumed the scheduled domestic flight operations in the country on May 25 last year after a two-month break, the ministry had permitted the carriers to operate not more than 33 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic services. This cap was gradually increased to 80 per cent by December last year.

Underwater Protest, Fast By Lakshadweep People Demanding Administrator's Recall



Agenceis

In Lakshadweep, several people on Monday held an underwater protest and staged a 12-hour fast demanding administrator Praful Patel's recall for his 'anti-people' measures and seeking withdrawal of draft legislation on development.

The protestors, both under sea water and outside of their homes, held placards with slogans like "Revoke LDAR" (Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation) and "Justice for Lakshadweep." The people who took to protest came under the banner of "save Lakshadweep forum" and posted pictures of protest in social media.

Opposition parties in Lakshadweep and in Kerala have alleged that Patel unilaterally lifted restrictions on the use of alcohol in the Muslim-majority islands, banned beef products, citing Animal Preservation and demolished fishermen's sheds built on the coastal areas, saying they violated the Coast Guard Act.

The BJP has however defended Patel, claiming that the protests were a result of his efforts to end "corrupt practices" involving local politicians and usher in development there.

In Kochi, United Democratic Front parliamentarians from Kerala

staged a protest in front of the Lakshadweep Administrator's Office in solidarity with the protestors, demanding withdrawal of the proposed "anti-people laws" by the union government.

"The islanders held a peaceful protest today. Almost all the establishments, shops and commercial establishments were closed today.

Almost everyone in the island took part in the protest," Hamdullah Sayeed, former Lakshadweep IUMLP MP, told PTI.

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IUML MP, told PTI.

AIYF, the youth wing of the CPI, a major ally in the LDF government in Kerala, also protested in front of the Administrator's office.

All MPs from Kerala, except Rahul Gandhi, K Muraleedharan, K Sudhakaran, Kodikkunnil Suresh, Sashi Tharoor, Adoor Prakash and N K Premachandran, took part in the protest.

The Lakshadweep people are demanding repeal of the proposed LDAR, the Lakshadweep Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation (PASA or Goondas Act) and the Lakshadweep Animal Preservation Regulation (LAPR).

Social media was flooded with #SaveLakshadweep with islanders posting pictures of their protests.

Thousands of others also trended the hashtag.

Expressing solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep, the Kerala Legislative Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution, demanding the recall of Patel and requesting the Centre's immediate intervention "to protect the lives and livelihood of the islanders."

An archipelago in the Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep has been witnessing protests by locals over the recent actions and administrative reforms being implemented by Patel. — PTI

AIIMS Delhi Starts Screening Of Children For Covaxin Trials



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The screening of children for trial of Covaxin, India's first indigenously developed COVID-19 vaccine, among those aged between 2 and 18 started at the AIIMS on Monday.

The trial on children has already started at AIIMS Patna to see if the Bharat Biotech jab is suitable for children. Participants would be given the vaccine after their screening report comes.

The trial is to be conducted on 525 healthy volunteers. In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two doses at day 0 and day 28.

"The screening of children for conducting trial of Covaxin has started. Participants would be given the vaccine after their screening reports come," Dr Sanjay Rai, Professor at the Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS, said.

India's drug regulator had granted permission for conducting the phase 2/3 clinical trial of Covaxin in the age group 2 to 18 years on May 12.

Covaxin is being used on adults in India's ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive.

The government last week cautioned that even though COVID-19 has not taken a serious shape among children till now, its impact can increase among them if there is a change in virus behaviour or epidemiology dynamics, and said preparations are being strengthened to deal with any such situation.

A national expert group has been formed to review COVID-19 infections in children and approach

the pandemic in a renewed way to strengthen the nation's preparedness, NITI Aayog Member (Health) V K Paul had said at a press conference.

The group has examined signs which were not available four-five months before, he said.

It has also considered available data, clinical profile, the country's experience, disease dynamics, nature of the virus and the pandemic and has come up with guidelines, which will be publicly released soon.

While we have been systematically reviewing scientific developments in this area, the group has been formed to take an updated view of the situation," Paul said.

Asked if the Pfizer vaccine, if it comes to India, will it be considered for children between the age of 12 and 15 years as being approved by the UK, Paul had said that the country has its own vaccines which are being readied for children.

"Child cohort is not a small cohort. My rough guess is that if it is between 12 to 18 years, this itself is about 13 to 14 crore population and for which we will need about 25-26 crore doses.

"We cannot have some people getting and others not getting. So we will have to take this into account when we strategise and make a decision based on how many doses of which vaccines are available, he said.

He further shared that Zydus Cadila's vaccine is already being tested in children.

"So when Zydus comes for licensure, hopefully in the next two weeks, may be we have enough data to take a view on whether the vaccine can be given to children," he said.

Mumbai Unlock: Restaurants, Gyms Reopen After 2 Months

Agenceis

MUMBAI: Restaurants, gyms, salons, public grounds and other commercial establishments re-opened after nearly two months on Monday in Mumbai, which falls in level-3 of the Maharashtra government's five-level 'unlock plan'.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) appealed to citizens not to let their guard down and follow all precautions to check the spread of Covid-19.

Buses of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST), the city civic body's transport wing, were allowed to ferry passengers with 100 per cent seating capacity, though local trains were restricted for those working in medical and essential services.

The BMC in a tweet said, "Mumbai, a gentle reminder! While we are getting back on track with the phase-wise opening, we can't go off the rails on our common main goal - a Covid free Mumbai. Let's reopen, but with care. Follow all precautions!"

The Maharashtra government has announced a five-level plan to relax the coronavirus-induced restrictions in the state, based on the weekly positivity rate and the occupancy of oxygen beds.

Easing of curbs under level-3 category are applicable for places where the positivity rate is five per cent to 10 per cent and the oxygen bed occupancy is more than 40 per cent.

The BMC on Sunday issued de-

tailed guidelines on the easing of restrictions.

Mumbai is at the level-3 with a positivity rate of 5.56 per cent and oxygen bed occupancy rate of 32.51 per cent for the May 28-June 3 week. As per the government's order, essential shops in Mumbai will remain open on all seven days in a week till 4 pm, but non-essential shops will function only on weekdays till 4 pm, BMC officials said.

Earlier, both essential and non-essential shops were allowed to remain open till 2 pm.

As per the latest order, malls, multiplexes and theatres (including for staging dramas) will continue to remain closed. However, medical and chemist shops will remain open round-the-clock.

Restaurants are also allowed to remain open till 4 pm, but only with 50 per cent their capacity, BMC officials said, adding that the facilities of parcel, takeaway and home delivery of food will continue.

They said the BEST buses are allowed to ferry passengers to 100 per cent of their seating capacity, instead of the earlier 50 per cent, but no standing passengers are allowed.

Public places and grounds and are allowed to reopen from 5 am to 9 am every day and activities like walking, cycling and outdoor sports allowed during the period, as per the order.

It also said that only 50 people can attend a marriage ceremony, while only 20 people can attend a funeral.

Herpes, Hair Fall, Nail Issues: Doctors Caution About Post-COVID Dermatological Problems

From reactivation of herpes infection to loss of hair, several Covid patients in recovery phase are facing one dermatological complication or another due to lowered immunity, say doctors.

Skin care experts at leading facilities in Delhi, Mumbai and other cities concurred that coronavirus patients even after being discharged from hospitals or having finished their home quarantine period should watch out for any skin inflammation or consult a doctor immediately if "it grows uncontrollably".

Dr D M Mahajan, senior consultant, dermatology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals in Delhi, says many post-Covid patients with skin complications are rushing to OPDs, fearing they have contracted mucormycosis or black fungus but people should be cautious not paranoid.

"Several Covid patients in recovery phase are facing skin complications and the most common one being reported to us are cases of herpes. In many patients with a history of herpes it is getting retriggered and in others they are just contracting it afresh, both due to lowered immunity," he told PTI.

Infection with herpes simplex virus, commonly known as herpes, can be due to either herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) or herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2). Herpes

labialis which occurs around the lip area with lesions in cluster preceded by burning pain is caused by HSV.

Herpes zoster is viral infection that occurs with reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus. It is usually a painful but self-limited dermatomal rash.

Skin experts, who are seeing post-Covid patients, say cases of herpes zoster are being reported more than herpes from HSV.

Mahajan said cases of infection from Candida fungus have also been seen among the Covid patients who are in recovery phase. It is a mould like infection and can result from excessive medication or use of steroids. This infection can cause white patches on genitalia.

Candidiasis is a fungal infection caused by a yeast (a type of fungus) called Candida.

Mumbai-based dermatologist and hair transplant surgeon Dr Sonali Kohli said COVID-19 compromises the immunity of a patient leading to multifarious complications, including in skin, hair and nails.

"Though there is no clinical study to correlate the two but herpes infection is being reported in large number of Covid patients during recovery phase even a month later. Besides hair loss and nail complications are too happening with many patients," she said.

As far as nail complications are concerned, cases of melanonychia or Beau's lines are also being seen in such patients. Melanonychia entails whitish or brown lines on nails, she said.

Kohli, consultant dermatologist, Sir H N Reliance Foundation Hospital in Mumbai, said patients should consult a specialist if hair loss persists.

Nikhita Kumar, 24, a Delhi-based student, who is recovering from Covid contracted in April, said, she had suffered "copious loss of hair in the initial days of recovery".

"I had consulted a dermatologist who prescribed some serum. He had said it will subside in a month or two. Also, while reading online on post-Covid complications, I found out that a famous Bollywood actress too had suffered hair loss after Covid," she said.

Dr Nidhi Rohtagi, senior consultant, dermatology at Fortis hospital, Vasant Kunj, said post-Covid hair loss is being seen more in women.

"Patients suffer skin complications during treatment too and during recovery may still exhibit some sort of inflammation or spots on forehead or back. But many times these are simple, self-limiting rashes which subside with time after applying appropriate ointment," she said.

8 Injured As Mumbai-Kolkata Flight Hits Severe Turbulence



Agenceis

KOLKATA: Eight passengers on Vistara's Mumbai-Kolkata flight were injured on Monday as the aircraft encountered severe turbulence just before landing, officials said.

The flight, UK 775, landed safely at the Kolkata airport at 4.25 pm, airport director C Pat-tabhi told PTI.

"Due to turbulence, three passengers were injured critically, and five passengers had minor injuries inside the aircraft," he said.

The critically injured passengers were sent to Charnock Hospital for treatment.

The five passengers who received minor injuries were sent to their destination after being administered first aid, the airport director said. There were 123 passengers on board the aircraft, he said.

The incident happened around 4 pm owing to bad weather when the flight was around 25 nautical miles from Kolkata, Pattabhi said.

A Vistara spokesperson said the airline is saddened by the unfortunate experience its customers had, and is closely monitoring the health status of those injured.

"We are investigating the incident on priority, and will share a further update at the earliest," the spokesperson said. — PTI

NEWS MAKERS

"They Are Not Gangsters': Court Rejects Plea To Produce Umar Khalid, Khalid Saifi In Handcuffs

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A Delhi court turned down a plea of Delhi Police to produce former JNU student Umar Khalid and activist Khalid Saifi in handcuffs before trial courts, noting that "they are not gangsters".

The plea application which came up for hearing before Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav sought to produce the 2020 Delhi riots accused in "handcuffs in both hands from back side", contending that they are "high-risk prisoners".

The judge dismissed the plea observing that it is devoid of merits and filed in a mechanical manner



and without application of mind by the high echelons of the Delhi Police and prison authority.

"The accused persons, who are sought to be produced in fetters and handcuffs, are admittedly not previous convicts. They are not even gangsters," the Additional Sessions Judge stated in an order dated June 5.

He further said that the plea is not required at this stage as the accused are not being produced in the court physically due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The judge also noted the replies submitted by the Superintendent of Mandoli and Tihar jail, Additional DCP (Special Cell) and DCP of third battalion of Delhi Police, on the plea.

The DCP told the court that in the aftermath of an attempt made by

armed assailants to free an undertrial prisoner at GTB Hospital, the police had decided to request the court for permission to handcuff high-risk prisoners who are prone to escape.

"As part of the exercise, the current application for handcuffing UTPs Umar Khalid and Khalid Saifi was moved for the consideration of Hon'ble Court," the senior police officer stated in a reply submitted to the court on April 26.

However, in the reply given by the Additional DCP of Special Cell, it was stated that no such application seeking to produce both the accused in handcuffs, was filed before any court or other authority.

Mehul Choksi Was Disposing Documents Into Caribbean Sea Before Arrest: Report

ROSEAU: Amid the controversy surrounding the arrest of fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi in Dominica, an eyewitness account revealed how Choksi was discovered in the vicinity of Roseau, where he was captured by the country's Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

According to the account of Dominican resident Harry Baron, Choksi started to run when the police approached him while he was disposing of some documents into the Caribbean sea.

The eyewitness said police got suspicious and ran after him, but he could not run far and fell twice and got caught while escaping from the

police, Writeups 24 reported.

The eyewitness revealed how the fugitive might have sustained injuries amid the chase. Later, Choksi was questioned by police after arrest at the beach, and later, he was taken into custody.

According to the Caribbean newspaper, Choksi's disappearance from Antigua and Barbuda and his apparent attempt to escape to Cuba, was unlike the Hollywood drama that it was made out to be.

After Choksi was taken into custody, the police discovered that they had captured an international fugitive, who had a red-corner issued by Interpol on his name.

After things did not pan out in fa-

vour of the fugitive, Choksi's brother, who is also a bank defaulter, has allegedly promised election funding Dominica's Leader of the Opposition Lennox Linton in exchange for pushing Mehul's abduction theory.

According to Writeups 24, the whole planning was to manipulate the entire scenario into an abduction story, and the media was trapped in a hoax created by Choksi's family on the advice of his lawyers. Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi are accused in the 13,500-crore Punjab National Bank fraud case. Choksi fled India. He was granted citizenship of Antigua and Barbuda in January 2018. He is involved in a legal battle to prevent his extradition to India.