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P3 CITY

CENTRE PROPOSES ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE AROUND DACHIGAM

The Centre has come up with a draft proposal to declare 137.75 square kilometres around Dachigam national park, Thajwas (Baltal) and Overa-Aru wildlife sanctuaries as eco-sensitive zones.

P6 THINK

THE IMPENDING CRISIS: US EXIT FROM AFGHANISTAN

History may repeat itself too soon in Afghanistan. Nearly three decades back, when the last Soviet soldier left the Afghan soil, the events that unfolded then may get replicated



P5 STATE

SHOPIAN VILLAGE WITNESSES LOWEST COVID POSITIVITY RATE

The Hirpora village situated on the historical Mughal road in Shopian district has so far recorded the lowest Covid-19 positivity rate in the district. The local Health Authorities



We generate fears while we sit. We overcome them by action.
— Dr. Henry Link

NEWS DIGEST

Militants Attack Security Men In Shopian

SRINAGAR: Militants on Friday attacked a state forces' party in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. No loss of life or injury has been reported so far in the incident. A police official said the militants fired upon the joint party of police and CRPF at Aglar in Zainapora area of the south Kashmir district around noon. The area has been cordoned off and a hunt has been launched to nab the attackers, the official added. (PTI)

Landslide Shuts Highway Temporarily

SRINAGAR: Traffic on the strategic Srinagar-Jammu highway was temporarily suspended on Friday after a landslide hit the mountainous district of Ramban. On Friday morning a landslide occurred along the 272-kilometre highway near Seri area in Ramban forcing the closure of the thoroughfare for seven hours, officials said. They said after seven hours, the highway was reopened and all the stranded vehicles were allowed to proceed towards their destinations.

Electric Shock Kills Woman

SRINAGAR: A middle-aged woman on Friday died after receiving an electric shock at her home in Naina village of south Kashmir's Anantnag district. 50-year-old Haleema Begum was busy with her household chores at her home in Naina village on Friday when she came into contact with a wire and received an electric shock, reports said. The high intensity electric shock caused her on spot death.

Engineer Nabbed With Rs 6000 Bribe

SRINAGAR: The sleuths of Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday arrested a junior engineer in Poonch district for demanding and accepting a bribe from contractors for releasing their payments. According to an ACB spokesperson, Mohammad Rahid Malik, posted as JE in Block Sathra, Poonch demanded a bribe of Rs. 12000 for releasing payment for construction of drain in favour of complainant and five other NREGA card holders. The complainant, he said, alleged that he approached Block development Officer and Assistant Commissioner Development, Poonch for redressal of complaint, but no action was taken by them. On receipt of the complaint, the bureau spokesperson said, a case FIR No.02 of 2021, under section 7 Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 was registered in Police Station ACB Rajouri and investigation was taken up. "A team was constituted that laid a successful trap" **More On P10**

Vaccinating All People Above 45 Years

LG SETS JUNE 30 AS DEADLINE



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Friday fixed June 30 as a deadline for the 100% saturation of the first

dose of vaccination for people above 45 years while directing officials to ensure that 30% of the targeted population falling under 18-44 age group is inoculated with the first dose in the next four days.

Chairing a high-level meeting at the Civil Secretariat here with the members of Covid Task Force, Deputy Commissioners, SPs, and other senior officials, the LG took **More On P10**

J&K Sees 906 New Cases, 17 More Deaths

Jammu and Kashmir's COVID-19 caseload increased to 3,05,772 on Friday with 906 fresh infections while the death toll climbed to 4,160 as 17 more people succumbed to the disease, officials said. While 244 fresh cases were reported from the Jammu division, 662 were from the Kashmir division of the union territory, they said. Srinagar district recorded the highest number of new cases at 156. **More On P10**

...Unauthorized Withdrawal Of Funds 2 ACDs, 12 BDOs Placed Under Suspension

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Governor administration in J&K on Friday suspended two Assistant Commissioners of Development (ACDs) and 12 Block Development Officers (BDOs) for unauthorized withdrawal of funds from E-FMS account.

According to separate orders issued by the Principal Secretary to the Government, Rural Development Department, Bipul Pathak ACDs of north Kashmir's

Baramulla district and South Kashmir's Anantnag district have been placed under suspension for unauthorized withdrawal of funds (excess) from e-FMS account.

An order under number 145 - RD&PR of 2021, dated 11-06-2021 reveals that District Anantnag has withdrawn an amount of Rs. nine lakh from Common account (eFMS, Material & Wages) unauthorizedly.

It further reveals after seeking explanation from ACD, he submitted **More On P10**

With No MPs, PDP Says Can't Be Part Of Delimitation Process

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The People's Democratic Party (PDP) on Friday said it cannot participate in the ongoing delimitation process in Jammu and Kashmir as only elected representatives can take part in it and the party has none at present.

Addressing a press

conference here, chief PDP spokesperson Suhail Bukhari said the delimitation commission has been designed in a way that only elected representatives can be part of the exercise.

Bukhari was asked about the stand of his party as well as that of the Peoples' Alliance for Gupkar Declaration **More On P10**

NC MPs Divided Over Participation

After staying away from the delimitation exercise for over a year, the Members of Parliament from National Conference (NC), are divided over their participation **More On P10**

Rainfall Brings Relief In Kashmir From Heat Wave

Gusty Windstorm Blows Away Rooftops, Uproots Trees

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Kashmir Valley received light rainfall on Friday giving some respite to the residents who were reeling under intense heat wave conditions from the past few days.

The rainfall started in the Valley on Friday evening, dipping the mercury by a few notches and bringing much sought relief to the people from the scorching sun, officials said. Srinagar, the capital city recorded a maximum temperature of 34.0 degrees Celsius, seven notches less than the temperature recorded on Thursday.



As per the data available on meteorological department, Srinagar has recorded the hottest June day ever on

the 29th day of the month in 1978 when mercury touched 37.8 degrees Celsius. There was **More On P10**

Parties Demand Revocation Of Property Tax By Cantonment Board

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: People's Democratic Party (PDP) on Friday demanded the revocation of property tax on the residents within the jurisdiction of Badamibagh Cantonment Board here after some inhabitants claimed to have received such notices.

Addressing a press conference, PDP chief spokesperson Suhail Bukhari said the decision

to levy property tax in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Badamibagh Cantonment Board was arbitrary and must be rolled back immediately.

Badamibagh Cantonment Board, or BB Cantt, is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Defence. There are reports that the people living within the jurisdiction of the Cantonment Board are being asked to pay property tax. **More On P10**

BEMINA SCHOLAR'S DISAPPEARANCE

4 Friends To Undergo Narco-Analysis Test In Gujarat

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Four friends of a PhD scholar, who went missing last June during a trekking expedition, will be taken by police to Gujarat for narco-analysis test, reports said Friday.

The four friends of Hilal Ahmad Dar of Bemina, who went missing on June 13, 2020 during a trek to high altitude

Naranag in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, were summoned by police for questioning into the case, news agency KNT reported Friday. All the four youth had returned home on the same evening, Hilal did not. The family and relatives of Dar had staged multiple protests seeking his whereabouts.

Quoting police sources, the report said **More On P10**

BARAMULLA BLAZE: 'It Was Raining Ash Everywhere'

Zaid Bin Shabir

NOORBAGH, BARAMULLA: The blaze was raging like a hellfire when Ibrahim Sultan woke up and stepped out wearing his slippers and an oversized T-shirt. He was standing near the edge of his locality, witnessing the frenzied flames, smelling smoke and hearing the wailing emergency sirens. The sky overhead had faintly turned glowing orange but a dark fog formed by the rising flames had rapidly smothered it. But just before the wails would resound on the night of June 10, the several matchbox structures of Sweeper Colony, Noorbagh Baramulla were either preparing to have their last



KO Photo Yaqoob Lala

meal of the day or retire to beds. Just then the long night descended after a liquid petroleum gas (LPG)

cylinder started to leak in one of the residences. A subsequent ignition, an explosion and a massive blaze engulfed

the whole colony within no time.

A night after the blaze, Ibrahim turn up to see the pervasive sight of

Govt To Cover Victims Under SDRF, PMAY Scheme

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday provided a relief of Rs 50,000 each to the Noorbagh blaze victims and announced to cover the affected families under the state disaster relief fund (SDRF) and the centrally sponsored **More On P10**

destruction in Noorbagh. Black walls are still emanating a bitter smoke. In the charred debris lies burnt bricks, beddings and books.

"Fire incidents aren't new here," Ibrahim says. "Such blazes erupt on either side of the colony every year. But what happened last night was a fire-storm—engulfing lifetime savings and possessions in just a matter of minutes."

When fire engulfed the first house, the residents thought it was yet another small fire-siege.

But then, the wind gusted sharply and the flames of burning wood floated towards other houses through the air and within 2 or 3 minutes, the second structure was up in flames.

"Within 15 minutes, three

residential houses were nowhere to be seen," Ibrahim, the eye-witness, recalls. "They were all gone. It was raining ash everywhere."

Amid the growing shrieks from the residents, others were desperately calling firemen.

"Even before the arrival of fire brigades would create a sense of calm, it was the local police that saved people from getting injured and also helped in dousing the fire," Altaf A.Churoo, a resident of Noorbagh told Kashmir Observer.

One of the surprising things about the fire is how quickly it had burned.

Police believe that the wooden work inside the residential houses fueled the fire. The material is heavily flammable and burns much **More On P10**



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KASHMIR
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Saturday| 12-06-2021

Coronavirus more likely to spread indoors through maskless interaction: Study

Press Trust of India

Speaking in indoor spaces without wearing a mask poses the greatest risk of spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, to others, a study has found. The research, published in the Journal of Internal Medicine on Tuesday, describes how different sized respiratory droplets emitted while speaking have a range of sizes, and can carry different amounts of virus. According to the researchers of the study, the

most concerning droplets are those of intermediate size that remain suspended in air for minutes. These droplets can be transported over considerable distances by air currents, they noted. "We've all seen some spit droplets flying when people talk but there are thousands more, too small to be seen by the naked eye," said Adriaan Bax, of the US National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. "When the water evaporates from such speech-generated, potentially virus-rich droplets, they float in the air for minutes, like

When the water evaporates from such speech-generated, potentially virus-rich droplets, they float in the air for minutes, like smoke, thus putting others at risk

smoke, thus putting others at risk," said Bax, senior author of the study. The researchers reviewed many studies on the physical and medical aspects of aerosol droplets in virus transmission that have appeared since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They concluded that airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 is not only the dominant pathway for transmitting COVID-19, but unmasked speech in confined spaces represents the activity that poses the greatest risk to others. "Since eating and drinking often take place

indoors and typically involve loud speaking, it should come as no surprise that bars and restaurants have become the epicentre of multiple recent superspreading events," the authors of the study said. They noted that next to vaccination, mitigation strategies should emphasise the use of face masks when speaking, and ensuring adequate ventilation to flush out long-lived aerosols. According to the researchers, such aerosols might otherwise accumulate in closed environments and enhance the risk of more serious lower respiratory tract infections.

Genetics, lifestyle play crucial role in Covid-19 susceptibility: Study

Press Trust of India

Genetics, immunity and life-style are among the contributing factors for Covid-19 susceptibility, an analysis by an international team of scientists said on Friday. The study was directed by Dr Kumarasamy Thangaraj, Director, Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics and Chief Scientist, CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), here, and Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, a press release from CCMB said. With growing data, it is becoming quite clear that there are several factors, including genetics, immunity and life-style, that contribute to Covid-19 susceptibility. CCMBs expertise in population studies is proving useful in understanding

these details of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Vinay Nandicoori, Director, CCMB, said. An earlier study suggested that a specific DNA segment, strongly associated with severe Covid-19 infection and hospitalisation, was found in 50 per cent of South Asians as compared to 16 per cent of Europeans. However, the study concluded that the genetic variants responsible for Covid-19 severity among Europeans may not play a role in coronavirus susceptibility among South Asians, the release said. The scientists have compared infection and case fatality rates with South Asian genomic data over three different timelines during the pandemic, especially large number of populations from India and Bangladesh in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, but it is still unclear why some people experience more severe

symptoms and adverse outcomes than others. In this study, we have compared infection and case fatality rates with South Asian genomic data over three different timelines during the pandemic. We have especially looked into a large number of populations from India and Bangladesh, said Dr Thangaraj. The study also suggests that the genetic variants correlated with Covid-19 outcomes differ significantly among caste and tribal populations of Bangladesh. Scientists working in the area of population studies should be more cautious to interpret their findings by differentiating caste and tribal populations, more explicitly so in the Bangladeshi population, Prof George van Driem, a renowned linguist and co-author of the study, said.

Study suggests more 'fairness' required in conservation

Agencies

The findings of a new study suggests that what is often assumed to be 'fair' in conservation practice might not be considered so by the very people most affected by it. The study published in the journal Environmental Science and Policy also found that a new approach is needed if protected areas are to be effective. From the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies based at James Cook University, Lead author Dr Georgina Gurney said considering local stakeholder conceptions of fairness in conservation is critical. "If conservation is perceived as unfair it can lead to conflict, undermining support and cooperation," Dr Gurney said. She said it is an ethical matter and key to achieving good outcomes for people and the environment. "But what is fairness? Very few studies

have asked this question in the context of conservation, especially marine protected areas." The researchers asked Indigenous communities in Fiji (who hold customary tenure rights to land and sea) about the fairness of five alternative approaches to distributing money paid by tourists to dive in a new co-managed marine protected area. "Our study found local stakeholders considered the 'most fair' way to distribute money from the area was according to who held rights over the area," said co-author Dr Sangeeta Mangubhai, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji Country Program. "They thought the least fair way to distribute money was according to the costs incurred to fishers who were affected by the new rules prohibiting fishing." The findings challenge common assumptions in much of the conservation literature and practice about what constitutes distributional fair-

ness. These often focus on equality and the forgone economic benefits of resource extraction, such as fishing. "Our findings help clarify fairness in global environmental policies and agreements," Dr Mangubhai said. "Explicitly identifying what is considered fair by those most affected by conservation is important during both the planning and evaluation processes." "This practice is especially important in low- and middle-income countries. Conservation practice and policy undertaken in these countries are often shaped by that developed in rich Western countries, which means they are underpinned by Western ideas about fairness." "As the coverage of conservation areas is expected to grow to 30% of the world's surface by 2030, more attention should be given to what local stakeholders consider is fair with regards to related decision-making and the distribution of associated costs and benefits," Dr Gurney said.

Department of (AYUSH) Govt. of J & K. District Anantnag. AYUSH Immuno Booster Medicine Distributed at Village Uranhall Anantnag. from Govt. ISM Dispensary Uranhall Anantnag.

On 11/06/2021; Following the Protocol of AYUSH Department-Ministry of AYUSH Govt. of India and the Orders of Director ISM J&K Dr. Mohan Singh and by the guidelines of ADMO MADAM Dr. Nuzhat Bashir & District Nodal officer Ayush Dr. Mir Javid Hussain sahib an awareness programme and distribution of immune booster medicines was organized at Village Uranhall Anantnag from Govt. AYUSH Dispensary Uranhall Anantnag. 250 beneficiaries received immunity boosting drugs and also were briefed about importance of Ayush immunity boosters in enhancement of human immunity to combat Covid 19 pandemic along other important preventive measures.



mja

OFFICE OF THE MEMBER SECRETARY DISTRICT TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL SOCIETY SRINAGAR

No: DTC/SGR/RNTCP/140
Dated: 09-06-2021

Notice for Hiring of Contractual Positions under RNTCP

Applications on plain paper with 02 copies of latest passport size photographs are invited from eligible candidates of District Srinagar / Ganderbal for filling up of following contractual positions in District TB Society Srinagar under National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) on monthly consolidated remuneration shown against each category for a period of one year. The set eligibility criteria as per Central TB Division and other details for each category of the posts advertised are given below:

S.No	Category / Job Title	No. of Posts	Essential Qualification / Requirements	Preferential Qualification
01	MEDICAL OFFICER DTC	01	1. MBBS or equivalent degree from institution recognized by Medical council of India Must have completed compulsory rotatory internship.	1. Diploma / MD Public Health/ Tuberculosis & Chest diseases. 2. One year experience in RNTCP. 3. Basic knowledge of computers.
02	MEDICAL OFFICER MEDICAL COLLEGE	01	1. MBBS or equivalent degree from institution recognized by Medical council of India. Must have completed compulsory rotatory internship.	1. Diploma / MD Public Health/ PSM/Community Medicine/ CHA/ Tuberculosis & Chest Diseases. 2. One year experience in RNTCP. 3. Basic knowledge of computers.
03	DISTRICT PROGRAMME COORDINATOR	01	1. MBA/PG Diploma in management/health administration from a recognized institute/ university. 2. At least 1 year of work experience.	1. Preference will be given to those who have worked in the field of Development/ Health at District / State level. 2. Basic knowledge of computers.

Other terms and conditions governing the contractual engagement are as under:

- The posts are contractual and do not confer any right for selected candidates to the permanent absorption in the Health Department or District TB Society Srinagar.
 - The term of engagement as mentioned above are for a period of one year, however the term can be extended on account of satisfactory performance.
 - The engagement can be terminated anytime on account of non performance without any notice keeping in view the public health importance of the programme (NTEP).
 - The selected candidates shall have to undergo for various trainings related to his/her position within or outside the State.
- The applications attached with the attested copies of the all relevant testimonials should reach within a period of 14 days from the date of publication of this notification to the office of the District Tuberculosis Officer (Member Secretary) at District Tuberculosis Centre, Druglan, Dalgate, Srinagar. Any application found deficient of required testimonials shall be rejected without any further notice.

S/d
Member Secretary
District Tuberculosis Control Society
Srinagar

DIPK-2707/21

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
Department of Archives, Archaeology & Museums, J&K
Lalmandi, Srinagar
NIT NO:DAMA/02/2021-22
Dated: 10/06/2021
NIT FOR OUTSOURCING HOUSEKEEPING/CLEANING SERVICES AT NEW MUSEUM BUILDING/ ADMINSTRATIVE BUILDING/ MUSEUM LAWNS ETC. FOR THE YEAR 2021-22
Last date of submission of bids 05-07-2021

For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of J&K Sealed tenders in conformity with detail tender call notice are invited from the service provider Agencies/ Firms having valid Registration Certificate, including registration with the Regional Labour Commissioner, EPF Registration, ESI Registration, and PAN Card, up to date, GST/CGST clearance certificate and having similar line of business for more than 3 years towards out-sourcing of Cleaning services in Govt/public sector establishments/buildings in Srinagar.

s.no	Name of Work	Bid security	Cost of Bid Document	Time period
1	OUTSOURCING of HOUSEKEEPING SERVICES for THE NEW MUSEUM BUILDING/ ADMINSTRATIVE BUILDING/ Maintenance LAWNS FOR THE YEAR 2021-222		1000/-	One year

The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be had from the office of the Director, Archives, Archaeology & Museums or can be sought through email jk.dama.gov@gmail.com.

Sd/-
Director,
Archives, Archaeology & Museums, J&K

DIPK-2771/21

اڑنیات قلم اباد

مضمون کاغذات درخواست مخائب مشتاق احمد وارولد غلام نبی وار ساکنہ ہریل ہمراد عطا یگی بیکوارڈ ایراسرٹیکٹ تحت 294 SRO

اشتہار ہمراد آ گاہی ہر خاص وعام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں درخواست سائل دفتر ہذا میں زیر کار روٹی ہے اس سلسلے میں پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ بشمول ریکارڈ طلب کیا گیا ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل موشع ہریل میں رہائش پذیر ہے اور کتبہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے سرٹیفیکٹ اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ ہی م اندر دفتر ہذا میں پیش کرے معیاد اگر نے بعد کوئی بھی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا

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اڑنیات قلم اباد

مضمون کاغذات درخواست مخائب مشتاق احمد وارولد غلام نبی وار ساکنہ ہریل ہمراد عطا یگی بیکوارڈ ایراسرٹیکٹ تحت 294 SRO

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مضمون کاغذات درخواست مخائب اشتفاق احمد گنائی ولد غلام احمد گنائی ساکنہ ہریل ہمراد عطا یگی بیکوارڈ ایراسرٹیکٹ تحت 294 SRO

اشتہار ہمراد آ گاہی ہر خاص وعام

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مضمون کاغذات درخواست مخائب الطاف احمد تاترے ولد غلام نبی تاترے ساکنہ ماور ہمراد عطا یگی بیکوارڈ ایراسرٹیکٹ تحت 294 SRO

اشتہار ہمراد آ گاہی ہر خاص وعام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں درخواست سائل دفتر ہذا میں زیر کار روٹی ہے اس سلسلے میں پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ بشمول ریکارڈ طلب کیا گیا ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل موشع ماور میں رہائش پذیر ہے اور کتبہ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے سرٹیفیکٹ اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ ہی م اندر دفتر ہذا میں پیش کرے معیاد اگر نے بعد کوئی بھی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا

تابع تحصیلدار

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Centre Proposes Eco-Sensitive Zone Around Dachigam

KO News Desk

SRINAGAR: The Centre has come up with a draft proposal to declare 137.75 square kilometres around Dachigam national park, Thajwas (Baltal) and Overa-Aru wildlife sanctuaries as eco-sensitive zones.

In a notification, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has proposed that the eco sensitive zone shall be of 137.75 square kilometers with an extent 0 (zero) to 9.90 kilometers around the boundary of Dachigam National Park, Thajwas (Baltal) wildlife sanctuary and Overa-Aru wildlife sanctuary.

“The zero extent of the eco-sensitive zone is towards the South and South-West side of Overa-Aru Wildlife sanctuary as the Eco-Sensitive Zone boundary passes along the important tourist destination of Pahalgam and Nunwan Camp, the base camp of the famous annual pilgrimage Amarnath Yatra.



Further, the Pahalgam area is under high demand for tourist infrastructural development and is notified under the Development Act as the local area for Pahalgam Development Authority. Also, the area has a sizable resident population and infrastructure,” reads the notifications.

The ministry has asked the public to submit its suggestions over the proposal within 60 days.

The natural boundaries of Dachigam National Park, Overa-

Aru Wildlife Sanctuary and Thajwas Wildlife (Baltal) Sanctuary are connected at landscape level.

“The boundary of Dachigam National Park on North and North Eastern side merges with Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary while as Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary on its North and North-Eastern side merges with Thajwas Wildlife Sanctuary,” reads the notification.

These protected areas hold a significant population of some of the important/endemic species of animals, birds and vegetation. “The eco-sensitive zone proposed makes these areas as one unit and will help gene flow across these areas to flourish biodiversity,” the notification states.

The draft notification proposes that all new and existing mining (minor and major minerals), stone quarrying and crushing units shall be prohibited with immediate effect except for meeting the domestic needs of bona fide local residents including digging of earth for construction or repair of houses within the eco-sensitive zone.

It also states that new industries and expansion of existing polluting industries in the eco-sensitive zone shall not be permitted. But the notification states that non-polluting industries shall be allowed within eco-sensitive zones as per classification of Industries in the guidelines issued by the Central Pollution Control Board in February, 2016, as amended from time to time.

The notification also poses a ban on setting up of new saw mills, brick kilns, and establishment of hydroelectric projects within ESZ.

“No new commercial hotels and resorts shall be permitted within one kilometer of the boundary of the protected area or up to the extent of eco-sensitive zone, whichever is nearer. “Provided that, beyond one kilometer from the boundary of the protected area or up to the extent of eco-sensitive zone whichever is nearer, all new tourist activities or expansion of existing activities shall be in conformity with the Tourism Master Plan and guidelines as applicable,” the notification reads.

According to the notification, a 22-member committee for monitoring implementation of eco-sensitive zone notification shall be headed by divisional commissioner, Kashmir.

The deputy commissioners of Srinagar, Ganderbal, Anantnag and Pulwama will be among its members.

DIAL-EMMA



- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS

SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 1547 - King Ferdinand of Austria subjects himself on Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent
- 1707 - Hungary declares itself independent under Ferenc Rákóczi II (aka Francis II Rákóczi)
- 1721 - England signs Treaty of Madrid
- 1727 - Spain underwrites Preliminary of Paris
- 1753 - Austria, Great Britain & Modena sign secret military treaty.
- 1951 - UN arm forces reach Pyongyang Korea
- 1963 - Vostok 6 launched, pilot is 1st woman cosmonaut
- 1980 - UN Security Council calls for South Africa to free Nelson Mandela
- 1982 - Fahd becomes King of Saudi Arabia after King Khalid dies at 69
- 1983 - NASA's Pioneer 10 becomes the 1st man-made object to leave the solar system
- 1990 - Boeing 767 sets non-stop commercial flight, Seattle to Nairobi Kenya.
- 1993 - Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani re-elected President of Iran.
- 2000 - President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea meets Kim Jong-il, leader of North Korea, for the beginning of the first ever inter-Korea summit, in the northern capital of Pyongyang.
- 2002 - The United States of America withdraws from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
- 2006 - The US Senate issues a formal resolution apologizing for failure to create anti-lynching legislation
- 2007 - The Al Askari Mosque in Samarra is bombed reportedly by Iraqi Baathists, destroying the mosque's two ten-story minarets
- 2012 - A series of bombings across Iraq kill 93 and wound 300 people
- 2015 - Philae, 1st spacecraft to land on a comet in European Space Agency's Rosetta mission re-awakes after 7 months
- 2017 - Otto Warmbier returns to the US in an unresponsive state after being held in Norther Korean jail for 17 months,



HIJRI

CALENDAR

01

ZIQADAT

-UL-

HARAAAM

1442

PRAYERS

FAJR

3: 34

ZUHR

12: 30

ASR

5:30

MAGRIB

7:45

ISHA

9:27

From KO Archives

Hurriyat Being Roped In For Mid-Term Polls: Omar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, today said that the state was moving towards mid-term polls in view of the rap- idly changing political situation. He said that efforts were on to rope in the leadership of the Hurriyat Conference for the election which, according to him could be held either at the end of this year or the start of the next.

The NC chief attacked the PDP, describing it as a “branch of the Congress with headquar- ters in New Delhi” and held die present coalition government responsible for the death of Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah.

“The Assembly elections in the state would be announced anytime as the political situa- tion is witnessing a rapid change. We might have to plunge in the electoral battle any- time.” Omar told party workers at session held in NC head- quarters in memory of Mirza Muhammad Afzal Begic and Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah.

He said that efforts were be- ing made to persuade the Hurriyat leadership and other separatist groups to take part in the polls.

The N C president also launched a scathing attack on the moderate Hurriyat and other separatist leaders who are currently on a visit to Pakistan and Pakistan-controlled Kash- mir (PcK) for their “conflicting statements.” Omar said after becoming a Union Minister, he had advised the Centre to allow the Hurriyat leaders to visit Pa- kistan to enable them to pre- vail upon the militant leadership there to stop bloodshed and help put an end to use of the gun in the state.

“In the Muzaffarabad as- sembly, the Hurriyat leaders talked of silencing the guns, but in a secret meeting with Syed Sala- huddin, they advised the continuation of the role of the gun.” the KNS quoted him as having said “They (Hurriyat leaders) .have misled the Kashmiri people.”

“What was the point in meeting Syed Salahuddin in se- cret when they had publicly an- nounced that they were going to talk to the militant leadership?” he asked.

“No political party, includ- ing the National Conference can claim to be the sole repre- sentative of the state,” Omar said “The participation of all political parties is essential in any ne- gotiations aimed at resolving the Kashmir issue.”

The NC Chief said the party leadership — Sheikh Moham- mad Abdullah and Mirza Mohamad Afzal Beigh had given a roadmap about 60 years ago to resolve the Kashmir issue.

The ongoing peace talks be- tween India and Pakistan and the dialogue initiated by the two countries is part of that road- map, he added.

“We had always urged the Indian and Pakistani leadership to resolve, the Kashmir issue through talks which also include the people of the state. Had they accepted our proposal, there would have been no violence and no bloodshed,” Omar said.

“We would not have lost hundreds of youths and seen this beautiful place being destroyed. The two countries would have shown tremendous progress both socially and economically had they not been embroiled in the dispute,” he added.

The NC President said his party had always favoured opening of all road links between the divided Kashmiris to enable the people to meet each other.

(Kashmir Observer, 12 June, 2005)



A BOY JUMPING into Dal Lake to beat the heat in Srinagar on Friday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Complete Srinagar Ring Road On Time: DC To Officers

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammed Aijaz Asad Friday convened a meeting to review progress of work on major developmental projects in Srinagar.

Chief Planning Officer, Srinagar, Mohammed Yaseen Ione, Assistant Commissioner Nazool, Sandeep Bali, Project Manager NHAI and other officers were present in the meeting.

The meeting held deliberations on status of acquisition of land for Rs 96 crore Ring Road project and the issues with regard to construction of Lasjan Flyover at National Highway by- pass being executed at an estimated project cost Rs 101 crore.

On the occasion, the DC was apprised that the process of



land acquisition has been almost completed and compensa- tion stands already disbursed to concerned citizens.

The DC stressed upon the of- ficers to work with added zeal and in coordinated manner so that the bottlenecks, if any, in the projects are removed to

start physical work on ground without any further delay.

He directed the officers to complete the process of tag marking resuming all works suspended due to Covid-19 pandemic at the earliest to en- sure all projects are completed within the set deadlines.

DC Srinagar Asks Traders, Transporters To Cooperate With Admin

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commis- sioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad Friday urged the peo- ple of Srinagar to exhibit strict compliance to the government directions for larger public safe- ty, health and follow COVID-19 related advisories and guidelines in letter and spirit.

He appealed traders and trans- porters to cooperate with district administration and strictly fol-

low Covid-19 SOPs and precau- tions to control the Covid-19 in- fection.

The DC also urged people to visit nearest vaccination centers and get vaccinated at an earliest to defeat the 2nd wave of Co- vid-19 pandemic.

The DC said that anybody found without a mask in pub- lic places shall have to undergo mandatory Covid testing apart from depositing fine as pre- scribed under rules.

Mayor SMC Reviews Functioning Of Community Centres

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Mayor Srinagar Mu- nicipal Corporation Junaid Azim Mattu along with Deputy Mayor Parvez Ahmad and Commis- sioner SMC Amir Athar on Friday con- ducted a tour of various com- munity centres in the city.

The Mayor while reviewing the Community hall at Abiguzar passed instructions to the con- cerned to expedite the remain- ing completion process so that people can utilise the facility for organising social functions.

During his visit to the Com- munity Centre at Sikh Bagh Lal bazaar, Mattu passed on instruc- tions to the estates officer to prepare and submit an estimate before the Authority for furnish- ing of the Community hall which otherwise is completed in various other respects including water connection, electricity supply, lighting and other basic facilities.

The statement said that lo- cals of the area along with their representative on the occasion



interacted with the Mayor and apprised him about their re- quired demands for the Com- munity hall.

Mattu also took stock of the Community centre / Marriage hall at Mallabagh.

The status and progress report of community centers at Madin Sahib Hawal, Gasi Mohala Safa Kadal and community centre at Noorbagh was also inspected and reviewed by the Mayor.

At Noorbagh Community Centre Mayor passed on directions to make the Community centre fully functional within one month as the major work is completed and requires minor work to be done.

...RAMBAGH-BYPASS ROAD Traffic Police City Issues Advisory



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The City Traffic Po- lice on Friday said that Ram- bagh Natipora, Chanpora and Nowgam stretch of road causes lot of congestion due to its nar- row width.

The police said it has been found necessary to follow one way Traffic in this stretch during peak hours.

It informed the general public that no vehicle shall be allowed to ply towards Chanapora and Nowgam via Natipora from Rambagh between 09:00 am to 11:00 am.

“Only vehicles from Chanapo- ra, Nowgam and Natipora shall move towards City Centre.”

Similarly, it said that no vehicle coming from Chanapora and Nowgam areas via Natipora shall be al- lowed to move towards City Center between 04:00 pm to 07:00 pm. “Only vehicles coming from City Center shall be allowed to move towards Chanapora and Nowgam via Natipora from Rambagh.”

The police requested the mo- torists to cooperate and help in Traffic Management. The traffic plan shall take effect from Mon- day i.e 14th of June 2021.

Levying Of Property Tax Arbitrary: Mir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Former Minister Mo- hammad Ashraf Mir Friday took a strong exception over the reports of levying of property tax by the Bad- ami Bagh Cantonment Board (BBCB) from the locals living in the vicinities of Sonawar, Batwara, Indra Nagar and Shivpora.

In a statement, Mir said that such arbitrary decisions will only tend to create more problems for the people who in advance are facing the brunt of lockdowns due the prevailing pandemic across the country.

“The people living within the ju- risdiction of Badami Bagh Canton- ment area have had their ances- tors living there for ages and now all of a sudden, they are asked to pay taxes for their own properties. It is totally absurd and excruciat- ing for the residents living there,” he remarked.

Mir said that the developmental

“THE PEOPLE LIVING WITHIN THE jurisdiction of Badami Bagh Cantonment area have had their ancestors living there for ages and now all of a sudden, they are asked to pay taxes for their own properties.

works in these areas have been al- ways carried out by the State go- vernment and no minuscule role has been played by the Canton- ment authorities.

“The condition of the roads and internal alleys has become explicitly deplorable and the water-logging problems are persistently reported. The requisite permissions for the construction or even renovations take eons time. When all the devel- opmental works have always been done by the state governments, then in what capacity the people living in these areas are supposed to pay such taxes,” he observed.

He asserted that the condition of numerous metropolitan areas main- tained by such cantonment boards elsewhere in the country are highly

advanced and developed but the case here is total reverse.

“Currently, Delhi Cantonment Board runs 12 Schools, a 49-bedded hospital, maintains about 20 km of public roads widely used by the public but here we are met with a plain disparity. If the BBCB would have also provided such facilities to the civilian population living in the area, then I would have only mentioned accolades for them. But the reality is evident,” he said.

Furthermore, he urged the Central Government to intervene in this matter of grave concern and allow the general public in these areas to live in amity as they have been economically devastated by the vi- ciousness of the pandemic and are unable to pay such heavy taxes.

Ex-Mossad Chief Reveals Operations Against Iran In A Revelatory Interview



Agencies

Yossi Cohen, the ex-Mossad chief, has given a revelatory interview just days after stepping down as the head of the intelligence agency.

The ex-top spy of the Israeli intelligence agency revealed the details about the theft of Iran's nuclear archive.

Cohen revealed that Iran's nuclear archives were stolen by Mossad from safes in a warehouse in Tehran.

The ex-Mossad chief hinted the agency's involvement in the assassination of Iran's top nuclear scientist, confirmed that the scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, had been in Mossad's sights for years.

Cohen gave what appears to be the most revelatory interview by a Mossad Chief to journalist Ilan Dayan on Channel 12's Uvda documentary program, which was approved by Israel's military censors and was broadcasted on Israeli television on Thursday night.

Cohen was appointed as Mossad chief in late 2015 by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The ex-Mossad chief neither confirmed nor deny his involvement in the assassination of Iran's nuclear scientist, however, he said that Fakhrizadeh "most troubled us from the point of view of the science, the knowledge, the scientists of the Iranian military nuclear program," and therefore "he was a target for [intelligence] gathering for many years."

"If the man constitutes a capability that endangers the citizens of Israel, he must stop existing," Cohen said as quoted by The Times of Israel.

He also added that someone could be spared "if he is prepared to change profession and not harm us any longer".

"Yossi Cohen cannot take responsibility for this action, but his personal signature is on the entire operation," said interviewer Dayan of Fakhrizadeh's assassination.

Russia To Supply Advanced Satellite To Iran: Report



REUTERS

WASHINGTON: Russia is preparing to provide Iran with an advanced satellite that would enable it to track potential military targets across the Middle East, the Washington Post reported on Thursday.

The plan would deliver a Russian-made Kanopus-V satellite equipped with a high-resolution camera which could be launched from Russia within months, the Post said.

The report was published days before US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet in Geneva and as Iran and the United States are engaged in indirect talks on reviving a 2015 nuclear deal designed to put curbs on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for easing economic sanctions.

The satellite would allow "continuous monitoring of facilities ranging from Persian Gulf oil refineries and Israeli military bases to Iraqi barracks that house US troops," said the paper, which cited three unnamed sources - a current and

a former US official and a senior Middle Eastern government official briefed on the sale.

While the Kanopus-V is marketed for civilian use, leaders of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps have made several trips to Russia since 2018 to help negotiate the agreement, the Post said.

Russian experts travelled to Iran this spring to help train crews who would operate the satellite from a newly built facility near Karaj west of Tehran, it added.

The satellite would feature Russian hardware, the Post said, "including a camera with a resolution of 1.2 meters -- a significant improvement over Iran's current capabilities, though still far short of the quality achieved by US spy satellites."

The Revolutionary Guards said in April 2020 that they had successfully launched the country's first military satellite into orbit, prompting then-US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to call for Tehran to be held accountable because he believed the action defied a UN Security Council resolution.

UK Says Delta Variant 60% More Transmissible Amid Rise In Covid Cases



Agence France-Presse

LONDON: The British government said Friday that the new Delta coronavirus variant is 60 percent more transmissible in households than the variant that forced the country to lock down in January.

The Delta variant, which first emerged in India, has caused a rise in cases in the UK, prompting questions about whether social distancing restrictions will be lifted as planned from June 21.

New research from Public Health England "suggests that the Delta variant is associated with an approximately 60 percent increased risk of household transmission" compared to the Alpha variant identified in Kent, south-east England.

The Kent variant caused a surge of Covid cases in January leading to a three-month lockdown as hospitals were stretched to near-capacity.

The government ramped up its public vaccination drive in response, and has now given two doses of vaccine to nearly 29 million adults and one dose to nearly 41 million.

Daily cases rose to 7,393 on Thursday, a level not seen since February. More than 90 percent of new cases were of the Delta variant, ministers said.

However the number of patients in hospital remains low, at just over 1,000 on Thursday, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock has said most inpatients have not had any vaccine.

The government said this suggested the vaccination

programme is mitigating the impact of the Delta variant, urging the public to get both jabs.

Jenny Harries, chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said that "two doses provide significantly more protection" against the Delta variant than one.

The UK has reported 127,867 deaths from the virus, the worst toll in Europe.

Under the government roadmap, England plans to drop rules on numbers at social gatherings and allow large weddings and reopening of nightclubs from June 21.

But officials have stressed that they are open to changing this date if the virus situation changes, with a decision due next week, as many businesses push for full reopening.

AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine Linked With Small Risk Of Low Blood Platelets: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON: The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, also known as Covishield, may be associated with a very small risk of developing a blood condition characterised by low platelet counts, according to a nationwide study in the UK.

The increased risk of the condition, known as idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP), is estimated to be 11 per million doses, similar to figures seen in vaccines for flu, and measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), the researchers said.

A low number of platelets -- blood cells that help prevent blood loss when vessels are damaged -- can result in no symptoms or can lead to an increased risk of bleeding or, in some cases, clotting, they said.

The team, led by researchers at the University of Edinburgh in the UK, noted that people at most risk from ITP tended to be older -- a median age of 69 years old -- and had at least one underlying chronic health problem such as coronary heart disease, diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

The researchers were unable to establish a definitive link between other forms of clotting -- including the rare form called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis or CVST --



due to the very low number of cases in vaccinated people included in the study.

The study of 5.4 million people in Scotland, of whom 2.5 million had received their first vaccine dose, is the first analysis of ITP, clotting and bleeding events following vaccination for an entire country.

The authors of the study, published in the journal Nature Medicine on Wednesday, emphasised that the increased chance of developing ITP after receiving the vaccine remains smaller than the risk of developing it because of COVID-19.

They noted that the rare risk should not deter the roll out of the vaccine programme.

The same risk of ITP was not found for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Other vaccines were not included in the study.

The researchers analysed a dataset as part of the EAVE II project, which uses anonymised linked patient data to track the pandemic and the vaccine roll out in real time.

They investigated data up to April 14, 2021 for people in

Scotland who had received the first dose of either vaccine.

By this date, over 1.7 million had an Oxford-AstraZeneca jab and some 800,000 had a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Experts recommend that recipients of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine should be made aware of the slight increased risks of ITP, but also stress that the risk of developing these disorders from COVID-19 is potentially much higher.

UK's Medical and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) had previous reported low platelet counts in combination with blood clots following vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine, estimated to occur at a rate of approximately 13 per million first doses.

The researchers, including those from the universities of Strathclyde, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Oxford, Swansea and St Andrew's, also looked at health records dating back to September 2019 to investigate any previous issues with ITP, clotting or bleeding disorders.

The data was then compared with those who were yet to be vaccinated to determine if any clotting events were outside what would have been expected pre-pandemic.

Turkey's Troops Should Leave Afghanistan Under 2020 Deal: Taliban

REUTERS

Turkey should withdraw its troops from Afghanistan under the 2020 deal for the pullout of foreign forces, a Taliban spokesman has said, effectively rejecting Ankara's proposal to guard and run Kabul's airport after the United States-led NATO forces depart.

The development raises serious questions for the US, other countries and international organisations with missions in Kabul about how to securely evacuate their personnel from landlocked Afghanistan, should fighting threaten the capital, Reuters news agency reported on Thursday.

It also appeared to dash Ankara's hopes of using the securing of Kabul airport to help improve ties with Washington -- strained by Turkey's purchase of Russian defence systems -- in talks set for Monday between President Joe Biden and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Asked in a text message whether the Taliban rejected Turkey's proposal to keep forces in Kabul to guard and run the international airport after other foreign troops leave, the Taliban spokesman in Doha responded that they should go as well.

"Turkey was part of NATO forces in the past 20 years, so as such, they should withdraw from Afghanistan on the basis of the agreement we signed with US on 29th Feb 2020," Suhail Shaheen told Reuters.

"Otherwise, Turkey is a great Islamic country. Afghanistan has had historical relations with it. We hope to have close and good relations with them as a new Islamic government is established in the country in future," he added.

The State Department and the Turkish foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment, Reuters said.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke on Thursday with Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar to "discuss bilateral cooperation and regional issues," the Pentagon said in a statement,



which did not specifically mention Afghanistan.

Under the February 2020 deal between the Taliban and the US signed by former President Donald Trump's administration, all US forces were to be out of Afghanistan by May 1.

But Biden said in April that the pullout would be completed by the 20th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US that prompted the US-led invasion and removal of the Taliban government that sheltered the al-Qaeda group.

Turkish officials say they made the Kabul airport proposal at a NATO meeting in May when the US and its partners agreed to a plan to withdraw their forces by September 11 after 20 years of backing the Afghan government in a war against the Taliban.

With violence raging, many US legislators and current and former officials fear the departure of the foreign forces and stalled peace talks are pushing Afghanistan into an all-out civil war that could return the Taliban to power.

The Pentagon says the US withdrawal is more than 50 percent complete. Turkey, with more than 500 soldiers still in Afghanistan training security forces, now has the largest foreign military contingent there.

Australia closed its embassy last month because of security concerns. The Taliban's effective rejection of the Turkish plan to secure the airport could prompt other countries to shutter their missions.

The development also poses a quandary for the Biden administration, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken promising as recently as this week at a Congressional hearing to maintain a US diplomatic presence in Kabul.

20 Pilgrims Die, 10 Critically Injured In Pakistan Bus Crash



REUTERS

QUETTA (PAKISTAN): A bus crammed with pilgrims coming back from a religious festival crashed in southwest Pakistan on Friday killing at least 20 and leaving 10 others critically injured, officials and a hospital doctor said.

The bus careened off the road into a ditch during the early morning in the Karkh area of Khuzdar district, in Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan.

"The bus was overloaded, and passengers were even travelling on the roof of the bus," a Pakistani security official in the area told Reuters after paramilitary forces and soldiers were sent to

help the survivors. "We have received 20 bodies and over 40 injured in Khuzdar district hospital," Dr. Manzoor Zahir told Reuters, adding that the condition of at least 10 of the injured was serious and the death count could increase.

Deputy Commissioner Khuzdar Bashir Ahmed told Reuters the victims were pilgrims who were returning from attending a religious festival honouring a local Muslim saint, and the victims were from the province of Sindh. Ahmed said all the dead were males.

Traffic and rail accidents are commonplace in Pakistan, partly because of the poor state of roads and track.

NEWS MAKERS

French Man Given 4-Month Sentence For Slapping President Macron

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A 28-year-old Frenchman who described himself as a right-wing or extreme-right patriot was sentenced to four months in prison Thursday for slapping President Emmanuel Macron in the face.

Damien Tarel was also banned from ever holding public office in France and from owning weapons for five years over the swipe Tuesday, which caught Macron's left cheek with an audible thwack as the French leader was greeting a crowd.

During Thursday's trial, Tarel testified that the attack was impulsive and unplanned, and prompted by anger at France's decline.

He sat straight and showed no emotion as the court in the southwestern city of Valence convicted



him on a charge of violence against a person invested with public authority. He was sentenced to four months in prison and handed an additional 14-month suspended sentence. His girlfriend broke down in tears.

Tarel, who shouted a centuries-old royalist war cry as he hit the president, described himself as a right-wing or extreme-right patriot and member of the yellow vest economic protest movement that shook Macron's presidency in 2018 and 2019. Poised and calm, he firmly defend-

ed his action and his views on Macron, without providing details of what policies he wants France to change.

Tarel acknowledged hitting the president with a rather violent slap. When I saw his friendly, lying look, I felt disgust, and I had a violent reaction, he told the court. It was an impulsive reaction...

I was surprised myself by the violence. While he said he and his friends had considered bringing an egg or a cream pie to throw at the president, he said they dropped the idea and insisted that the slap wasn't premeditated.

I think that Emmanuel Macron represents the decline of our country, he said, without explaining what he meant.

He told investigators that he held right- or ultra-right political convictions without being a mem-

ber of a party or group, according to the prosecutor's office.

The slap called attention to an assortment of ultra-right groups bubbling beneath France's political landscape, which are considered increasingly dangerous despite their small following.

Macron wouldn't comment Thursday on the trial, but insisted that nothing justifies violence in a democratic society, ever.

It's not such a big deal to get a slap when you go toward a crowd to say hello to some people who were waiting for a long time, he said in an interview with broadcaster BFM-TV. We must not make that stupid and violent act more important than it is. At the same time, the president added, we must not make it banal, because anyone with public authority is entitled to respect.

Pakistan's National Assembly Passes Bill To Give Right Of Appeal To Kulbhushan Jadhav

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Pakistan government has rushed through the National Assembly a bill to provide the right of appeal to Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav amidst ruckus and boycott by the Opposition.

The lower house of Parliament passed the ICJ (Review and Re-consideration) Bill, 2020 on Thursday. The bill is aimed at allowing Jadhav to have consular access in line with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) verdict.

Jadhav, the 51-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.



The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

The ICJ, in its 2019 verdict, had asked Pakistan to provide a proper forum for appeal against the sentence given to Jadhav.

The bill was among 21 laws passed by the National Assembly on Thursday evening, ignoring protests by the Opposition lawmakers who wanted the proper reading of bills.

But the government suspended rules of business regarding legislation to bulldoze 21 laws in a single sitting.

Speaking after the passage of the bill, Law Minister Farogh Nasim said had they not passed the bill, India would have gone to the UN Security Council and could have moved contempt proceedings against Pakistan in the ICJ.

Nasim said the bill was being passed in light of the verdict of the ICJ which had asked Pakistan to provide a credible review opportunity to Jadhav.

He said by passing the law, they had proved to the world that Pakistan was a "responsible state".

DDC Anantnag Exhorts Officers To Complete PMGSY Roads In Time



Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Anantnag, Dr Piyush Singla Thursday said that strong road infrastructure is important to enhance the connectivity across the district besides giving convenience to public commuting on these roads.

The DDC said this while reviewing the progress on PMGSY roads in a meeting with officers and engineers of PMGSY, revenue and other concerned departments at Dak Bungalow Khanabal.

Dr Singla directed the con-

cerned officers to immediately settle routine hindrances like court cases, ROWs, forest issues, contractor issues, shifting of utilities, compensation etc so that road infrastructure is developed in the shortest possible time.

He also directed the officers of PMGSY to fully utilise the current working season and complete the ongoing/pending works in a time bound manner. He also called for greater coordination among the line departments for removing the bottlenecks in larger public interest.

The DDC stressed on strengthening of physical connectivity adding that the same would ameliorate the public woes caused by damaged roads and non-availability of road links besides boosting various economic activities in the district.

The SDMs and Tehsildars were asked to extend full cooperation for sorting out the revenue matters of the PMGSY roads. He also directed officers of other related departments viz PDD, Jal Shakti, etc to shift the utilities soon so that the targets are achieved in time.

GMC Bla Efficiently Providing Covid, Non-Covid Medicare Services: Principal

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: Briefing about the performance recorded in the wake of 2nd wave of COVID-19 pandemic, Principal Govt Medical College (GMC) Baramulla, Dr Ruby Reshi said that both the COVID-19 as well Non-COVID related medical services were delivered efficiently and in a hassle free manner.

The Principal said that COVID-19 patients and other patients were treated smoothly during the critical circumstances without having any impact on one another.

Dr Ruby informed that two COVID-19 wellness centres were simultaneously operated, one at Indoor Sports Stadium and other at the GMC, in which the functionaries worked tirelessly day in and day out.

She said that mass testing was conducted and over 2000 tests are being conducted on a daily basis which is highest in the Kashmir valley. She also said that results of these tests are declared within 24 hours and 5 percent samples are being forwarded to SKIMS for further medical examination and research.



Dr Ruby further said that testing services in the virology lab of the College has tripled or even quadrupled during the 2nd wave and 3 RT-PCR setups have been established in the lab. She also said that various initiatives are being taken to augment the overall functioning of the college which will prove beneficial in future.

While appreciating and extending gratitude to health workers and other associated stakeholders, the Principal said that various authorities, especially district administration and NHM extended their utmost cooperation during these tough times which made it possible to provide qualitative and efficient healthcare services to the people.

Over One Lakh Covid Vaccine Jabs Inoculated In Kulgam: DC



Observer News Service

KULGAM: The District Administration Kulgam is rigorously conducting Covid vaccination drive across the district and has administered more than one lac doses to the eligible population so far, Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din-Bhat said.

The DC said that the administration has started door to door and evening vaccination drives across the district, and this initiative picked up well and has witnessed immense public response across the district.

He said the district administration is close to achieving the target of cent percent inoculations of the age group of above 45 years.

To vaccinate ST and migratory population in district mobile vaccination teams have been deployed in the service added the DC.

He said the strict implementation of guidelines led to decrease in positivity rate and recovery rate reached above 90 percent.

People In Pulwama Dumping Waste In Canals As Govt Fails To Provide Facility: Bandh

Observer News Service

PULWAMA: Vice Chairperson District Development Council Pulwama Mukhtar Ahmad Bandh Friday said that Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-Gramin) programme has failed to clean up rural areas in J&K particularly in Pulwama district as large amounts of solid and liquid waste isn't being treated by authorities and money available under the scheme isn't being utilised.

He appealed to Chief Secretary A K Mehta to intervene. "We see not even a single project in operation in J&K. In a recent article that appeared in a local English daily a detailed report

had been published on this issue. Not even a single project on waste management has been executed in the entire J&K. The situation is much worse in Pulwama and other districts," he said.

Bandh said that solid and liquid waste is being dumped in canals and rivers by people as Govt hasn't been able to provide any facility to people.

He said that Rural Sanitation department has failed to execute waste management projects in spite of facts that funds around Rs 20 lakhs is available for each gram panchayat with Govt of India but the DPRs are not prepared nor have the technical people been hired as per SBM G Guidelines.

Govt's Intention Holistic Development Of Every District: Kansal



Observer News Service

PULWAMA: Principal Secretary Power Development Department (PDD), Rohit Kansal Friday said that the intention of the government is to create a vision for every district in order to have holistic development in terms of infrastructure and socio-economical upliftment of these administrative units.

He was chairing a meeting to review progress under the Capex budget 2020-21 and discuss the annual Capex plan for the current financial year of District Pulwama.

He said that the reason behind nominating Administrative Secretaries as incharge secretaries of districts is to have a guardian and mentor for every district for handholding and to share their administrative experiences with the district administration.

He called upon the departments to have a close coordination among themselves for any developmental project in the district.

He impressed upon the heads of the department to finish all the works within given deadlines with respect to all the Centrally Sponsored Schemes and works taken under CAPEX Budget 2021-22.

He emphasised for timely submission of audit reports, UCs, action taken reports so that the works would be finished in time.

He directed the officers that besides focusing on infrastructure works they should also identify other activities which include social welfare schemes and focusing also on economic activities of their area while making any developmental plans for the district.

With respect to the demand of stadium and playing fields in the area, he asked the revenue department to identify lands for the purpose.

Commenting on the Back to Village Programme, Block Diwas and Jan Abhiyan, Principal

Secretary maintained that the aim of these programmes is to take the administration at the doorsteps of the people.

He directed the officers that during Block Diwas they must focus on 100 percent saturation of beneficiary oriented schemes, besides issuance of certificates like Domicile, Income, RBA and other Revenue related documents.

About the beautification plan of Pulwama town, the Principal Secretary asked the officers to come up with a holistic plan and consult Urban Planning Consultant while taking into consideration all the aspects of aesthetics and beautification of the area before executing any work.

With respect to electricity supply in the district, the Principal Secretary said that the PDD department is investing Rs 5000 crore in different schemes for the purpose and the district will also be covered under such schemes.

THE REASON BEHIND NOMINATING ADMINISTRATIVE Secretaries as incharge secretaries of districts is to have a guardian and mentor for every district for handholding and to share their administrative experiences with the district administration."

Shopian Village Witnesses Lowest Covid Positivity Rate

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: The Hirpora village situated on the historical Mughal road in Shopian district has so far recorded the lowest Covid-19 positivity rate in the district.

The local Health Authorities of the district attribute the lowest positivity rate in the village to the strict adherence of Covid-19 SOPs and guidelines issued by the Government from time to time.

Earlier, during the first wave of the pandemic, this Hirpora village was considered as the hot bed of the coronavirus as more

HEALTH Authorities of the district attribute the lowest positivity rate in the village to the strict adherence of Covid-19 SOPs."

number of Covid Positive cases were reported from this village than any other in the district.

But, the locals have learnt a lesson from the first wave of the pandemic and are strictly ensuring usage of masks, hand sanitizers, maintaining social distancing and washing hands properly besides sanitization around their surroundings to

avoid the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, added the health authorities.

Despite unlocking and partial resumption of activities, the traders, transporters, fruit growers, religious leaders, Imams and people in general are adhering to the SOPs and guidelines religiously to avoid repetition of happenings in the first wave.

The Health Authorities said, it is due to this reason that the situation arising is under control in the village and the rate of positivity during the 2nd wave is witnessing a massive decline.

Anantnag Officers Directed To Intensify Efforts For Ensuring 100 Percent Vaccination

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Piyush Singla Thursday directed the concerned officers to intensify efforts for ensuring cent percent vaccination of the priority/target population

in a time bound manner.

Showing satisfaction over performance of health and other concerned departments, Dr. Singla asked the officers to work harder and fine tune the strategies at micro-level for better results.

He also exhorted for strong coordination among AEROS

(Tehsildars), BMOs and BLOs to plan things and frame lists at Polling Station level for vaccinating the remaining target population soon.

The meeting was attended by ADC (S), all SDMs, ACR, Tehsildars, CMO, Dy. CMO and other concerned officers.

Joint Efforts Helped In Mitigating Covid Crisis In Kupwara: DC

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Imam Din Friday said that the joint efforts by Health, Civil and Police administration in mitigation process of COVID-19 has yielded better results on ground across district Kupwara, but it is still advisable for all to adhere to COVID Appropriate Behaviour (CAB) religiously and vaccinate themselves at nearest vaccination centres.

Giving details, the DC said that

the recovery rate has increased upto 91.10 percent, positivity rate has drastically come down to 5.3 percent in the district.

The DC said that the number of total positive cases in the district is 13058 while the number of recovered patients is 11896. He said the district has witnessed 149 deaths since the beginning of Covid-19.

Regarding isolation of positive cases, the DC said that 76 positive cases are in Hospital isolation while 952 positive cases are under home isolation.

VC SKUAST Stresses On Transforming Traditional Agriculture Into Profit-oriented Business Entities



SRINAGAR: The vice chancellor of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Prof JP Sharma, Friday stressed on the importance of industry interface interaction with the industry so that the gap between the industrial requirement and academia can be minimised.

He stressed that mechanisation should be regional and crop-specific, particularly when the landholding size is shrinking, and water resources are dwindling at both the UT level and national level. He highlighted the need for transformation of the traditional agricultural system from a 'way to life' into a dynamic profit-oriented business entity.

He was speaking during a

daylong industry interface with more than 10 reputed agri-tech industrialists of the country.

Director Planning and PI NAHEP, Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai, talked about the idea of making the industry our stakeholders for mutual interests. He observed that skilled human capital and innovations are the important determinants for the growth of the industries. Working with industries, SKUASTK aims to build an outcome-based education system that shall help the industry in these two endeavours. The collaboration shall make our graduates skilled in new-age technologies, entrepreneurial and industry-ready and increasing their employability for high paid industries.

Govt Asks PDD To Evolve Strategy For Rational Power Distribution

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta Friday asked the PDD to draw a strategy for regular preventive maintenance drives to fix minor faults in the auxiliary machinery and equipment at all grid stations.

"Timely repairs and restoration works will not only cost less but will also prevent major malfunctions and failures in the future", he said.

He was speaking during a meeting convened to review the recent power outages in Jammu region.

Principal Secretary, Power Development Department and Chief Engineers along with MD, Power DISCOMs participated in the meeting.

It was informed that Jammu province has witnessed a year-on-year increase in power utilization and maximum load capacity by 29.43% and 11.36%, respectively. The Chief Secretary directed the Department to rationally analyze supply and demand of electricity in various regions of the Union territory. He further directed regular monitoring of issues related to power transmission channels and ensuring uninterrupted power supply during the ongoing summer season.

Expressing concern on the distribution losses of over 70% in some feeders, the Chief Secretary directed taking immediate measures for checking AT&C losses on priority at such feeders and fixing of accountability.

To make public grievance redressal prompt and efficient, especially in times of power failure, the Department was asked to ensure round-the-clock accessibility of field officers in their respective jurisdictions and give wide publicity to the contact numbers.

Patnitop Ropeway Reopens For Weekend Operations



Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Patnitop ropeway in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir started weekend commercial operations on Friday, over a month after it was closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The 2.8-km cable car project is the first-of-its-kind leisure, lifestyle and adventure destination, located amidst bountiful nature, in the lap of the Himalayas.

"Skyview by Empyrean, the recently launched hospitality venture of Empyrean Skyview Private Limited (ESPP) is now open at Sanget-Patnitop for visitors starting today (Friday) for weekends only -- 11 am until 5pm," its managing director, Syed Junaid Altaf, said.

Last year, the ropeway resumed its operations on October 10 after remaining closed for more than six months due to the outbreak of the coronavirus. "We look forward to welcoming visitors to this unique and holistic adventure and lifestyle destination," Junaid said.

He said the Skyview is an ideal getaway for locals and tourists who visit nearby Katra, the base camp for Vaishno Devi pilgrimage, for religious tourism and for those looking to combine or extend their stay in Patnitop.

Spread over 22 acres in the panoramic Sanget valley and Patnitop, Skyview is just a 90-minute drive from the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine.

Teenager Drowns In Poonch

Observer News Service

POONCH: A fifteen-year-old boy Friday drowned in a river in his native village in Jhullas sector of Poonch district.

Locals said that the boy Prabhu Dayal son of Ram Sharma was bathing in Khari Nallah. The boy's body was retrieved in an unconscious condition and he was rushed to District Hospital Poonch. The doctors declared the boy dead on arrival.

Abducted Girl Recovered In Baramulla, Accused Arrested

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: Jammu and Kashmir Police Friday recovered an abducted girl and arrested the accused involved in the crime.

A police spokesperson in a statement said that Police Post Wusan received an information from Ghulam Hassan Dar son of Abdul Khaliq Dar, a resident of Tengpora Pattan stating that his daughter has been kidnapped by Ishaq Ahmad Dar son of Ghulam Mohammad Dar, a resident of Tengpora Pattan.

He said a case under relevant sections of law was registered at Police Station Pattan.

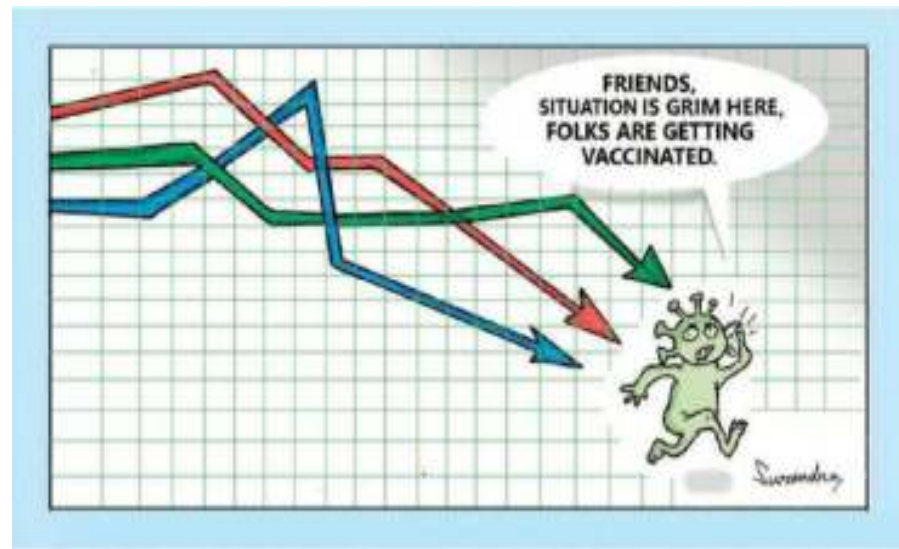
"On receipt of the information, officers from Police Station Pattan recovered the abducted girl from Tengpora Crossing in Pattan. Accused involved in the commission of the crime was also arrested."

After completing the medico-legal formalities, the recovered girl was handed over to her legal heirs. Further investigation into the case is going on.

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NO HOLDS BARRED



The elections are far away, and the middle class can be unpredictable, but grief is not like an election manifesto, it can't be forgotten easily. Uttar Pradesh polls next year are crucial and perhaps Covid would have taught the government not to call out victory in advance. Or maybe it hasn't.

The Impending crisis: US exit from Afghanistan

Malik Javid

They have thrown the field open for the next civil war to unleash after hastily signing a face saving exit deal in the name of peace deal without giving any due consideration to the peaceful future of Afghanistan. The US has already accepted it as fait accompli that Taliban is going to take over Afghanistan again after their exit. Instead of handing over military infrastructure, arms and ammunition to ANSF, they are destroying most of it

History may repeat itself too soon in Afghanistan. Nearly three decades back, when the last Soviet soldier left the Afghan soil, the events that unfolded then may get replicated exactly with NATO exit too. Afghanistan famously considered as a graveyard for foreign invaders due to its rocky treacherous terrain, often gives undue strategic advantage to local Afghans to overpower their opponents, who are not acclimatized to fight amid such tough and testing conditions. Who would have thought then that the euphoria of Soviet exit was just an illusion for the landlocked Afghan nation as the worst was yet to unfold for them in the form of a bloody civil war that started between the local warlords from different provinces to conquer the fortress of Kabul. Historical records are testimony to this fact that more casualties of civilians were reported due to infighting between these warlords on Afghan soil than the war with Soviet forces. That ultimately paved the way for Talib's (Arabic word for students), then studying in Islamic seminaries of Frontier provinces of Pakistan to come together under the banner of a new organization called Taliban to wage a brutal war of aggression with the aid of Pak-Saudi alliance jointly funded by CIA against these warlords just to tighten its grip on the whole Afghan affairs.

What followed after this was the beginning of the infamous Taliban regime. Afghanistan was rechristened from "republic" to Islamic republic of Afghanistan. Religion was forced on people under the guise of shariah law, the world was squeezed for women to four walls, public hanging for crime was endorsed and Afghanistan became the new breeding ground for many Islamic fundamentalist organisations like Al Qaeda to flourish.

Post 9/11 attack on the twin towers of America, which the US blamed on Al Qaeda forces operating from Afghanistan, turned the world upside down for Afghanistan as America with its NATO allies invaded Afghan territory to quench their thirst of revenge. Since then, US has been caught in a quagmire of a no win war in Afghanistan, after spending billions of dollars on sustaining its army on foreign soil and training local Afghan army in combat warfare skills and building civilian infrastructure. However, they are back to square one again by deciding to call it a day and leaving Afghanistan on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 and leaving it in the hands of divided mainstream politicians, poorly equipped and with the amateur ANSF(Afghan National Security Force).

With the intra Afghan talks between the civilian government of Afghanistan led by Ashraf Ghani



and Taliban interlocutors yet to reach a final agreement over prisoner's swap deal and removal of UN economic and trade sanctions, one can speculate only two scenarios arising out of these intra Afghan talks scheduled to be held in Istanbul in near future. One positive aspect is that if both parties agree on some common minimum peace programme for a better future of Afghanistan and Taliban agrees to be a part of a pluralistic government, then in that case it will be a win-win situation for the whole of Asia. But there are spoilers as well. If peace talks fail and Taliban considers using force as a way forward, then the world might see a Deja vu moment of the 90s yet again. The situation in Afghanistan might plunge into another humanitarian crisis.

Many experts did not appreciate the decision of the US president to pull out its forces, as by doing so they have thrown the field open for the next civil war to unleash after hastily signing a face saving exit deal in the name of peace deal without giving any due consideration to the peaceful future of Afghanistan. The US has already accepted it as fait accompli that Taliban is going to take over Afghanistan again after their exit. Instead of handing over military infrastructure, arms and ammunition to ANSF, they are destroying

most of it. This is a clear sign that they don't trust the capabilities of ANSF and they fear ANSF might surrender before the might of Taliban post NATO exit just as they did post the soviet exit.

With the Taliban already enjoying control over 30% of the area in Afghanistan, it is only going to increase its base when ANSF finds itself weak after the NATO exit. As per the recent report of Washington post, fighting has intensified from past months with battlegrounds shifting from local to urban areas now. This has set alarm bells ringing for mainstream Afghan politicians and bureaucrats about their uncertain future. The coming months are going to be very challenging for Afghanistan. The world might have to witness a civil war crisis yet again in this war-torn nation in the absence of ideal peace negotiations between parties in conflict.

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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The Indian middle-class was having a moment, a rather extended one at that. Then, the pandemic struck. Initially there was resistance - our un-hygiene will keep us healthy, its members proclaimed. Little did science know this was only the beginning.

In the last 7 years, India's middle class has often reminded me of the IPL cheer leaders - always dressed up for showtime, and there has always been an act. Shakespeare would have been left wondering if he got it all wrong.

It watched as its leaders campaigned without a mask - on their face or otherwise as they lulled voters in. But all was well. It wasn't them and they weren't there.

Like the front bench in class always looking to please the teacher, the middle class often in the last few years worried about failing its politicians.

As Mark Twain once said, "It is easier to fool people than to convince them they have been fooled." So, pictures of millions taking a dip at the Kumbh made them switch the channel instantly, what you can't see, can't hurt you.

Then the pandemic struck

But then it came for them. Suddenly, they began to lose parents, wives, friends and even children. Middle-class India was on the roads, standing in long queues for oxygen cylinders and hospital admissions.

All is well, tweeted the health minister- he thought he had this, headline management and social media distraction were schemes launched right at the beginning. But when the minister looked around, he was alone on a sinking ship.

In hospitals only healthcare worked,

for saving lives only infrastructure mattered. The chests began to shrink, polarisation, the faithful learnt did not buy drugs or get them vaccinated. Nor did statues and ambitious new buildings.

Their savings dwindled and just like that so did the middle class. Pew Research report says 32 million people in the country crossed a line and plunged into poverty. This was last year, by most accounts expect much higher numbers in the second wave, but data has never been our strong point.

Press the rewind button

Circa 2014, Madison Square Garden, New York. 20,000 jubilant Indian NRIs listened to the Prime Minister as he asked them to invest in cleaning-up the Ganga.

Those who haven't seen the river in decades thumped their fists in joy, this was the home of their forefathers never mind that it wasn't for them. Today, bodies are floating in the same Ganga.

5 years later, there was 'Howdy Houston'- a slogan a day kept uncomfortable questions at bay while engagements continued with his bands of loyalists- the di-

COVID-19 and India's 7-year itch with the BJP

When the pandemic struck, statues or swanky buildings meant nothing. Only oxygen mattered.

Jyotsna Mohan



aspora abroad especially in the US.

The middle-class back home was complimentary- it was a buy one, get one free scheme, both enablers of where we

stand today.

Indians though were still running Silicon Valley and their children still acing Spelling Bee, but back home it was

no longer the land of Buddha. We finally learnt to stand up but unfortunately in the words of Virat Kohli, in this "representation of the new India,"

A war of words

There was nothing healthy in a debate, every logical reasoning had an equal and opposite reaction. The Congress was 'corrupt' and the unbearable price hike during its rule once made even Amitabh Bachchan's middle class speak up. These days with fuel at Rs100/litre he wants to only tell us kaun banega crorepati.

We were also constantly reminded of emergency, but we needed no reminder. The rest was on Nehru.

Politics has no friends and in the last 7 years it made sure we also lost some of ours. When the pandemic hit, a society that was already socially distanced, was asked to keep its distance.

Until death came at our doorsteps

The elections are far away, and the middle class can be unpredictable, but grief is not like an election manifesto, it can't be forgotten easily.

Uttar Pradesh polls next year are crucial and perhaps Covid would have taught the government not to call out victory in advance. Or maybe it hasn't.

Despite the rumblings Chief Minister Adityanath keeps his place - for now. The Congress helps, barely allowing its tallest leader Amarinder Singh to rule in Punjab.

Before the second wave hit it was all about where the government stands. Today, it also matters where we the people stand. Could the one-sided love affair finally be over? The 7-year itch some say is not just a phrase.

Gulf News



Up Close and Personal Doctors in Covid-19

The covid-19 pandemic has been a show of unending horror — full of suspense coupled with a certainty of danger. Those who have witnessed its grotesque reality unfold right in front of their eyes have been health care workers. We got in touch with doctors, who shared with us their experiences during the covid crisis and fears following the second wave of covid-19

Now that finally, the number of Covid cases is coming down, we have enough infrastructure to take severe cases as they come. Unlock is necessary because we have had so many people lose their livelihood during these two months and the one year previous to it. Finally, when things start going back to normal, we can get the economy somewhere back in place.

My fear regarding the lockdown is that people and the government will not learn anything from the current crisis and we will get back to the same old system. The fear is that we will forget all the learnings that we have had in these couple of months and the year that proceeded.

Vaccine definitely can be helpful during the unlock. More the vaccination, less the severe Covid infections and more home management and certainly better outcome of the unlock phase. I think, at the moment, vaccine is the only thing that can help us go through the unlock phase and go back to a normal life.

Dr. Sabine Rafiq Kapasi Sheikh, AAM Hospital Mumbai

Unlock is a two-edged sword. It's necessary for the depleting economy but on the other end, due to negligence of people and stupid assumptions, people don't follow the rule of wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing and consequently, the infection rates go frenzy.

Vaccination is an extra sheath of protection and it's very effective in decreasing the severity of the disease. It's like wearing seat belts for preventing accidents, even though there are risks of accidents, but it does decrease the severity. Like in my case, I was diagnosed with Covid but due to 2 doses of vaccine, it wasn't very severe and I could get back to my duty within 14 days.

Dr. Sovan Kumar Subuddhi, House Surgeon, MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Berhampur Odisha

"Speaking from an economic perspective, the new guidelines announced by the government on the unlock are better than a complete lockdown. However, people need to understand that unlock is not the end of the pandemic and unlock means they will have to follow the Covid-appropriate behaviour more strictly. A few days ago I was travelling to Dalgate Srinagar and I saw a lot of people without masks. People should understand that masks are necessary. We need double masking right now and frequent sanitizing of hands.

Vaccination is also very important to complement the unlock process. People who have received one/two doses of vaccine do not get a severe infection. I have got vaccinated. My niece of 18 years got vaccinated and my mother has also got vaccinated. There is no relationship between vaccination and infertility. If you're vaccinated you might still get Covid but it would be mild. I request you all to get vaccinated and consider the mask and sanitiser as a part of your life till the pandemic is over.

Dr. Sheikh Amina, Gynaecologist

"It's the residents whom I will call the true warriors. Initially it was scary being a surgeon and that too, to deal with the medicine branch. But once you are in the ward you see the patients and their misery. You just can't help doing your best for the patients. Give them the encouragement, give patient hearing to the patients and just be compassionate towards them. But at the same time praying you should not be the source of infection for your

near and dear ones. It has been mentally challenging to say the least"

Dr Natasha, surgeon, skims.

"I'm a doctor who's been working with covid patients for over a year. Everyday I see patients who don't know when this unpredictable disease will suck the life out of their lungs. Within days, a completely healthy individual with no health issues starts gasping for oxygen.

The mental anguish I see patients going through is hard to explain in words. When I get back home with a heavy heart and crave to see my three year old daughter, the one person who can bring some sunshine back in the dark time. I see her waiting patiently by the door. But I can't even give her a hug, fearing I might be carrying the infection. I can't imagine the attendant who just saw his loved one struggling for life and that compels me to tell my daughter to stay away from me. It breaks my heart every time I tell her this and the look she gives me is the saddest face in the world, worse than when I tell her she can't have an ice cream. I just hope this madness ends soon."

Dr Shahid, Rainawari hospital

"I had been on covid duty since the first wave of covid-19. Away from family, I had no option but to put up a brave face. Being a Kashmiri, the weather has always been an enemy for us in mainland India. However, with the PPE gear as well, it was practically hell for us.

One doesn't realise the mental exhaustion one faces with the fear, the anxiety, the stress, the emotions and so many lives at stake. It's not just the fear of the virus, it is the horror of watching it unleash right in front of our eyes that has been distressing.

As doctors living away from home, many of us have had to lie to our families about being safe. I contracted the virus while in Delhi, all alone. I had no option but to fake it till I made it and got back to my job again"

Dr Rafia Nazir, Fortis Hospital, Vasantkunj



Guide to Buying Health Insurance in 2021



A health insurance plan is designed to cover essential healthcare expenses related to illness or accidents. It can act as a financial shock absorber and protect your savings from the impact of high medical costs. Generally, medical insurance covers the cost of treatment during hospitalisation with the sum assured that you select.



Riders are add-ons that can be attached to the base health insurance plan to enhance the coverage. Based on what your requirements are, you can choose from the available riders to get additional protection with your medical insurance. Different insurance providers may offer riders of varying kinds with their health insurance plan.

Sponsored Feature

If there's one thing that everyone needs in the present is financial security against health threats. With alarmingly increasing health problems and the past year of suffering from the coronavirus outbreak, a health insurance plan has become a crucial part of a financial plan.

But, finding the right health insurance plan in 2021 can be confusing since there is an abundance of options available. Ideally, one looks for medical insurance to enable access to quality healthcare facilities without exhausting their savings. This also depends on personal factors of the policy buyer's such as their affordability, medical condition, etc.

Firstly, let's understand how health insurance plan works to make the right purchase decision.

Health Insurance Plan

A health insurance plan is designed to cover essential healthcare expenses related to illness or accidents. It can act as a financial shock absorber and protect your savings from the impact of high medical costs. Generally, medical insurance covers the cost of treatment during hospitalisation with the sum assured that you select.

By paying an annual premium for the health insurance plan, you can remain protected for a prolonged period. Most insurers offer cashless treatment or reimbursement of the medical bills after the policyholder has received necessary medical care. You can buy a health insurance plan

for yourself or cover family members, as per your choice.

Furthermore, the premiums paid towards a health insurance plan are eligible for tax deduction under Section 80D of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Understanding the basics of a health insurance plan can help your decision to buy appropriate medical insurance for yourself or your family. Let's look at some key things you should remember to get proper financial security for health purposes:

1-Consider Your Financial Situation

Being aware of personal needs and financial situation is the primary step to create a sound financial plan. Your income source, health condition and responsibilities in life are distinct. Therefore, knowing how it impacts your future in terms of money is essential to buy the right health insurance plan.

Not to mention, the cost of living and the rate of healthcare expense increasing steadily with time. In the absence of a comprehensive medical insurance, you are at a greater risk of facing immense financial burdens if a medical emergency arises. So, remember to be realistic when projecting the future requirements for more efficient planning.

2-Carefully Select Sum Insured

Selecting the sum insured for a health insurance plan plays a key role to get adequate protection. Preferably, you should opt for a plan that provides maximum sum insured and maximum coverage to equip you for

emergencies. Considering the impact of medical inflation, it is best to go with a high sum insured and avoid disappointments later.

Even the simplest of medical procedures can cost upto certain lakhs that can set your financial planning back significantly. Having the security of a health insurance plan can put your worries at rest. Hence, select a sum insured that you can depend on in a time of crisis.

3-Get Appropriate Riders

Riders are add-ons that can be attached to the base health insurance plan to enhance the coverage. Based on what your requirements are, you can choose from the available riders to get additional protection with your medical insurance. Different insurance providers may offer riders of varying kinds with their health insurance plan.

Usually, these are the riders that are available with a health insurance plan:

- Hospital Cash – provides daily cash to take care of medical expenses during the policyholder's hospitalisation.
- Critical Illness Cover – provides coverage against a list of life-threatening diseases
- Maternity Cover – provides coverage against expenses incurred during childbirth
- Room Rent Waiver – most health insurance plans have a cap on covering room rent; you can get higher sub-limit or no-limit on the room rent with this rider.

- Personal Accident Rider – provides compensation for accident-related deaths, injuries or disabilities.

You can create an efficient financial plan against possible health emergencies by choosing a combination of best-suited riders to your medical insurance.

4- Compare Health Plans

Lastly, when you are looking for the best health insurance plan for yourself or family, comparing different plans can help. You can look at different parameters while comparing medical insurance by insurers such as:

- Price of the health insurance plan
- Coverage offered under the plan
- Variety of riders available with it
- Flexibility to increase the sum insured over the years
- Range of the waiting period
- Claim settlement ratio of the insurer
- List of Network Hospitals

These factors can be considered as the standard requirement of an optimal health insurance plan. Additionally, there are different types of COVID 19 insurance plans available with insurers that can strengthen your financial protection during uncertain times like this.

It is crucial to think ahead and be practical when it is about your health and financial safety. Buying the right health insurance plan today can prevent significant problems in the future. So, make sure to choose carefully and plan in the right way.

SC Rejects Plea Seeking Another Loan Moratorium, Says Matter Is Up To Govt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Supreme Court Friday refused to pass direction on a plea seeking remedial measures to redress the financial hardship faced by borrowers during the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, saying it is in the realm of policy decision.

"Government has many things to do. They have to spend money on vaccine, they have to spend money on migrant labourers. We cannot do it like this," the apex court said, adding that it is for the Centre and the RBI to consider the issue.

"These are all in the realm of policy decision. These are issues having financial implications and we are not the experts," a bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M R Shah told advocate Vishal Tiwari, who has filed the petition.

The top court was hearing the plea which sought directions to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to take effective and remedial measures, including in the form of fresh loan moratorium, to redress and overcome the financial stress and hardship faced by borrowers during the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown.

During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, Tiwari referred to the reports on how the second wave of the pandemic has affected the Indian economy and said the situation is much worse as compared to last year.

The bench noted in its order that the petitioner has also annexed the last month's circular by which the RBI had issued resolution of COVID-19 related stress of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

The petitioner appearing in person submits that the circular does not sufficiently address the hardship of the borrowers. Be that as it may, the financial relief and other measures are in the domain of the government and essentially related to policy matter, the bench said in its order.

"We are, thus, of the view that no direction, as prayed in the writ petition, be passed. We, however, observe that all the issues, which are raised, are policy matters and it is for the Union of India and the Reserve Bank of India to consider and take appropriate decision. The writ petition is disposed of," the apex court said.

The bench said it had dealt with similar aspects in a writ petition which was filed last year. The plea filed by Tiwari had sought directions to the Centre and the RBI to permit the lending institutions to grant interest-free moratorium period for term loan and defer the payment of loan instalments for a period of six months or till the situation from COVID-19 normalises.

Hafeez Asks Tourism Unit Heads To Be Innovative In Promoting, Preserving Destinations



KO NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR: Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Sarmad Hafeez on Friday impressed upon all the heads of tourism units and bodies in Jammu & Kashmir to come up with innovative ideas to promote and preserve their destinations in particular and the UT in general.

Chairing a high-level review meeting here today, the Tourism Secretary asked the CEOs and Resort Officers to be innovative leaders to promote their destinations in the tourism market while preserving the ecology, environment and heritage of their destinations and properties. In this regard, he emphasized on optimum use of manpower and their capacity building so that employees and workers are utilised in a professional manner as per the need and the demand of the tourism market.

Sarmad Hafeez also directed the officers to update all the information related to tourist destinations on their websites for being the interface between the visitors and the Tourism department where people get information about the places, destinations and other spots related to tourism. He said owing to its technical and professional nature,

the tourism sector was selected as a priority sector by the government for inoculation so that as the COVID situation improves tourists are welcomed back without any hesitation. He directed 100% inoculation of the staff by each unit at the earliest.

The Tourism Secretary impressed upon the officers for the timely disposal of cases pertaining to the promotions and career advancement of their employees besides moving towards an online system of file movement. He also asked the corporations to hold regular board meetings as prescribed in the board rules.

MD JKCCC, Majid Khalil Drabu; Director Tourism Kashmir, Dr. G N Itoo; Director Tourism Jammu, Vivekanand Rai; MD JKTD, Nisar Ahmad Wani; Director SKICC, Javed Humayun Bakshi; Chief Executive Officers of all the Tourism development Authorities and senior officers of Tourism Department were present in the meeting.

Earlier, in a separate meeting with several travel operators, the Secretary Tourism impressed upon them to further diversify their product portfolios by including some innovative packages, routes and destinations. He specifically asked

them to revive the concept of locally conducted tours of destinations during which the tourists would get familiarized with local culture, cuisine and people while enjoying the beauty of the place. He also asked them to explore the idea of reviving helicopter safari service to meet the demands of niche tourist segments and in the process explore new and virgin places like Gurez, Bangus valley, Gangabal, Seven lakes in Poonch and Nun Kun peaks etc.

Sarmad Hafeez expressed satisfaction that 80 per cent of the stakeholders were vaccinated during the latest vaccination drive. He, however, urged the stakeholders to ensure that the remaining 20 percent of the stakeholders are also inoculated so that as the COVID situation improves, tourist arrivals come back to their previous levels and tourists feel the confidence of visiting Jammu & Kashmir.

The Tourism Secretary informed the tourism stakeholders that the Department has embarked on an ambitious plan of capacity building of stakeholders in the post COVID scenario during which around four thousand tourism workers would be imparted training.

Germany To Lift Travel Warning For Most Countries From July 1: Minister



Agence France-Presse

BERLIN: Germany will lift its pandemic travel warning for most countries from July 1, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Friday, bringing back more normalcy as citizens are increasingly vaccinated against Covid-19.

Countries recording infection rates of 50-200 cases per 100,000 people in seven days would no longer be deemed a "risk-zone".

Restrictions however remain in place for countries with higher levels of infections, or where virus variants are circulating, such as Britain or India.

"With the summer, hope and confidence are returning to Germany. In many places, the number of infections is falling and more and more citizens

are vaccinated," said Maas.

"After long months of lockdowns, we can look forward to more normalcy, and that also applies to travelling."

At the same time, the minister stressed that the lifting of the warning should not be seen as an "invitation to carelessness".

With an eye on virus variants, he warned that "in the summer of 2021, no one can claim to be surprised by the pandemic while on holidays".

With an incidence rate of just 19 per 100,000 people as of Friday, Germany has in recent weeks eased most curbs including allowing shops and restaurants to reopen.

However, rules on mask-wearing in shops, regular tests for schoolchildren and employees working from home remain in place.

Explained: China's New Law Could Be A Headache For Foreign Businesses

Agence France-Presse

BEIJING: A new Chinese law against foreign sanctions is designed to boost Beijing's power against international pressure, but could spark compliance dilemmas for foreign businesses operating in the world's second-largest economy. It comes just a week after US President Joe Biden expanded a blacklist of Chinese companies in which Americans are not allowed to invest.

Here is what we know about the law so far:

What is it?

The anti-foreign sanctions law was rushed into force on Thursday. It aims to protect Chinese individuals or organisations in the event that a country "uses various pretexts or its laws" to take "discriminatory" action against them.

No country is specifically named. But Beijing has accused Western nations of "suppressing" China's development, especially the United States. It has lashed out at "illegal and unreasonable" sanctions over human rights and flagged an urgent need to fight back.

What could it do?

Countermeasures listed in the law include denying visas, deportation, or seizing assets of those who formulate or comply with sanctions against Chinese businesses or officials.

It rules that authorities are not only able to target individuals and groups but can also take aim at their family members.

The law is broad and "significantly increases the punitive power of China's anti-sanctions measures", said University of Hong Kong associate professor Angela Zhang.

"The broad scope of this framework means that lots of folks, like scholars, pundits, think tanks, could be sanctioned for supporting sanctions on China," warned Julian Ku, an expert on international law at Hofstra University.

How could it impact business?

Senior executives of entities on a countermeasure list could also come under pressure, with potential implications for a large number of people and businesses. "Affected businesses could lose entire access to the Chinese market, and Chinese citizens and institutions will need to cut ties with affected NGOs and think tanks," Zhang told AFP.

The law could also create severe compliance issues for



multinational companies.

Part of the legislation prohibits those in China from going along with designated foreign sanctions. It acts in a similar way to a European blocking statute "which nullified the effect of US Iran sanctions within the EU", said Ku.

This puts foreign businesses in a bind if they cannot legally comply with both US sanctions and Chinese prohibitions.

Why now?

The law builds on earlier measures which prevent companies and individuals from complying with foreign sanctions targeting China.

In an explainer on the National People's Congress website, an official said the law was passed in a short period of time because there was "an urgent need to counter the hegemonism and power politics of certain Western countries".

The law will help "counteract the containment and suppression" China faces, the official added.

Beijing has long complained about US sanctions and trade restrictions affecting Chinese companies. But in recent months Biden has stepped up US criticism over intellectual property theft and alleged human rights abuses in Hong Kong and the northwestern Xinjiang region.

How much of a threat is it?

Ku warned the law had "some reasonable parts, and some troubling parts".

The section allowing for retaliatory sanctions "is unprecedented compared to other countries' sanctions regimes", he said.

Foreign companies are regularly caught in the crosshairs of tension between China and Western nations, including recent nationalist attacks on fashion brand H&M for voicing concern about forced labour claims in Xinjiang.

Zhang said she believes Chinese authorities will not immediately wield the new powers, given that anxiety among foreign businesses could lead to more decoupling.

A \$43 Billion Jump In Gautam Adani's Fortune Is Fraught With Many Risks

Agencies

A rally in the stocks of companies controlled by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani has added almost \$43 billion to his wealth this year, catapulting him to the spot of the second-richest person in Asia. Some analysts say the gains are fraught with risk.

Mr Adani's net worth of \$76.7 billion got a boost from a 330% jump in Adani Total Gas Ltd., a 235% rise in his conglomerate's flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd. and a 263% increase in Adani Transmission Ltd. this year.

Adani group stocks, especially these three, "look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Gaurav Patankar and Nitin Chanduka wrote in a June 10 note after analyzing technical indicators.

"Among the biggest foreign investors are a few Mauritius-based funds holding over 95% of assets in these companies," the analysts wrote. "Such concentrated positions, along with negligible onshore ownership, create asymmetric risk-reward as large investors conspicuously avoid Adani."

The analysis underscores the vulnerability of the rapid



wealth surge Mr Adani has seen in 2021, beating the gains for Warren Buffett and his compatriot Mukesh Ambani. A representative for Adani Group declined to comment immediately.

The overseas funds hold a large chunk of shares, effectively reducing the public float and leaving the stocks prone to volatility, the analysts wrote. Elara India Opportunities Fund, Apms Investment Fund, Cresta Fund, Albula Investment Fund, Lts Investment and Asia Investment Corp. have put more than 95% of their assets in Adani group firms, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Intelligence.

The ports-to-power conglomerate also got a boost after MSCI Inc. included three more Adani firms to its India benchmark index last month, taking the group's total footprint to five. This leads to mandated buying by investors that track this index.

Advisor Khan Reviews Pending Projects Of Tourism

KO NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan, today chaired a meeting at Civil Secretariat to review the progress of pending projects of tourism sector in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Advisor reviewed the progress of works on various projects and deliberated upon the issues and bottlenecks scheme wise executed by JKPC. The officers were directed to ensure the effective follow-up of these projects in order to achieve results in time bound manner.

During the review development of Hazratbal under PRASAD scheme was threadbare discussed. Advisor directed for expediting of works and officers were instructed to clear impediments on war footing basis.

The projects at Hazratbal include Multi level mechanized car parking at Hazratbal, Shopping Kiosks (Bingri Market) and Public Convenience block. Advisor fixed the timeline for completion of the development of Hazratbal and directed the officers to complete the project by 31st of August. He directed them to adhere to the fixed timeline.

Regarding the development of Anantnag - Pahalgam - Daksun circuit, the Advisor fixed the timelines for each component and directed the officers to expedite the projects so that completion date fixed for each projects is achieved. The Advisor fixed 30th of November to complete the whole project.



The Advisor also fixed the timeline for completion of Tourism facilities at Tral within 20 days. It was given out in the meeting that 80 percent of the work on Tourist Reception Centre Tral has been completed and rest of the work will be completed within the set deadline.

Regarding the development of tourist facilities at Anantnag, it was given out that 60 percent of the work on various components has been completed and efforts are on to complete the rest of the work. The development of tourist facilities at Anantnag include Tourist Reception Centre Harnag, Tourist Facilitation Centre, landscaping and beautification among other things.

Advisor also reviewed the progress of Himalayan Circuit of Swadesh Darshan Scheme and directed the officers to expedite the progress on each component. The projects of Jammu division that came up for discussion include Comprehensive Mansar Rejuvenation Plan, Bikram Chowk Railway Station, Purnamandal and Uttarbehni

and other projects under PMDP.

Advisor further directed the officers to monitor the progress of works on weekly basis for effective results and submit progress reports.

He also passed on directions to the Directors of both the divisions to take review of the Development Authorities on regular basis as they are an important part in the development of tourism infrastructure. He directed them that they should inoculate themselves with all the details on the ground and prepare roadmaps accordingly.

The meeting also called for strict adherence to the laid down Standard Operating Protocols already issued by the Government, keeping in view the present COVID-19 pandemic while executing projects at the site of work.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Tourism, Managing Director JKPC, Director Tourism Kashmir, Director Tourism Jammu, Managing Director J&K Cable Car Corporation and General Manager JKPC.

Director A&T Kashmir Issues Instructions/ Guidelines For Processing Works Bills

KO NEWS SEDK

SRINAGAR: The Director, Accounts and Treasuries (A&T) Kashmir today issued a set of instructions/ guidelines to be followed by the Treasury Officers (TOs) of Kashmir division while processing works bills.

As per the circular issued here, it has been given out that various Orders/Instructions issued by Finance Department and Provisions in General Financial Rules while processing works bills etc, necessary documents including Administrative approval, Technical sanction, availability of Funds, Pre and Post geo-tagged photographs are enclosed and proper mechanism of e-tendering is

followed.

Further, that any Bill/Instrument which is deficient in any way should be returned to the concerned Drawing and Disbursing Officer along with a written memo both online and offline, reads the circular.

It is also informed that under no circumstances, there should be any diversion of funds from one unit of Appropriation to another. Expenditure incurred should be charged to the proper Account head. In case of any deviation, the concerned Treasury Officer and Section Officer shall be personally responsible in this regard.

Moreover, the circular mentions that in order to overcome the difficulties being

faced by the Pensioners, a proper arrangement must be made in the Pension Section of Treasuries. The Pensioners shall not be made to stand for long and an adequate number of chairs should be kept in the pension section and they should be treated politely and redressal of grievances of Pensioners must be kept on top priority.

The TOs have been instructed that KYC Updation shall be completed within a period of 10 days from the date of issuance of this Circular.

Meanwhile, all the Treasury Officers of Kashmir division are directed to adhere to the aforementioned instructions in letter and spirit.

FM To Chair GST Council Meet Today; Tax Cut On Covid Essentials On Agenda

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will on Saturday chair the meeting of the GST Council, which is expected to decide on tax relief for COVID-19 essentials and black fungus medicine.

The 44th GST Council meeting will be attended by Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur, besides finance ministers of states and Union territories and senior officers from Union government and states, the Union finance ministry tweeted on Friday.

The Council will discuss the report of the Group of Ministers, headed by Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, on GST concessions on COVID-19 relief items like medical grade oxygen, pulse oximeters, hand sanitisers and ventilators, among others.

Besides, GoM also looked into vaccines, drugs and medicines for COVID-19 treatment and testing kits for its detection.

Some state finance ministers in the GoM are understood to have pitched for a rate cut on COVID-19 essentials.

UP Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, who is also a member of the GoM, had on Wednesday said the state is in favour of cutting taxes on COVID-19 essentials to facilitate patients, but will accept the decision of the GST Council on tax rates.

AFFECTED BUSINESSES COULD LOSE entire access to the Chinese market, and Chinese citizens and institutions will need to cut ties with affected NGOs and think tanks,"

10.35 % Population In J&K Living Below Poverty Line: Survey

Agencies

SRINAGAR: At least 10.35 per cent population in Jammu and Kashmir is living below the national poverty line, reveals Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2021.

A survey conducted by Niti Aayog reveals that over 10.35 percent of the population in J&K is living below the national poverty line while just 4.20 percent of households with any usual member are covered by a health scheme or health insurance.

It was also stated that Jammu and Kashmir was producing over 2339.65 kilogram hectares of rice and wheat annually in accordance with per

unit area, reveals Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2021.

The report states that the global SDG aims to double agricultural productivity by 2030.

It reveals that the indicators have been selected based on the availability of data at the sub-national level and to ensure comparability across States and UTs.

"Tamil Nadu and Delhi are the top performers among the States and the UTs. J&K stands on 7th rank among Union Territories with scoring 69 against the national average of 60," it reads.

As per the SDG index, the national poverty line in

Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory stands at 10.35. Global SDG target reduces at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Further, only 4.20 percent of households with any usual member covered by a health scheme or health insurance are there in UT.

This target corresponds to the global SDG target that aims to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all.

The Niti Aayog data reveals that 4.30 percent of households of Jammu and Kashmir were living in Kacha houses.

LG Sets June 30

district-wise appraisal of the Covid situation and suggested a host of measures needed to be implemented to bring down the positivity rate across the Union Territory, an official spokesperson said.

Emphasizing on conducting the vaccination drive on mission mode, the LG, he said fixed June 30, 2021 as a deadline for the 100% saturation of the first dose of vaccination for 45 and above age group. Sinha, he said, further directed the officials to ensure that 30% of the targeted population falling under the 18-44 age group is inoculated with the first dose by July 15th, 2021.

The official spokesperson said that the LG took note of the decrease in positivity rate being registered in most of the districts and observed that the collaborative efforts from all the stakeholders, coupled with comprehensive surveillance of COVID-19, decentralization of healthcare system, accelerated vaccination drive, rigorous testing for early case detection, prompt contact tracing, effective Covid Clinical Management and continuous augmentation of healthcare infrastructure, human resources and the committed efforts of Doctors, Paramedics, and other corona warriors have yielded favourable results in controlling the spread of coronavirus in J&K

"Corona Warriors, Front-line workers, citizens and the entire team of J&K Administration worked hard to save lives and secure our future," Sinha said, as per official spokesperson.

"Next few days are crucial in terms of making further improvements in all indicators of the Covid containment measures. With optimum utilization of testing and vaccination capacities, strict adherence of SoPs, following Covid Appropriate Behaviour in letter and spirit, and by working 24x7, we can address the challenges of Covid pandemic," he added.

On areas with low vaccination rate, Sinha, as per the official spokesperson directed the concerned DCs to strategize a comprehensive plan in coordination with the Police and Civil administration to accelerate the vaccination drive. Districts with the scope of improvement need to go some extra mile to achieve desirable results.

"Ensure no Social gatherings, Marriages, and community programmes, takes place without prior permissions. Constitute Joint teams of Police, District Administration and Health department for Special enforcement drives and spreading continuous awareness through announcements regarding adherence of Covid appropriate behaviour, besides conducting door-to-door vaccination and involving community elders to complement the Administration's efforts," the LG, as per the official spokesperson directed the DCs.

He said the LG also stressed on notifying Micro-containment zones on scientific parameters to ensure its effective outcome. He also asked the police department to distribute face masks amongst the violators at checkpoints.

"The message should be clear that the aim is not only penalizing but care and protecting the people. They need to be aware that the restrictions are for their welfare and safety," he said, as per official spokesperson.

Stressing on effective operationalization of Covid Care Centres in Panchayats, the LG instructed the DCs and CMOs to fix the responsibilities for proper functioning of these centres with all requisite facilities and its maintenance.

"Now, as the impact of the Covid has been controlled a greater extent, it has to be ensured that Covid management measures and developmental activities must go together following all SoPs. We have to accelerate development work & build a strong economy with Innovative, Concrete and resolute policies and its implementation," the LG said, as per official spokesperson.

"Basic amenities must be made available to the people. Maximum services should be made available on-line, focus should be on face-less service delivery on time," he added.

The LG, as per the official spokesperson also directed the DCs to submit the report on the construction of community toilets in their respective districts.

"Directions were also passed regarding establishment of offices and accommodations for DDC Chairpersons; identification of youth for extension of benefits of Mumkin scheme under Mission Youth; Hostels for wards of martyrs of Police, Para-Military and Army; completion of pending works identified under Back to Village programme; training of para-medical and other frontline workers; clearing pendency under PMGKP," he added.

The official spokesperson further said that Sinha also passed specific directions to speed up the process for identification of beneficiaries under the Special Scheme 'SASCM' envisaged by the Government for Families which have lost their bread earner during pandemic.

He said that the LG also gathered inputs and feedbacks from the participants of the meetings on the present Covid scenario.

Meanwhile, Atal Dullio, Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education Department gave a detailed briefing on scientific data-driven analysis and other important aspects of the Covid management. He informed that the positivity rate of J&K has moved down to 2.2%.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to Lt Governor; Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Dilbag

Singh, DGP; Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary to the Government, Home Department; Shailendra Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Government, Public Works (R&B) Department; Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Lt Governor; Ranjan Prakash Thakur, Principal Secretary to the Government, Industries & Commerce Department; Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Ms. Sheetal Nanda, Secretary to the Government, Social Welfare Department; Vijay Kumar, IGP Kashmir; Dr. Raghav Langer, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Deputy Commissioners and SPs, attended the meeting, in person and through virtual mode.

J&K Sees 906

followed by 92 in Budgam.

There are 17,585 active COVID-19 cases in Jammu and Kashmir. So far, 2,84,027 patients have recovered from the disease, the officials said.

There are 18 confirmed cases of mucormycosis or black fungus in the union territory. No case was reported the previous day, they said. (PTI)

Series Of Political

The possibility of Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairing the meeting is not ruled out, the officials said.

The state units of the BJP and the Congress are also likely to be part of these discussions which are seen among a slew of measures to restore democracy in the Union Territory that was formed by bifurcating Ladakh on August 5, 2019 when the Centre abrogated special status of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir.

Barring Bukhari, other leaders have also served a spell of detention following the August 2019 decision.

The NC and six other parties including its arch rival PDP and People's Conference had joined hands last year ahead of the District Development Commission polls and the alliance surged way ahead of BJP and its allies including JKAP by bagging 110 seats out of 280. The BJP was the single largest party with 75 seats and the NC won 67 seats within the alliance.

The political mainstream of the union territory, especially those having a strong base in the valley, has been critical of successive administrations of the union territory for neglecting the demands of the people and raising questions on the development slogan raised post August 2019.

Bifurcation of J&K

keep their political boggy relevant and to serve their political interests. "Only selfish people fuel rumours. Bifurcation of J&K is just a rumour nothing else," he said.

The J&K LG said what he was saying was "with full responsibility and people have understood what he means."

Replying to a query about troop movement in Kashmir, he said that this gives no signal about anything. "Paramilitary forces had gone to West Bengal for poll duty and they are returning now. Some 60 companies were allotted to J&K and they are returning. Many jawans were also under quarantine and they too are returning," LG Sinha said adding that whenever there has been Amarnath Yatra in J&K such troop movements are a routine.

To a query whether J&K government would go ahead with the Amarnath Yatra this year despite Covid pandemic, he said that the administration led by him took a series of steps to contain the spread of Covid and they succeeded largely. "Nothing is more important than human lives. In the days ahead, Covid situation will be better. After analysing the situation threadbare, decision will be taken on whether to hold annual pilgrimage,"

On Assembly polls and the delimitation process, LG Sinha said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced at the Lal Qila that once the delimitation commission would finish its exercise, J&K will witness Assembly polls. "Let the Delimitation Commission submit its report," he said. About NC's participation in the Delimitation process, he said if NC takes part in the exercise, they will fulfill their responsibility.

Asked whether militancy has been curbed in J&K, the LG said that the tourist arrivals suggest that peace is prevailing in Kashmir and there is no law and order situation. "No doubt a few incidents of violence have taken place, but local militant recruitment is down. We have an upper hand on militants. Security forces are maintaining a close coordination. A handful of people are trying to disrupt the peace but the government is committed to defeat them and act as per the law," he said.

Replying to query that some people were alleging discrimination against Jammu, he said that in a democracy there is a freedom of expression but that doesn't mean, "Whatever people would say would become government policy." "My tenure is witness that not a single decision has been taken by my administration where one can smell discrimination. Gone are the days of discrimination. Jammu and Kashmir are two eyes of the government," he said.

2 ACDs, 12 BDOs

that BDO Pahalgam, BDO Sogam, BDO Breng, BDO Bijbehara, BDO Larnoo and BDO Verinag have made excess payment and violated the conditions of release of payments.

However, he has not provided the names of concerned BDOs, it said, adding that the district

Anantnag is continuously withdrawing excess amounts unauthorisedly and as on date Rs 15 lakh has been withdrawn.

"In the backdrop of above, ACD Anantnag has failed to perform his duties to control his BDOs from excess withdrawal (unauthorised) so, Mr. Nisar Ahmad Malik, KAS, ACD Anantnag is hereby placed under suspension with immediate effect and shall remain attached with the Directorate of Rural Development Kashmir. Mr. Adeel Saleem, KAS, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Anantnag shall hold the charge of ACD Anantnag in addition to his own duties till further orders," the order said.

In a separate order, it said that perusal of NREGA Soft on 08-04-2021 revealed that District Baramulla has withdrawn an amount of Rs. 1.91 crores from Common account MNREGA (eFMS, Material & Wages) unauthorisedly.

Similarly, the ACD has failed to provide proper reason and give block-wise and GP-wise data indicating the blocks withdrawing excess amount against the funds released, it further states. According to the order, the district is continuously withdrawing the amount unauthorisedly and as on date Rs 2.04 crores has been withdrawn.

"In the backdrop of above, ACD Baramulla has failed to perform his duties to control his BDOs from excess withdrawal (unauthorisedly) so, Mr. Yaar Ali Khan (KAS), ACD Baramulla is hereby placed under suspension with immediate effect and shall remain attached with the Directorate of Rural Development Kashmir. Mr. Gulzar Ahmad KAS, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Baramulla shall hold the charge of ACD Baramulla in addition to his own duties till further orders," the order said.

Meanwhile, in a separate order, the government has suspended 11 BDOs for unauthorised withdrawal of funds (excess) from e-FMS account in Noorkhah, Parenpillan, Singhpora, Sopore, Uri, Wagoor of district Baramulla and Sogam, Pahalgam, Bijbehara, Breng, Larnoo, Verinag blocks of district Anantnag.

The Block Development Officers are hereby placed under suspension with immediate effect and are attached with the Directorate of Rural Development Kashmir, the order reads.

The BDOs include Junaid Amin Bhat (Jr. KAS) BDO (Probationer) Shangu holding additional charge of block Sogam, District Anantnag, Shakeeb Arsalan (Jr. KAS) BDO (Probationer) Pahalgam, District Anantnag, Talat Mahmood Wani (Jr. KAS) BDO Bijbehara, District Anantnag, Muzaffar Hussain Wani, BDO (Jr. KAS) Breng, holding additional charge of block Larnoo, District Anantnag, Umar Bashir, (Jr. KAS) BDO (Probationer) Verinag, District Anantnag, Nassir Ahmad I/C BDO Noorkhah, District Baramulla, Hilal Ahmad Bhat, (Jr. KAS), BDO Parenpillan, District Baramulla, Sheeba Inayat, (Jr. KAS), BDO Singhpora, District Baramulla, Fahmeeda Bano I/C BDO Sopore District Baramulla, Mohd. Aarif Shah, (Dr. KAS) BDO (Probationer) Uri, District Baramulla and Abdul Rashid Gar al I/c BDO Wagoor, District Baramulla.

Director Rural Development Department Kashmir has been asked to make suitable alternative arrangements to look after the charge of these blocks.

In a separate order, the government has announced the suspension of BDO Shopian Muzaffar Ahmad Sheikh also. He has been attached with Directorate of Rural Development Department Kashmir.

Gusty Windstorm

also respite from heat wave in Jammu, the winter capital of J&K, as it recorded a maximum of 37.3 degrees Celsius against previous day's 41.9 degrees Celsius. With rainfall overnight, the temperature in Jammu was around two degrees less than the normal for this time of the year there, the official said.

Meanwhile, Qazigund recorded 33.0 degrees Celsius, Pahalgam 30 degrees Celsius while Kokernag witnessed 32.3 degrees Celsius, more than previous day's temperature there, the official said.

The border town Kupwara recorded a maximum temperature of 34.5 degrees Celsius, the highest temperature in Kashmir.

World famous skiing and tourist resort Gulmarg in north Kashmir recorded a maximum of 23.5 degrees Celsius, the official added.

The weather office has forecast light to moderate thunderstorms with rain for next few days.

Regarding Ladakh, the officials said that the weather will remain partly to generally cloudy. "No forecast of any significant weather in the coming days," he added.

Meanwhile, gusty windstorm blew away rooftops of several houses, uprooted trees, damaged vehicles and disrupted electricity supply in several parts of the Valley. The scary videos of the windstorm showing rooftops being blown away in Pulwama and Srinagar went viral on social networking websites Facebook and Twitter.

According to reports, several structures, including residential houses and vehicles were damaged in Pulwama, Shopian and Kulgam districts of south Kashmir.

Similar reports were also received from Baramulla and Budgam districts. In Pattan, many cars were damaged after the trees fell on them.

With No MPs

(PAGD) -- of which the PDP as well as the NC are constituents -- over the issue.

"I cannot say anything on behalf of the alliance. However, as far as the PDP is concerned, I want to tell you one thing that it is not about the alliance taking part in it or not. It is the decision of the individual parties of the alliance," he said.

The PDP cannot participate in the proceedings of the commissions as the party has no members in Parliament or in the legislative assembly, he said.

"The way the commission has been designed, only elected representatives are part of the exercise. The PDP as of now has no MP or legislator, so we cannot participate in the process," he said.

"As far as the NC's participation is concerned, I think it is that party only that can answer this question," he said.

While the PDP has no MP in the Lok Sabha, its MPs in the Rajya Sabha have either completed their term or were expelled.

Asked to comment over the remarks of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma that the immigrant Muslims should follow family planning norms for population control, Bukhari said Sarma was not the first person to say something like that.

"We have been hearing many people, especially BJP leaders, say this for some years now. There is no sense in finding any sense in these remarks," he said.

NC MPs Divided

in the process in Jammu and Kashmir with some saying they will participate if invited while others stating that there was no change in party's stand.

NC MP from South Kashmir, Hassnain Masoodi said that there was no change in the stance and it has not been decided yet whether they will participate in the meeting.

"We are firm to our statements. We are sticking to whatever we have said," he said, adding that the party has not changed its mind in this regard.

However, party's another MP from north Kashmir, Muhammad Akbar Lone stated that they have decided to attend the meeting, if they will be invited again.

"The party has not held a meeting so far in this regard. But, we MPs have decided to participate in the meeting in case we will be invited by the commission for the meeting next time," he said.

Pertinently, the Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir convened its first meeting with Associate Members at its office in New Delhi on February 18, 2021 to discuss delimitation of Assembly constituencies in the Union Territory.

However, the MPs from Kashmir region stayed away from the meetings called by the delimitation commission here, saying that they didn't receive any intimation in this regard--(Agencies)

Parties Demand

Instead of helping the people who have been suffering from 2019, the government is pushing the people to the wall, Bukhari said.

He said the decision should be revoked especially since the people in the Valley were suffering economically.

This arbitrary decision of charging property tax from the local residents should be revoked immediately. People should not be made to suffer. People are in distress for the last two years as they have suffered economically. The government institutions or agencies rather than helping the people are giving them more trouble by such decisions, he said.

Bukhari said it seems the decision has been taken to weaken the people of Jammu and Kashmir economically as well as politically.

The Badamiagh Cantonment is a class II cantonment established in 1954, covering a total area of 1458.537 acres including civil area of 313.50 acres, according to the board's website.

Referring to the rumours in the valley that the Centre was planning further reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, the PDP spokesperson asked the administration to come out with facts.

If they are only rumours, then the government should have come forward to dispel these rumours. Some high-ranking official should come on record and tell the people that these are all rumours and assure the people so that there is no uncertainty, he said.

The National Conference also expressed dismay over the alleged imposition and charging of property tax by the Cantonment board, saying the people are in dire straits and lack the capacity to pay the tax.

Expressing concern over the new wave of anxiety created among people by the property tax notices being served to them by the cantonment, NC youth leader Ahsan Pardesi castigated the cantonment authorities on pressuring the people to pay exorbitant property tax.

Prevailing condition of people is not conducive for levying taxes as the local economy and individual incomes have suffered major reverses since the 2014 deluge, the condition was further compounded by the subsequent tumultuous situation, and series of clampdown and COVID-19 induced lock down, he said.

Pardesi said the measures have panicked the middle and lower middle class families in the entire stretch of Srinagar falling within the jurisdiction of the cantonment.

What is adding salt to the wound is the unilateral evaluation of properties and assessment of the amounts to be paid, he said.

The NC leader said it is uncalled for to ask people to pay taxes amidst sulking economy and high rates of unemployment.

The government had already decided not to levy property tax in civil areas earlier. Why are people living in cantonment areas being singled out and discriminated upon?

When in current times banks are restructuring loans how can anyone think of property taxes. Till board members were there, nothing of this was initiated. Just after the board got disbanded, the cantonment authorities thought of such unwarranted act, he added.

Pardesi urged the defense ministry to take cognisance of the matter and put a halt on the exercise to ensure that local populace does not suffer on any account.

Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) provincial president, Kashmir, Mohammad Ashraf Mir also took a strong exception over the reports of levying of property tax by the board.

In a statement issued here, Mir said such arbitrary decisions will only tend to create more problems for the people who are facing the brunt of lockdowns due the prevailing pandemic across the country.

The people living within the jurisdiction of Badamiagh Cantonment area have had their ancestors living there for ages and now all of a sudden, they are asked to pay taxes for their own properties. It is totally absurd and excruciating for the residents living there, he said.

Mir said the developmental works in these areas have been always carried out by the state government and no minuscule role has been played by the Cantonment authorities.

He urged the central government to intervene in the matter and allow the general public in these areas to live in amity as they have been economically devastated by the viciousness of the pandemic and are unable to pay such heavy taxes.

4 Friends To

that on the repeated requests from the family of missing Scholar, police today called all the four friends of the Scholar to police station Kangan.

The sources said Narco-Analysis tests will be conducted on all these four persons. These tests will be performed in Western State of Gujarat.

Narco-analysis test involves the intravenous administration of a drug (such as sodium pentothal, scopolamine and sodium amytal) that causes the subject to enter into various stages of anaesthesia.

A top police official from the district confirmed that all the four friends will be taken to Gujarat for Narco Test.

"Most probably, a Police party will leave for Gujarat accompanying these four persons tomorrow where they will undergo Narco Analysis Test," he said.

Baramulla Blaze

more slowly than lighter fluid or gasoline.

Within a few minutes, the holes started to melt through the panels of these structures, and the warm air inside the house rushed outward, igniting the panels and spreading the fire across the roofs.

The relative humidity, the wind speed and direction only propelled the fire straight toward other far located houses.

"After the first LPG spark," a police officer part of the rescue mission says, "there were around 4 LPG gas cylinder blasts from various houses that further abetted the fire."

Soon, it became obvious to the witnesses that the blaze was approaching from everywhere and that it was impossible to save the colony from that inferno.

"It was suddenly much darker," Altaf continues. "Everyone had their flashlights and torches on. The sky above the blazing colony had become an orange ball but waning into absolute black. The plume from the fire had billowed upward and then fell earthward again. The burning sound was more ferocious than the flames."

When the blaze thawed a bit due to "the joint efforts by the local youth, firemen, police and army", everyone could feel their mind grinding against what happened, desperate to whittle it down into a simple explanation of what went wrong, who should be blamed, what could be learned.

There were many credible answers, specific mistakes to call out. But it was easy to worry that, given the scale of this particular disaster. The principal takeaways might be only humility and terror.

"No one can be blamed for this particular disaster," a local standing in the backdrop of his gutted house says.

"If one would've visited this locality before this incident, it was clearly visible that there were no fire gaps maintained between residential structures and that was the reason why the fire blazed the whole of the colony."

The blaze upshot renewed mourning at the crack of the dawn.

Wailing women, crying children and sobbing men arrived in droves to see a major portion of their colony lying under the heap of ash.

Some of them removed their half-burnt essentials from under the rubbles of their memories, checking the damage of the 20 residential houses that are no more visible. Around 35 families are left without a roof overhead.

"One victim of this blaze had been saving for the last 10 years for his daughter's wedding," Ibrahim says. "And now, that money, the newly bought wedding clothes, their dreams, everything has been turned into ash just like their house."

To provide relief to the victims of this blaze, the Baramulla administration has asked the Tehsildar, Accounts Officer, Revenue Officer, and Senior Police Officers to review the damage and estimate the relief cost.

"We'll provide compensation to these families as soon as possible," Ghulam Mohammad Chopan, NaibTehsildar Baramulla told Kashmir Observer.

"For now, these victims have been provided temporary shelter by the administration with all essential services like food and medical attention in neighbouring parts of Noorbagh, Baramulla."

Even though there wasn't any damage to human life and all the affected families are together, they still feel trapped.

The slight smoke blooming erratically around the rumble of houses, the impregnable riot of burned walls, charred woods and excessive heat are enough to keep on traumatizing the wailing victims, maybe forever.

Govt To Cover

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

The announcement regarding it was made by J&K Lieutenant Governor's Advisor Baseer Ahmad Khan, who paid a visit to Noorbagh Baramulla on Friday and assured the fire affected families of support by the LG-led dispensation.

The Advisor provided cheques worth Rs 50,000 among each affected family as an immediate relief and also announced one month free ration among the victim families, an official spokesperson said Friday. Khan, he said, also assured that more financial support shall be provided out of the Disaster Management Fund and under other similar schemes.

"Furthermore, the Advisor directed the Deputy Commissioner to undertake a holistic assessment so that they can be covered under PMAY housing scheme and SDRF relief. He also directed to ensure that every type of possible assistance is provided to ameliorate their sufferings," the official spokesperson said.

On the occasion, he said, the Advisor was apprised about the condition and the issues these families are facing in the aftermath of the incident.

"The Advisor gave a patient hearing to the sufferers and assured that every possible support shall be provided for their immediate rehabilitation. He said that the Lieutenant Governor is personally monitoring the relief and rehabilitation of the affected families," the official spokesperson said.

The fire victims, he said, thanked the LG and his Advisor for their personal intervention and their efforts to extend immediate relief to the sufferers.

Meanwhile, the Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Baramulla Bhupinder Kumar, SSP Rayees Ahmad Bhat and other concerned functionaries also visited the fire affected families, the official spokesperson said.

The Div Com, he said, took first hand appraisal of the situation during which the fire victims appraised the advisor about their condition besides extending their issues and demands. Pole, he said, gave a patient hearing and assured that every kind of possible support shall be provided for their immediate rehabilitation.

"Meanwhile, P K Pole directed the Deputy Commissioner to conduct a proper assessment of the damage so that the victims are rehabilitated under different welfare programmes sponsored by the administration," the official spokesperson said, adding "He also directed to provide essential items as an immediate relief and take appropriate measures for their time being shelter."

Engineer Nabbed

and caught the JE red handed while demanding and accepting the bribe from the complainant. The amount of bribe to the tune of Rs. 6000 was also recovered on the spot," the ACB spokesperson said.

The accused engineer, he said, was arrested and taken into custody by the ACB team.

"After the arrest searches were also conducted in the premises of the accused. Further investigation is in progress," the bureau spokesperson added.

27 Face Punishment For Hosting 'Unprofessional' Ultra-Marathon That Killed 21 Runners



Press Trust of India

BEIJING: Twenty-seven people, including several senior municipal government officials, faced disciplinary punishment or criminal charges after being held responsible for hosting an "unprofessional" ultra-marathon race in Gansu province last month in which 21 runners died, local authorities announced on Friday.

A 100-kilometre cross-country mountain race in the north-western province of Gansu turned deadly on May 22 as freezing rains, high winds and hail suddenly hit the competitors. Twenty-one people, including China's well known ultra-marathon runner Liang Jing, were killed in the tragedy.

"Non-standard and unprofessional event operations led to the accident," read the investigation report announced at a press conference held in Lanzhou, capital of Gansu province.

A total of 172 people participated in the mountain marathon. While eight sustained minor injuries, 151 were confirmed safe. Most competitors were wearing

thin shorts and T-shirts, according to media reports.

Baiyin ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) secretary Su Jun and Baiyin mayor Zhang Xuchen are among those who have been given disciplinary punishment, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Zhang Wenling was sacked as the magistrate of the Jingtai County, while Jingtai party secretary Li Zuobi, who has died after the mishap, was exempted from punishment.

The tragedy was caused by a sudden change in weather and the province had set up an investigation team to look further into the cause of the incident, Baiyin City mayor Zhang Xuchen, who was among the punished, had said.

"As the organiser of the event, we feel a deep sense of guilt and remorse. We express our deep condolences and sympathies to the bereaved families and the victims," he said.

The tragedy had evoked public anger on Chinese social media, with criticism mainly directed at the Baiyin government for lack of contingency planning.

Sports Ministry Launches Athlete Injury Management System

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday launched an ambitious initiative to provide world class treatment and rehabilitation to elite athletes injured during competition or training.

The Centralised Athlete Injury Management System (CAIMS) aims to provide inputs on prevention, diagnosis and high quality treatment and rehabilitation to athletes on time and maintain records for mapping their injury via an Online Athlete Management System.

This system, to be run by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in collaboration with the leading medical experts of the country, will be applied initially to the developmental group of athletes for the 2024 Paris Olympics and will broaden to others later on.

"I have seen athletes whose careers have been damaged or shortened due to lack of timely and proper treatment of even common injuries. For some injuries, treatment is not available in our country and athletes will have to go abroad. So, this is a humble beginning to address that," Rijiju said in an online event.

"I hope this initiative will lead to a system where we will have a professional way of managing



injury of athletes. It is something long desired by one and all. This is a centralised platform where we will have a common and uniform injury and rehabilitation management system."

He said sports science in India is still in a nascent state and need improvement.

"We want to be a sporting powerhouse and to have a world class injury management is an integral part of that. Injury management is a part of that (sports science). We need an excellent and professional injury management of the athletes."

"We will need upgradation and improvisation in many things and that is how we will learn to make this a success."

Indian Olympic Association President Narinder Batra lauded the Sports Ministry and the Sports Authority of India for the initiative.

"A lack of communication between athletes and medical providers leads to devastating injuries to athletes, hinders their recovery and leads to re-injury and that affects their career," Batra said.

"I would like to emphasise that the confidentiality of the injury of the athletes should be maintained and should never be made public."

Sports Secretary Ravi Mittal, SAI Director General Sandip Pradhan, IOA Secretary General Rajiv Mehta, renowned orthopaedic surgeons like SKS Marya, Anant Joshi and Dinshaw Pardiwala were also present.

Spain Vaccinates EURO 2020 Team After COVID Outbreak Scare

Agencies

MADRID: Worried that a coronavirus outbreak could derail its chances at the European Championship, Spain sent in the army on Friday to vaccinate the national football team three days before its opening match at the tournament. Medics from Spain's Armed Forces administered the shots at the team's training facility near Madrid.

"We have had the privilege and the good fortune that the government decided to vaccinate us," said Spain midfielder Thiago, who was infected with COVID-19 last year.

"While this is great news for us, I hope that we don't have any adverse effects before the match."

Spain will play Sweden in Seville on Monday in its opening Euro 2020 match.

Some people who receive vaccines can experience fever and tiredness, but many do not have any side effects.

The government allowed the football team to be vaccinated ahead of schedule in Spain, which is maintaining a strict order based on age. Currently, no one under 40 years old is eligible for a shot.

Spain has also given special permission for its athletes heading to the Tokyo Olympics to receive vaccinations against the virus. Spain's preparations for Europe's biggest national football tournament were thrown off this week after captain Sergio Busquets and defender Diego Llorente both tested positive. Llorente's subsequent tests have come back negative so his initial positive result may have been erroneous. The team said he may be able to return soon.



Bhuvneshwar Kumar has been named Dhawan's deputy. Five players have received their maiden India call up for the series including K Gowtham, Devdutt Padikkal, Nitish Rana, Ruturaj Gaekwad and Chetan Sakariya.

Humbled To Lead My Country, Says SHIKHAR DHAWAN

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Handed responsibility to lead the Indian team on the Sri Lanka tour, opener Shikhar Dhawan on Friday said he feels humbled after being appointed captain of the national side. India will play three ODIs and as many T20s in Colombo starting July 13. The selectors picked a bunch of fresh faces for the Sri Lanka series on Thursday as the main team is in the UK for the World Test Championship final and five Tests against England.

"Humbled by the opportunity to lead my country. Thank you for all your wishes," tweeted Dhawan. The 35-year-old has played 34 Tests, 145 ODIs and 65 T20s. Bhuvneshwar Kumar has been named Dhawan's deputy. Five players have received their maiden India call up for the series including K Gowtham, Devdutt Padikkal, Nitish Rana, Ruturaj Gaekwad and Chetan Sakariya.

As 'A' Team Coach, Made Sure Every Player On Tour Got A Game: Rahul Dravid

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Widely credited for creating India's talent pool at the under-19 and A level, former captain and NCA Director Rahul Dravid says during his stint as coach with these teams, he made sure that every cricketer who toured got a game unlike his playing days.

Dravid will be head coach of a Shikhar Dhawan-led Indian team that will tour Sri Lanka for a white-ball series next month. He doesn't travel with the A and U-19 squads any more but it was he who made sure all the squad members played on tours.

"I tell them upfront, if you come on an A tour with me, you will not leave here without playing a game. I've had that personal experience myself as a kid: going on an A tour and not getting an opportunity to play is terrible," Dravid ESPNCricinfo's 'The Cricket Monthly'.

"You've done well, you scored 700-800 runs, you go, and you don't get a chance to show what you're good at. And then you're back to square one from the selectors' point of view, because the next season you have to score those 800 runs again."

"It is not easy to do that, so there



is no guarantee you'll get a chance again. So you tell people upfront: this is the best 15 and we are playing them. This is not about the supposed best XI. At U-19, we make five-six changes between games if we can," he said.

Indian cricketers are now among the fittest in the world but there was

a time when they did not have the required knowledge on fitness and enjoyed the more athletic Australians and South Africans, Dravid said.

Now in charge of the National Cricket Academy, Dravid has played a key role in producing the next generation of cricketers and a reserve pool which is the envy of India's opponents.

In his playing days, Dravid said the awareness just wasn't there.

"Playing on the beach and playing on the road doesn't make you a cricketer. It makes you someone who loves the game. That's what we had. We had a lot of people who loved the game," Dravid said.

"Unless you give that guy a proper matting wicket or a turf wicket, unless you give him some half-decent coaching, some half-decent fitness assistance- where was all this in the 1990s and the 2000s? There was no access to it. We were starved of knowledge."

"Even in terms of fitness, we used to look at the Australians and South Africans and we used to look at their fitness trainers, and what did we get? 'Don't do too much gym, your body will become stiff. Bowl, bowl and bowl. Run rounds and laps'," he recalled.

With 'Carrom Ball' In Armoury, Krishnappa Gowtham Ready To Soar

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Krishnappa Gowtham was nicknamed "Bhaji" by his teammates during his early years and he has adored Ravichandran Ashwin's cricketing philosophy but the all-rounder's skill-sets, including the "carrom ball", is his own customised version.

Gowtham is among the six uncapped players picked for India's white-ball tour of Sri Lanka, comprising three ODIs and three T-20 matches between July 13 and July 25.

"You live a dream for years and now it has come true and you can't be more happier," was Gowtham's first reaction when PTI caught up with him.

A consistent performer for a formidable Karnataka side, Gowtham hit the headlines when Chennai Super Kings broke the bank to win his services after an intense bidding war and now at 32, the lanky all-rounder has got his maiden India call-up.

"Starting off in my career I used to mimic Bhaji Paa (Harbhajan Singh) and my teammates would call me Bhaji," Gowtham recollected during the interaction.

So like Bhaji, does he also bowl



the doosra? "No I don't bowl doosra but I bowl the carrom ball," Gowtham, who has 166 first-class, 70 List A and 42 T20 wickets, replied.

Has he developed the carrom ball watching its finest exponent Ravichandran Ashwin?

"I developed it on my own. If you have to play at the highest level, you need to develop skills on your own. In my junior days, I have been coached by Erapalli Prasanna sir also. "Obviously, you do look up to a legend like Ashwin. I love Ashwin's mind-set and approach towards the game," the reticent cricketer answered.

Like his teammates from Karnataka, who have gone on to play for India, Gowtham also speaks with a lot of clarity even though his an-

Rashid Khan Helps Qalandars To 10-Run Victory Over Zalmi In PSL

Agencies

ABU DHABI: The competition-leading Lahore Qalandars had a 10-run win over Peshawar Zalmi as the second game in the first double-header since the resumption of the Pakistan Super League finished in the early hours of Friday morning.

The Qalandars slipped to 25-4 after 7 1/2 overs before Ben Dunk (48) and Tim David combined in an 81-run partnership to re-set the innings. David, who finished unbeaten on 64 from 36 balls, then shared a late 47-run stand with James Faulkner (22) to lift the Qalandars to 170-8.

Faulkner took two wickets in his first over, the second of the innings, to have Peshawar in early trouble before Rashid Khan took a pair in the 10th to keep the Qalandars in control.

Rashid returned 5-20 to restrict Peshawar to 160-8, despite

Fast bowler Imran Khan claimed 3-28 and leg-spinner Imran Tahir picked up the key wickets of Martin Gupthill and Afghanistan's Najibullah Zadran, who both scored 11 runs each as Azam was kept in check by the Multan bowlers.

Azam took his time to settle down and got little support from the other end to challenge the target. Azam raised his 18th half century in the PSL off 45 balls but his five fours and four sixes in the end were not enough to carry his team home.

Khan claimed all his three wickets in the last over and was on a hat trick when he dismissed Thisara Perera and captain Imad Wasim off successive deliveries.

Qasim Akram denied Khan the hat trick before offering a tame catch off the last ball at extra cover.

South African Rilee Rossouw smashed seven fours in his quick-



Shoaib Malik's 48-ball 73.

In the earlier game, Babar Azam's unbeaten half century went in vain as Multan Sultans defeated defending champion Karachi Kings by 12 runs.

Azam hit 85 off 63 balls, but Multan held Karachi to 164-7 through some disciplined seam and spin bowling.

After being put into bat, Multan did well in the end to push its total to 176-5 with left-handed Khushdil Shah remaining unbeaten on 44 off 32 balls.

fire 44 off 24 balls and it looked like Multan could cross the 200-run mark.

Rossouw and captain Mohammad Rizwan (29) shared a 68-run third wicket stand off 39 balls as Multan reached 107-2 by the halfway stage.

But Karachi hit back through Thisara Perera, who bagged 2-12 off his three overs as Rossouw sliced a catch to long on and Rizwan was run-out in the same over while attempting a needless second run.

Fearing COVID, David Warner & Marcus Stoinis Pull Out Of UK's The Hundred

Press Trust of India

MELBOURNE: Star Australian opener David Warner and all-rounder Marcus Stoinis have pulled out of the inaugural edition of 'The Hundred' as the England and Wales Cricket Board gears up for more withdrawals in wake of the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic.

Warner and Stoinis, who returned home from COVID-ravaged India after the suspension of the IPL last month, were named in Australia's preliminary squads for the limited over tours to the West Indies and Bangladesh.

The upcoming tours clash with The Hundred which is scheduled to be held between July and August.

"It is obviously disappointing to lose players with the ability of David and Marcus, but the realities of COVID means there are practicalities that are difficult for some overseas players to overcome," the ECB said in a statement on Thursday.

"Replacement overseas players will be signed by Southern Brave, and we look forward to The Hundred showcasing world-class cricket this summer."

manner I know best."

Gowtham also feels enriched after being part of the senior Indian team set-up during the home series against England earlier this year. He was one of the net bowlers during the four-Test series.

"It's always good to bowl to the best in the country and you get to learn a lot. Obviously it was a great experience being in the Indian set-up and bowling to quality players."

With 12 five-wicket hauls in first-class cricket apart from impressive batting strike-rates of 141 plus (50 over) and nearly 160 (T20) in the white ball format, Gowtham's rise can also be attributed to the fact that he plays for one of the finest domestic teams, Karnataka.

"It really has helped that I have been a part of a very strong Karnataka unit. It's not just about strength but also the fact that it's a very happy unit."

"We all enjoy each other's company which I have always looked forward to and it's a privilege," Gowtham said about the team that in recent years has had Manish Pandey, KL Rahul, Karun Nair, and Prasad Krishna making the national team.

Lakshadweep Filmmaker Booked For Sedition Over 'Biological Weapons' Comments

Agenceis

The Lakshadweep Police on Thursday booked filmmaker Aisha Sulthana on sedition charges following a complaint by a BJP leader that she spread false news about the spread of COVID-19 in the Union territory during a TV debate.

The complaint was filed by the BJP's Lakshadweep unit president Abdul Khader. Sulthana hails from Chetathi island in Lakshadweep.

According to the FIR lodged by the Kavaratti police, a case under sections 124A (sedition) and 153B (hate speech) of the Indian Penal code has been registered against the filmmaker.

In his complaint filed with the Kavaratti police on Wednesday, Khader said Sulthana, during a debate in a Malayalam TV channel, had alleged that the Central government used biological weapons for the spread of COVID-19 in Lakshadweep.

The BJP leader, in his complaint, has alleged that Sulthana's statement was an anti-national act, which tarnished the "patriotic image" of the Central government. He sought action against her.

Earlier in the day, the BJP staged a protest in the islands seeking action against the filmmaker.

A Lakshadweep-based model and actor, Aisha Sulthana has worked with several Malayalam filmmakers. Lakshadweep has been witnessing protests by various political parties since the administration started implementing reform measures in the islands.



Farmers ploughing their paddy field in a village in Tral area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district on Friday. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

US Delays Use Of India-Made COVID-19 Vaccine Covaxin. What It Recommended

Agenceis

HYDERABAD: In a setback to Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin, the US Food and Drug Administration has "recommended" Ocugen Inc, the US partner of the Indian vaccine maker, to go for Biologics Licence Application (BLA) route with additional data, nixing hopes of Emergency Use Authorisation.

Ocugen in a statement on Thursday announced that as recommended by the US FDA, it will pursue submission of a biologics licence application (BLA) for Covaxin. Biologics Licence Application or BLA, is a "full approval" mechanism by the FDA for drugs and vaccines.

"The company will no longer pursue an Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) for Covaxin. The FDA provided feedback to Ocugen regarding the Master File. The company had previously submitted and recommended that Ocugen pursue a BLA submission instead of an EUA application for its vaccine candidate and requested additional information and data," Ocugen said.

The development may delay the Covaxin launch in the US, Ocugen said. Ocugen is in discussions with the FDA to understand the additional information required to support a BLA submission. The company anticipates that data from an additional clinical trial will be required to support the submission.

"Although we were close to finalising our Emergency Use Authorisation application for submission, we received a recommendation from the FDA to pursue a BLA path. While this

will extend our timelines, we are committed to bringing Covaxin to the US," Dr. Shankar Musunuri, Chairman of the Board, Chief Executive Officer and co-founder of Ocugen said.

"This differentiated vaccine is a critical tool to include in our national arsenal given its potential to address the SARS-CoV-2 variants, including the delta variant, and given the unknowns about what will be needed to protect US population in the long term," he added.

Ocugen recently announced that it secured exclusive rights to commercialise Covaxin in Canada and has initiated discussions with Health Canada for regulatory approval.

The company will pursue expedited authorisation for the vaccine under the Interim Order Respecting the Importation, Sale and Advertising of Drugs for Use in Relation to COVID-19 in Canada.

In a statement issued by Bharat Biotech, the company said that "The USFDA had earlier communicated that no new Emergency Use Authorisation will be approved for covid vaccines. All applications have to follow the biological licence application process, with is the standard process for vaccines."

Bharat Biotech further stated that "Covaxin has received EUA's 14 countries with more than 50 countries in process," adding that "No vaccine manufactured or developed from India has ever received Emergency Use Authorisation or full licensure from USFDA. When approved, it will be a great leap forward for vaccines innovation and manufacturing from India."

PM Modi Meets Amit Shah, Nadda Amid Cabinet Reshuffle Buzz

Agenceis

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Friday, held deliberations with Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda amid speculation about a reshuffle in the Union cabinet, an exercise Modi has not undertaken since forming the government for a second time in May 2019.

There is also a growing buzz about the Cabinet expansion in Uttar Pradesh after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath met the BJP top brass during his two-day visit to the national capital.

Sources, however, added that Modi has been meeting Union ministers in different batches of late, and Nadda has also been present there.

The deliberations among the top BJP leaders at the prime minister's residence came a day after Shah also met party allies from Uttar Pradesh, including Apna Dal's



Anupriya Patel who was a minister in the first Modi government, but was not inducted in the next.

There has been no official word from the party on these deliberations.

The BJP has of late engaged in the review of its organisation and government works in different states.

Nadda had also held a meeting with the party general secre-

taries where, besides the relief work carried out by the saffron organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic, its performance in the recent assembly polls were reviewed.

With the party now gearing up for the next round of assembly polls in five states early next year, including in all important Uttar Pradesh, it is expected to take various measures to bolster its social equation.

Education Ministry Launches Online Module To Track, Re-Enrol Out-Of-School Children

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Education on Friday launched an online module to compile data on out-of-school children that will facilitate age-appropriate admissions for children in the 6-14 age group.

The ministry also said that for out-of-school children in the 16-18 age group, financial assistance will be provided for the first time in the 2021-22 session to allow them to continue their education through open or distance learning mode.

"Taking care of every student of India is our government's top priority. Accordingly, the department of school education and literacy developed an online module for compiling out-of-school children's data identified by each State/UT and map with Special Training Centres on the PRABANDH portal," Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' tweeted.

"Child-wise information of the identified out-of-school children and

STCs must be uploaded at block level under the Block Resource Coordinator. A quarterly progress report and a user manual are shared on the portal," he said.

In a letter to education secretaries of all states and union territories, the ministry has sought that the information regarding out-of-school children, special training centres (STCs) and their progress, as uploaded by the block resource centre (BRC), be validated by the district magistrate or an appropriate officer as authorised by the DM.

"In order to facilitate age-appropriate admission of out-of-school children in the age group of 6-14 in regular schools, financial provisions are made in the 'Samagra Shiksha' scheme for arranging special training to bridge their learning gaps and mainstreaming them in schools," the letter said.

"For out-of-school children in 16-18 age group and belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged

groups (SEDG), financial assistance has been made available for the first time from the year 2021-22 to continue their education through open/distance learning mode," it stated.

The letter further said, "The ministry has developed an online module for compiling the data on out-of-school children identified by each state and UT and their mapping with STCs on the PRABANDH Portal. The child-wise information of the identified out-of-school children and STCs is required to be uploaded at the block level under the supervision of block resource coordinator of the concerned BRC."

"For monitoring the progress of mainstreaming, the quarterly progress report is also to be uploaded on the portal. It is requested that the information regarding out-of-school children, STCs and their progress, as uploaded by the BRC, is validated by the district magistrate or an appropriate officer as authorised by the DM," it said. — PTI

SC Postpones INI CET Exam 2021 by a Month



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The Supreme Court Friday termed as "arbitrary" the fixing of June 16 for conducting INI CET 2021 and directed All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to hold the post graduate medical entrance test after one month. A vacation bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M R Shah disposed of a plea filed by doctors seeking admission in PG medical and challenging the notification of fixing June 16 as date of INI CET 2021. The bench said that having regard to the difficulty faced by the candidates due to the examination and many placed far way due to COVID duty from the examination centre, the exam needs to be postponed.

Around 80,000 candidates are vying for 815 seats in the national level examination which is being held by AIIMS. The 815 seats are spread across 8 institutes of AIIMS and JIPMER, Puducherry, NIMHANS, Bengaluru and PGIMER, Chandigarh.

The INI CET 2021 was initially scheduled to be held on May 8 but was rescheduled to June 16 due to the COVID pandemic.

COVID Threatens India's Regional, Global Ambitions: Us Think-Tank



Agenceis

India's domestic challenges due to COVID-19 crisis have become a threat to its regional and global ambitions, a US think-tank has observed and warned that unless it recovers with the help of allies like the United States, the pandemic could impact the geopolitical balance in the Indo-Pacific.

As such, it is in the United States' best interests to help India retain its status as a pre-eminent power in South Asia, particularly in view of China's efforts to bolster its position at the expense of the US and India, it said.

The Hudson Institute think-tank said that at the start of the pandemic, India offered medical assistance to its immediate neighbours and followed vaccine diplomacy in the first three months of 2021 which helped India to project itself as a regional leader, advancing its claim of being a global power in waiting.

"There was optimism that India would be able to counter China's soft power with its own. Now, however, at least over the short term, India's domestic challenges have become a threat to its regional and global ambitions," wrote Husain Haqqani, a former Pakistani Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the US, and Hudson research scholar Aparna Pande.

Haqqani is currently the director of South and Central Asia at the Hudson Institute. Pande is director, Initiative on the Future of India and South Asia at the think-tank.

"The recent surge of COVID-19 in South Asia challenges India's traditional ability to aid its smaller neighbours, a change that could, in turn, affect India's influence in its competition with China. Unless India can recover from this surge with the help of allies like the United States, the pandemic could impact the Indo-Pacific's geopolitical balance," the joint policy memo released by Hudson stated.

In the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, India succeeded in occupying the role of a regional

leader. But official complacency, disinclination on the part of government leaders to accept the advice of scientific advisors and reluctance to ramp up vaccine production and distribution has seriously damaged India's standing, the think-tank report said.

Haqqani and Pande wrote that a year-and-a-half after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, China's footprint in South Asia is larger than it was before. Both Pakistan and Sri Lanka are deeply in debt to China, having borrowed heavily from it due to the pandemic.

"Unless India, the United States, and the financial institutions led by the democracies provide support, the Maldives and Nepal may also turn towards China for assistance," they warned.

Bipartisan support within the US policy community for India has already mobilised Americans to help India. The Joe Biden administration has sent oxygen concentrators, medicines testing kits, ventilators, and personal protective equipment to India, and many US companies and the Indian-American community have rallied to India's support, the think-tank report stated.

The Hudson Institute recommended the Biden Administration offers Covid vaccine doses to India and other countries in need of them. In the short term, one way to help India's economy recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic would be to reinstate India's Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus status, which the Donald Trump administration removed.

"A mini-trade deal could be offered to signal American support for India's economic recovery," the policy memo said.

Noting that India's economy underwent its first recession in 2020, contracting by 10 per cent, it said encouragement for American companies and those of other countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, that are moving out of China, to invest in India would also aid the country in restoring its economic growth.

Delhi Man Fakes Own Kidnapping, Demands ₹3 Lakh From Father: Police

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: A 23-year-old man, who allegedly faked his own kidnapping to demand ₹3 lakh from his father, was traced to Punjab's Jalandhar, the police said Thursday.

On June 3, Delhi's Shahbad Dairy police station received a call about the kidnapping. The police reached the spot and recorded the statement of Veer Pal Singh - the father of the man, a senior police officer said.

Mr Singh told the police that his son Aman had gone to the market on June 1 and had not returned home since, officials said.

Mr Singh told the police that he received a call from his son on June 3 who told him that he has been kidnapped and the kidnappers have demanded a ransom of ₹3 lakh, the officer said.

He received three calls from his son, asking him to transfer the money to his bank account, they said, adding that a case was registered following that.

During the investigation, the location of the mobile phone from which Aman had called was checked and was found to be in Punjab's Jalandhar following which a team was sent there.

The team interrogated some friends of Aman in Jalandhar. Finally, he was traced on Saturday and brought back to the national capital on Sunday, the police said.

"During the interrogation, Aman told the police that he wanted to



sell a car and discussed the matter with his friend Ankit, a resident of Jalandhar, who told him that he had a purchaser for the vehicle," Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer north) Rajiv Ranjan Singh said.

On June 1, Aman went to Hisar in Haryana where his friend Ankit, the actually owner of the car - Ravi - along with the purchaser met, the police said. The purchaser gave ₹2 lakh in cash to Aman but Ravi snatched the cash and fled along with the car, the police said.

The buyer then started pressurizing Aman to return his money as he had not got the possession of the car, the police said.

Aman first went back to Jalandhar along with his friend Ankit and started working in a factory as a labourer. However, since he knew that he would not be able to return the money from the salary of his job, he planned his own kidnapping, called his father, and demanded ₹3 lakhs from him, saying that he has been kidnapped, the police said.

Mamata Banerjee To Marry Socialism In Tamil Nadu On June 13

Agenceis

COIMBATORE: Mamata Banerjee is all set to marry Socialism on June 13 this year. No, this isn't the beginning of a political joke.

What it is in fact is a wedding invitation that's left many scratching their heads. A wedding invitation that was published in Tamil newspaper 'Jan Shakti', the mouthpiece of CPI on Monday, and has since gone viral says P Mamata Banerjee will marry AM Socialism.

The invite also mentions the names of the groom's elder siblings—AM Communism and AM Leninism.

CPI sources said Socialism is the son of party's Salem secretary A Mohan alias Stalin Mohan and the bride is the granddaughter of a Congressman, who named her after West Ben-



gal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee after being inspired by her actions and style of functioning. Mohan, who

is also councillor of Panamarathupatti town, said he wanted his future generations to carry forward the ide-

ology of Communism.

He said his grandson is named Marxism.

"If a girl is born in the family, I will name her Cubaism," he said.

On naming his first son Communism, he said that was due to the propaganda that Communism would not prosper after the fall of the Soviet Union.

"I decided to name him communism as I felt that communism will exist till the world and human race exist," he said, adding that many people had named their offspring Romania, Vietnam, and Russia in the region.

So he named his second son Leninism and third one Socialism who is getting married to P Mamata Banerjee on Sunday, Mohan said.

On publishing the invitation in the party mouthpiece, he said the family was not able to invite relatives and other people due to the Covid-19 restrictions. — Agencies