



P5 STATE

VARIOUS TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN J&K TO GET HELICOPTER SERVICES SOON

The tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir is set to undergo a change with various tourist destinations in both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir getting...

P6

A CASE FOR ETHICAL SHOPPING: CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION TO HELP THE VULNERABLE

Post Covid world will be a different one in many dimensions. Politics, economics, society and government will not be transformed but will be impacted. On the level of economics, in the



P3 CITY

LG INAUGURATES WB FUNDED INTERPRETATION CENTRE IN BEMINA

With an objective to give a determined push to the growth of Woolen industry in the UT, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today inaugurated the Showroom cum



Quote!

I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.
— Mark Twain

NEWS DIGEST

Militant Arrested In Hajin: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday claimed to have arrested a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant at a checkpoint in Hajin town of Bandipora district. Muzammil Sheikh alias Abu Maviya was nabbed by the joint team of police, army and CRPF at a checkpoint in Gundjahanger area of Hajin town after his suspicious movement was noticed, a police spokesperson said Friday. The checkpoint, he said was established after a specific input about **More On P6**

Bomb Scare In Soura

SRINAGAR: An unattended bag on Friday triggered a bomb scare in Soura area of the city, prompting police to suspend movement of traffic. Official sources said that a hand bag was found lying unattended on the road near SKIMS Sarai following which a police team reached the spot. The commuter and vehicular traffic movement was suspended along the road and a Bomb Disposal Squad was summoned to the site. After the assessment, the BDS found some clothes and **More On P6**

Landslide Blocks Banihal Highway

SRINAGAR: The traffic movement on Srinagar-Jammu highway was suspended on Friday after a landslide occurred at Magharkote. Officials said that a huge landslide occurred at Magharkote on Friday evening prompting the traffic authorities to suspend movement of vehicular traffic from both the sides. The officials said that it might take the entire night to clear the debris. Officials said that the highway was likely to be **More On P6**

Boy Drowns In Budgam River

SRINAGAR: A minor boy drowned while taking bath in a river in Narbal area of central Kashmir's Budgam district on Friday. 12-year-old Furqan Ahmad Tabadar of Parimpora Srinagar, who had come to his maternal home at Ghat Narb, drowned while taking bath with his friends in river Jeel on Friday afternoon, reports said. Soon after the incident, a joint search operation was launched by locals and the police to trace the boy.

Over 4000 Violators Slapped With Fine

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir police on Friday slapped a fine of over Rs 6 lakh from 4272 across Kashmir Valley for violating various guidelines and rules related to the coronavirus pandemic. In a statement issued here, a police spokesperson said that continuing its efforts to curb the outbreak of 2nd wave of Coronavirus, Police have realized fine to the tune of Rs6,41,950 from 4272 people throughout the **More On P6**

2 Dozen Politicians, Ex-Babus Told To Vacate Govt Quarters

Agencies

SRINAGAR: After the High Court directions, the Estates department has asked nearly two dozen political leaders as well as the former bureaucrats to vacate the government accommodations across Jammu and Kashmir.

Sources within the department said that following the HC directions, the notice vis-à-vis vacating the government accommodations were served to many political leaders as well as the former bureaucrats.

They informed that the notice was served to 150 political leaders and former bureaucrats' approx, saying that almost two dozen have been there across Jammu and Kashmir now and would be vacated shortly.

"We had got the directions to vacate the former legislators and bureaucrats from government accommodations. We have already started work in this regard and all those staying in these accommodations and have been served notices, will be vacated at earliest," a top **More On P6**



A group of tourists roam around Nishat Garden in Srinagar on Friday in a brazen violation of Covid-19 guidelines. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Hospitals In Kashmir Resume OPD Services, Surgeries

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Authorities in Kashmir have ordered resumption of routine healthcare services, including OPD and surgeries, in the health institutions across the valley in view of the decline in COVID-19 cases, officials said on Friday.

The officials said the Directorate of Health Services, Kashmir issued an order to resume the services in view of the decline in the number of COVID-19 positive



cases reported from across Kashmir division, a drastic decrease in the number of

hospital admissions and also as a DRDO hospital has come up for coronavirus patients.

... it is enjoined upon all chief medical officers, medical superintendents & block medical officers under the administrative control of this Directorate to resume OPD, surgeries & other routine healthcare facilities services in all the health institutions under their respective jurisdictions forthwith in the interest of better patient care, the order read.

However, the officials said the Directorate has ordered that **More On P6**

Vaccination Ordered In Religious Institutions

Amid apprehensions of a third wave of coronavirus hitting the country, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday ordered Covid-19 vaccination drive on "war footing" basis in all the religious places. "In order to take further measures for containment of possible resurgence of Covid-19 cases (3rd Wave), a need has been felt to carry-out vaccination drive in Darul Uloom, Orphanages, Asharams, Gurdwaras, Churches & Juvenile homes in Kashmir Division, so that the staff as well as students in these religious institutions can be vaccinated well in time," Director Health services Kashmir Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather said in a circular. "Therefore, it is impressed upon all the Chief Medical Officers, Medical **More On P6**

Situation In J&K Under Control: LG

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Friday that the security situation in the union territory was totally under control and nobody will be allowed to disrupt peace in the valley.

"The security situation is totally under control," Sinha told reporters after visiting Bemina Woolen Mills here.

He also said the security forces have an upper hand and "nobody will be allowed to mess with the security" in Jammu and Kashmir.

'Delimitation In J&K A Very Complex Issue, Not Mere Arithmetic'

D Panel Rules Out Defreezing Of 24 Pak Kashmir Seats

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir will be transparent in nature and there should be no fears and doubts over it, Justice (retired) Ranjana Prakash Desai said on Friday, seeking to dispel apprehensions among a section of political leaders and people that it is a pre-planned exercise guided by the agenda of a



political party. Desai, who heads the Delimitation Commission, was on a four-day **More On P6**

Court Orders Framing Of Charges Against 4 Hizb 'Members'

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday ordered framing of charges against four alleged members of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) after "prima facie" finding that they received funds from Pakistan for carrying out militant activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

Special Judge Parveen Singh noted that in the case, also involving HM commander Syed Salahuddin, the militant outfit had created a frontal organization in the name of JKART (Jammu Kashmir Affectees Relief Trust) and the purpose of the trust was to fund militant activities and mainly to provide funds for the militants and their families.

The judge said every militant organization needs funds to continue its activities, to provide salary/stipend/incentives to its cadres, for procurement of arms and ammunition and further, for taking care of incarcerated militants and the families of the **More On P6**

Gunmen In Army Fatigues Spotted Near Jammu



Agencies

SRINAGAR: A high alert was sounded on Friday along the Jammu-Pathankot highway in Samba district of Jammu region after four heavily armed gunmen in army fatigue were spotted by the locals on Thursday night.

According to police, a local identified as Ravinder Kumar of village Chhan Kana of Jammu area of Samba district claimed to have spotted four heavily armed persons in Army uniform on Thursday night. "Ravinder Kumar along with his father **More On P6**

Militants Give Slip To Govt Forces In Kulgam

Unidentified militants managed to give slip to the government forces after engaging them in a brief encounter in south Kashmir's Kulgam district, reports said Friday. According to officials, an encounter broke out between unknown militants and the joint team of police, army in **More On P6**

WE ARE ON A HIGH ALERT. Checking has been intensified and forces have been deployed at all sensitive points

Probe Ordered Into ULB Appointments Of Last 20 Years

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration have ordered a high-level investigation into the illegal appointments and regularisation of employees in the municipal bodies of the Valley during the last two decades.

According to a government order, a committee of officers headed by Director Urban Local Bodies Kashmir, Mathoor Masoom has been constituted to probe all illegal appointments made in the municipal councils and committees across the Valley since 2001. Two other members of the committee are Showkat Ahmad Mir, special secretary (legal), Housing & Urban Development department and Alyaz Ahmad Naisroo, secretary, Lakes &

Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA).

The panel would hold a detailed enquiry into all the illegal appointments/regularisations made in the ULBs in Kashmir from 2001 till date. The Directorate of ULB Kashmir administers three municipal councils and 39 municipal committees.

This is the second such enquiry into the backdoor appointments in the ULB Kashmir in the past 15 days.

On June 23, the government ordered that Dr. Bashir Ahmad Bhat, vice-chairman, Lakes and Waterways Development Authority would inquire into the appointments done in Urban Local Bodies Kashmir by way of illegal relaxation of norms of age/qualification etc. In the past **More On P6**

Govt To Train 18000 Youth In 35 Sectors: LG

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a bid to provide livelihood avenues to the unemployed youth, The Jammu and Kashmir administration will train 18,000 youth in 35 identified sectors under various skill development programmes, the Union Territory's Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said Friday.

He made these remarks while chairing a meeting to review the functioning of the Skill Development Department.

The LG, as per an official spokesperson laid special focus on upskilling of the youth in



various sectors and directed the officials of the Skill Development Department to integrate skill development with Youth clubs, besides exploring various modalities to hone the ability of the talented youth of J&K by taking

the initiatives under skill development to grass root level.

"Improve quality and market relevance of skill development programmes and provide more access to youth in skill training; Identify gaps **More On P6**



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**KASHMIR
OBSERVER**

Saturday| 10-07-2021

Good Storytellers Get Better Health Care – But Childhood Trauma Confuses The Narrative

Agencies

When describing their symptoms, medical history and health changes at a clinic or hospital, every patient is the storyteller of their own health. Good storytellers tend to get better health care, but a history of childhood trauma plays havoc with telling your own story.

Consider Florence, as a (fictional) example: It is a hot July night and Florence is having dizzy spells again. She feels dreadful and is worried. What if it happens when she is driving? What if it doesn't get better? How can she work like this? What if it is a stroke or a tumour? She goes to the emergency department in spite of her past experience that it isn't very helpful.

The triage nurse asks what she is there for. “Well, I had this bad thing... they did tests and it was almost normal...” The nurse looks puzzled. “When was that?” “October. I was...” The triage nurse doesn't need to hear what happened nine months ago. She cuts Florence off and points her toward the waiting area.

A while later Florence meets with a doctor. She has been practising what to say while she waits. He interrupts after a few seconds to ask what Florence means she by “dizzy.” Florence replies, “You know, it's like that dizzy feeling, oh I hate that, you know ...” Although it doesn't occur to either Florence or the doctor, a lifetime of difficulty — starting with violence that she witnessed and experienced as a child — is compromising Florence's health.

Research on the links between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and poor mental and physical health has made this formerly hidden risk factor for many of our most common and burdensome chronic diseases a topic of public discussion.

The numbers are mind-boggling. About 60 per cent of adults experienced at least one type of ACE as they are usually defined. About one in three children experience serious physical or sexual abuse or are exposed to interpersonal violence. It is a major public health problem. ACEs are linked to unhealthy behaviour and experiences later in life. They increase the risk that a child will smoke cigarettes, adopt unhealthy drug and alcohol use, become obese, or experience further trauma as an adult. Because of this, and because of other effects of stress on health, ACEs increase the risk of diseases of the heart, lungs and liver, pain syndromes, and some cancers. What Florence is experiencing in the emergency room is a further consequence of childhood adversity — one that makes it much harder to get good health care. There is



The numbers are mind-boggling. About 60 per cent of adults experienced at least one type of ACE as they are usually defined. About one in three children experience serious physical or sexual abuse or are exposed to interpersonal violence

a strong relationship between unresolved developmental trauma and impaired storytelling. This is technically called “narrative incoherence.”

The qualities of a good narrative were described by the philosopher Paul Grice in four maxims: have evidence for what you say (quality), be succinct, yet complete (quantity), be relevant to the topic at hand (relation) and

be clear and orderly (manner).

Psychologist Mary Main and her collaborators used Grice's maxims to describe how unresolved childhood trauma and loss can affect a person's state of mind regarding important relationships in their life. They found people with unresolved trauma could be identified by failures in the quality, quantity, relation and manner of

the stories they told during an emotionally taxing interview about those relationships.

It is a short leap from that research to high-stakes conversations in an emergency department or doctor's office where someone like Florence struggles to make her condition clear and receive the help they need.

There are two common patterns of incoherence in these interactions. Florence's pattern is called preoccupied. Her anxiety is obvious. She is too overwhelmed by fear to organize her thoughts. She presents events out of sequence; her thoughts are unfinished; there are too many details; it is hard to tell the signal from the noise.

As a result, it can seem like the story of Florence's health is a jigsaw puzzle and all the pieces have been dumped on the table at once. A listener feels baffled and frustrated. The doctor may start his note with the comment “poor historian.” The second pattern of narrative incoherence is quite different from Florence's preoccupied pattern of providing too much disorganized information. A person with a dismissing pattern tends to provide conclusions without evidence, and generalizations without examples. Q: “How does that feel?” A: “Same as always.” Q: “How long has this been going on?” A: “A while.” The conversation is short and at its end a health-care provider is unilluminated. While someone like Florence wears her anxiety on her sleeve, a person with the dismissing style keeps their cards close to their chest. A listener feels uninvited to ask more.

Practical steps

If Florence and her health-care providers are able to recognize that trouble telling her own story is a clue to what is going on — not just a marker that she is a “poor historian” — they can take steps to meet the challenge. Some steps Florence can take include: Bringing a friend with her who helps her stay calm and organised.

Explaining that she is anxious and needs a little time to describe the trouble.

Making notes in advance about her most important points and questions.

Even more importantly, health-care workers need to recognise the face of fear. The doctor can help Florence to organise her thoughts instead of interrupting to interrogate her. They can help each other to find the story that allows her dizziness to be understood.

Every patient is forced to be a storyteller; a health-care professional's job is to make them an excellent one.

The Conversation

ٹھیکہ داری کارڈ نکالنا مطلوب ہے

ہر خاص و عام کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ منظور کوئی کلاس ٹھیکہ داری کارڈ نکالنا مطلوب ہے۔ اس بارے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دنوں کے اندر اندر اپنا اعتراض آراپڈ نی ڈویژن واپس دے کر حل ہوتا ہے۔ تاہم کے دفتر میں پیش کریں۔ معیار گذرنے کے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

انتھرو پروویڈر احمد بٹ غلام قادر بٹ سائل لارو تحصیل RNA

از نیابت سگام با ا اجلاس نائب تحصیلدار سگام

مضمون درخواست منجانب: عکاش علی الدین ولد غلام علی الدین راتھر سگام باڑہ پورہ ضلع اہلہ ناگ

برآمدگی RBA سرٹیفکٹ

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان: (صدر میں سائل نے ایک درخواست بعض از نیابت و نمونہ سگام با ا اجلاس منظور احمد خان نائب تحصیلدار حصول ایک وادارہ پاسرٹیفکٹ دفتر پڑا میں پیش کیا ہے۔ اس بارے میں عملی طور سے رپورٹ طلب کیا گیا جس سے عکاش کے پاس کئی کارڈ موجود ہیں اور اس کے لئے درخواست پندرہ سالوں سے رہائش پذیر ہے اور سائل کا تعلق پڑا میں ہے۔

شمار	نام افراد	عمر	پیشہ	آمدنی
01	غلام علی الدین راتھر ولد محمد امان	52 سال	مزدوری	3000/=
02	عکاش علی الدین راتھر ولد غلام علی الدین	50 سال	گھریلو کام	
03	طارق احمد ولد غلام علی الدین	26 سال	ڈرائیور	5000/=
04	ایرو جان دختر غلام علی الدین	24 سال	=	
05	عکاش علی الدین پسر غلام علی الدین	19 سال	=	

اسٹورٹمنٹ: 05 افراد مستحق ہیں۔ اور ٹیکس سالانہ 96000 روپیہ تک ہے۔ لہذا از نیابت سرٹیفکٹ اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر اندر اپنا اعتراض معروض کرے۔ عکاش کے لئے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

نائب تحصیلدار RNA

از نیابت نائب تحصیلدار ماگام

مضمون کاغذات درخواست منجانب: بشیر احمد حجام و عاشق حسن

اولاد ان عبدالخالق ساکنہ موضع سوڈل بمراد عطا گی RBA

تحت 294 SRO

اشتہار بمراد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان: (صدر میں درخواست سائل دفتر پڑا میں زیر کارڈ ہے اس سلسلے میں پڑا میں حلقہ سے رپورٹ منظور کیا گیا ہے جس سے عکاش کے پاس سائل موضع سوڈل میں رہائش پذیر ہے اور سائل کا تعلق پڑا میں ہے۔

بشیر احمد ولد عبدالخالق حجام زمینداری 48 سال سربہ کبہ

گھریلو کام 48 سال

دھرم 29 سال

گھریلو کام 26 سال

دھرم 24 سال

دھرم 22 سال

دھرم 20 سال

دھرم 18 سال

تسلیم 26 سال

اس کے علاوہ کوئی افراد نہ ہیں۔ سائل کے کنبہ کی سالانہ آمدنی 96000 ہے۔ سرٹیفکٹ اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض سائل ہی مندرجہ پڑا میں پیش کرے۔ عکاش کے لئے بعد کوئی بھی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

نائب تحصیلدار sult

از نیابت قلم آباد

مضمون کاغذات درخواست منجانب: رابعہ ملک و عکاش علی ملک اولاد ان عبدالخالق

ملک ساکنہ موضع پورہ قلم آباد بمراد عطا گی EWS تحت 294 SRO

اشتہار بمراد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان: (صدر میں درخواست سائل دفتر پڑا میں زیر کارڈ ہے اس سلسلے میں پڑا میں حلقہ سے رپورٹ منظور کیا گیا ہے جس سے عکاش کے پاس سائل موضع مندرجہ قلم آباد میں رہائش پذیر ہے سرٹیفکٹ اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض سائل ہی مندرجہ پڑا میں پیش کرے۔ عکاش کے لئے بعد کوئی بھی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

نائب تحصیلدار sult

The Jammu and Kashmir State Board Of School Education

Sub-Office Anantnag

Attention Please

The applicant/ candidate whose photograph is published in this notice and claiming to have lost his Marks certificate of class 12th issued by BOSE under registration No N11400550089

With Following Particulars:-
Name : JUNADE-EBNE-RASOOL MANTOO
Parentage Gh Rasool Mantoo
R/O Dethu Anantnag
Roll No(S) Class 12Th 1149260 Year & Session Annual 2014-15

Now the candidate has applied for their duplicate. Anybody (if) having any objections in this regard may please file the same before the undersigned within (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides the above referred Marks Certificate treated as cancelled

Sd/- Assistant Secretary
Sub-Office Anantnag

RNA

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost RC of vehicle bearing registration No Jk03B 0391. Now I want to apply its duplicate if anybody having any objection in this regard He/She may file His/Her objection office of the ARTO Anantnag within the period of seven days after that no objection will be entertained.

Name: Mohammad Amin
S/o; Gh Nabi
R/o: Verinag

RNA

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my Provisional-cum Character Certificate bearing Roll No: 860311, Session Annual 2001. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Iqbal Memorial Institute Bemina Srinagar within a period of Three days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Raja Jahangir
S/O G hulam Ali Malla
R/O Soniem Pattan Baramulla

bmgr

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have applied for the issuance of "D Class" Contractor Card. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Block Development Officer Lalpora within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Bashir Ahmad Dar
S/O Ab Rehman Dar
R/o Waripora, Tehsil Karhama

BMG

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost the RC of my vehicle bearing Regd No: DL4CAV445 somewhere. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Regional Transport Kupwara within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Bilal Ahmad Khan
S/O Nasarullah Khan
R/o Tingroo Qaziabad Kralgund

sult_r

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir

e-mail: ddtreg123@gmail.com

Subject: - Renewal & Retirement of partners from the Registration Certificate of “M/s Happy Paradise Travels” situated at Ishber, Nishat, Srinagar.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas, Mr. Shabir Ahmad Bhat S/o Mr. Gulam Rasool Bhat R/o Ishber, Nishat, Srinagar one of the partner of the Travel unit running under the name and style “M/s Happy Paradise Tour & Travels” has approached this office for Retirement/ Dissolution of partners namely Mr. Showkat Ahmad Bhat & Mr. Javid Ahmad Bhat both residents of Ishber, Nishat, Gupt Ganga, Srinagar under the J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011-12.

Whereas, the unit is registered with this office vide Registration No. Reg/772/1072/DT/15/L-8 dated 22-12-2011 and renewed upto 31.03.2021.

Now therefore, in exercise of powers conferred on me under J&K Registration Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011/12, before the request for Retirement of partners is considered in favour of “M/s Happy Paradise Tour & Travels”, the matter is hereby notified for information of general Public/Financial Institutions/Bank/Organization, etc for objection if any. The same should reach this office within a period of 7 days from the publication of this notice in the local newspaper. No objections beyond period of 7 days will be entertained and Retirement of one partners shall be effected to the above mentioned Travel Agency and necessary changes in the Registration records shall be made under rules after submission of all documents.

Sd/-
Deputy Director Tourism,
Registration (Kashmir)

DIPK-4245/21

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Office Of The Chief Executive Officer Srinagar Smart City Ltd

(A J&K GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING)

REQUEST FOR QUOTATION (RFQ)

No.:	RFQ 06-SSCL of 2021
Title	ARTISTIC WALL PAINTING WORKS IN SRINAGAR CITY

IMPORTANT DATES

S.No.	Description	Date
1	Date of issue of RFQ Notice	06-07-2021
2	Period for down loading of RFQ documents	06-07-2021 at 14:00 Hrs. to 13-07-2021 up to 16:00 Hrs.
3	Last Date of Online Submission of RFQ	13-07-2021 up to 16:00 Hrs.
4	Date of Opening of RFQ	14-07-2021 at 14:00 Hrs.

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

Sd/-
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SRINAGAR SMART CITY LTD.

No: SSCL/CEO/4624-25
DT: - 06/07/2021

DIPK-NB-1648/21

LG Inaugurates WB Funded Interpretation Centre In Bemina

New Facility To Provide Livelihood Opportunities: LG

SRINAGAR: With an objective to give a determined push to the growth of Woollen industry in the UT, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today inaugurated the Showroom cum Interpretation Centre at Government Woollen Mill, Bemina established under the World Bank funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTRFP).

In the 1st Phase of the project, Showroom cum Interpretation Centre was completed at a cost of Rs 4.25 crores. The sub-project was undertaken as part of the Restoration & Strengthening of Livelihood component of the JTRFP project. In Phase II, upgradation of machinery and ancillary work - shall be completed by August, 2021 end at a cost of Rs 4.00 crores.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lt Governor observed that the new Showroom cum Interpretation Centre will greatly impact the livelihood opportunities of people working in the mill, besides providing market opportunities for the thousands of wool-producing farmers in J&K. At the same time, the new facility will give a massive re-



vamping to Woollen industry of the region, he added.

Stressing on providing viable market opportunities to those associated with the wool production, the Lt Governor asked the officers to work put in committed efforts and formulate a comprehensive strategy to promote local woollen products at the national and international market.

While ensuring the improved and better quality product range, the new centre will provide direct Market for 80,000 Kgs of locally produced wool annually, thus

benefitting 1600 sheep rearing families, said the Lt Governor.

This will further improve the economic viability of Government Woollen Mills, Bemina, besides increasing annual fabric production from locally procured wool by 1,60,000 meters, he added.

J&K is the 2nd largest producer of wool in the country, producing approximately 70 lakh kgs of wool per annum. The reformative policies of the UT Government is providing economic growth opportunities to around 50,000 families associ-

STRESSING ON PROVIDING VIABLE market opportunities to those associated with the wool production, the Lt Governor asked the officers to work put in committed efforts and formulate a comprehensive strategy to promote local woollen products at the national and international market.

ated with sheep rearing in J&K, the Lt Governor maintained.

The Lt Governor was informed that the J&K Industry has tie-up with e-commerce platform 'Amazon' through Silk Mark Organisation of India (SMOI) as e-marketing channel.

Registration on GeM portal was completed. Trade name JKIL stands accepted with formal notification to be issued by Registrar by end of August, 2021. Professional catalogues and brochures were also developed. Reputed designers are being roped in to develop new product range in line with present market trends and fashions, it was informed.

The project is executed as part of the massive revamping of the Government Woollen Mill Bemina which was badly impacted during the floods of 2014 and had caused extensive

damage to the building and equipment installed in the mill.

To reinvigorate the functioning of the Government Woollen Mill Bemina, a comprehensive revamping project was undertaken under the World Bank funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project which included the rehabilitation of the mill, as well as the providing of the latest textile weaving equipment to enhance the production of wool manufactured at the factory.

It was informed that the New Government Silk Factory, Rajbagh with state-of-the-art preparatory, weaving and finishing machinery will be completed soon, thus providing economic benefit to 3000 cocoon-rearing families.

Pertinently, Experience Centre cum Sales Outlet was already made operational at Jammu for promotion and marketing of JKI products.

Srinagar Records Recovery Rate Of Over 98 Percent: DC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad Friday informed that the pace of ongoing Vaccination drive has been intensified and as many as 446153 vaccine doses have been administered so far in the district. He said the positivity rate has declined to 0.85 percent, while the recovery rate has touched 98.7 percent in the district.

The DC said this during a routine press briefing to present an overall situation of the Covid-19 in the district.

He said that presently we have 651 active positive cases in the district.

Giving details, the DC said, all parameters with regard to Covid-19 are improving gradually and keeping this in view ambit

of restrictions have been further eased. He said at present we have to strictly adhere to Covid safety precautions to tackle the 3rd wave of Covid-19.

The DC further said that unvaccinated persons shall not be given entry into public Parks to protect others from the Covid-19 infection. "Any person without vaccination will have to undergo Covid test" DC added.

The DC appealed the people of Srinagar to adhere to all guidelines, follow appropriate Covid-19 Behavior to ensure safety of themselves, family and fellow citizens.

The readers can also reach on the official Twitter account of DC Srinagar: @sringaramin and official Twitter account of DDPR Srinagar: @ddprsrinagar.



A HEALTHCARE WORKER CHECKS the temperature of a visitor outside a Mughal garden in Srinagar on Friday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

DDC Srinagar Sets Deadline For Projects Under PRI Grant, JJM



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad Friday chaired a meeting of officers to review the works identified and achievements made under District Development Plan 2021-22 through Panchayat Raj Installation.

Additional District Development Commissioner Srinagar, Gulzar Ahmad, Chief Planning Officer, Mohammed Yaseen Lone, Superintendent Engineers of PHE, PWD, PHE, District Panchayat Officer, Block Development Officers and other concerned were present in the meeting.

On the occasion, the District Development Commissioner highlighted the schemes and other major components of the District Development Plan for the current fiscal.

While giving a brief about the role of elected DDCs, BDCs and Panchayat members, the District Development Commissioner said that the District Development Plan has assumed immense significance after the formulation of District Development Councils, Block Development Councils thereby completing the three tier PRI system to ensure democratic decentralisation.

He informed that for the first time, proportionate funding to all three tiers of PRIs is being ensured to cater to the development aspirations of the people through DDCs, BDCs and Panchayats.

Funds to the tune of Rs 25 lakh per Block Development Council,

THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT commissioner directed the officers to work in coordinated manner with line departments and in consultation with PRIs. He set the deadline for identification of developmental works to be taken and examining the feasibility of the actual estimates.

Rs 10 crore to District Development Council out of the budget has been provisioned, while Rs 23.30 lakh per Panchayat has been earmarked out of ULB/ PRI grants this time to achieve development targets.

The meeting held sector wise discussion with the officers of line departments and deliberated on sector wise plan ceiling.

The District Development commissioner directed the officers to work in coordinated manner with line departments and in consultation with PRIs. He set the deadline for identification of developmental works to be taken and examining the feasibility of the actual estimates.

The DDC exhorted upon the officers to work with synergy to achieve development goals well in time keeping in view the working season.

Meanwhile, the District Development Commissioner also reviewed the progress made under Jal Jeevan Mission and directed the concerned to speed up the pace of works to achieve set targets in set timelines.

Webinar On 'Stress and Coping Strategies' Held At KU

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Kashmir University's UGC HRDC on Friday organised a webinar on "Stress and Coping Strategies among Faculty of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) during COVID-19 Pandemic."

Prof Mushtaq Ahmad Darzi, Director, HRDC, in his welcome address, threw light on the challenges faced by the teaching community during the current COVID crisis.

He spoke about the online teaching model and stressed on the need to evolve coping strategies to achieve academic positivity in the "new normal".

"As face-to-face classes have become difficult, necessary technical and instructive skills are needed for managing digital class instructions," he said, thanking Vice-Chancellor Prof Talat Ahmad and Registrar Dr Nisar Ahmad Mir for their constant support to the endeavors of the UGC-HRDC.

The lead speaker for the event, Prof Alok Kumar Chakraval from Saurashtra University, Rajkot, Gujarat, gave a detailed presentation on the stress and coping strategies and highlighted the high-stress levels which teachers are facing during the current COVID times. He discussed how COVID-19 has brought new challenges to teachers all across the globe and highlighted that switching over to the online teaching model has added to the stress level of teachers with new stressors for them.

"The time pressures, heavy workloads, and work-from-home protocols have created a big physical gap, resulting in unprecedented stress among teachers," he said.

NIT Faculty Member To Offer Consultancy Services To Saudi Company

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A faculty member from National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar has been offered to provide consultancy services in finance domain to technology based Investment Company from Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Nufazil Altaf Ahangar from Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, NIT Srinagar said Investment Company is in the process of going for Initial Public Offering (IPO) and he will be guiding them in matters related to valuation

and post IPO financial strategies.

While extending his greetings to Dr. Nufazil, Director NIT Srinagar (Dr.) Prof. Rakesh Sehgal, said the institute has been actively engaged in providing consultancy services to various agencies. He also appreciated the efforts of faculty members who are actively engaged in research and consultancy activities.

Registrar NIT Srinagar Professor Kaiser Bukhari appreciated Dr. Nufazil for being offered consultancy services by foreign company and said these activities are taking the institute to new heights in the field of academics and research.

دارالعلوم صدیقیہ بڈگام ہنہیال ہاتہال

میں اجتماعی قربانی کا نظم

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- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
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- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BIJHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPOR: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

This Day in History

- 48 BC - Battle of Dyrrhachium: Julius Caesar barely avoids a catastrophic defeat to Pompey near the city of Dyrrhachium (in what is now Albania)
- 1568 - Battle on Eems: Dutch Water garrison beats Spanish
- 1652 - England declares war on The Netherlands - beginning of the 1st Anglo-Dutch war
- 1778 - American Revolution: Louis XVI of France declares war on the Kingdom of Great Britain
- 1780 - The Comte de Rochambeau and his French force of 7,000 land at Newport, Rhode Island, to join the American Revolutionary War
- 1796 - Carl Friedrich Gauss discovers that every positive integer is representable as a sum of at most three triangular numbers
- 1861 - Lincoln writes to Kentucky's militia and says Union troops will not enter that state
- 1863 - Battle of Charleston, South Carolina (Morris Island)
- 1863 - Battle of Jackson, Mississippi - captured by federals
- 1913 - Romania declares war on Bulgaria
- 1923 - All non-fascist parties dissolved in Italy
- 1924 - Denmark takes Greenland as Norway ends claim
- 1925 - USSR's official news agency TASS forms
- 1940 - Battle of Britain begins as Nazi forces attack shipping convoys in the English Channel
- 1942 - Netherland's government in exile (London) recognizes Soviet Union
- 1943 - US, British and Canadian forces invade Sicily in WW II (Operation Husky)
- 1944 - German submarine U-821 sunk by RAF
- 1944 - "Father of Medicare" Tommy Douglas becomes the 7th Premier of Saskatchewan
- 1946 - Belgian government of Acker resigns
- 1947 - 200 die when train derailed and falls into a river in Canton, China
- 1947 - Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is recommended as the first Governor General of Pakistan by then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Clement Attlee
- 1951 - Armistice talks to end Korean conflict began at Kaesong
- 1962 - Martin Luther King Jr. arrested during demonstration in Georgia
- 1967 - Uruguay becomes a member of the Berne Convention copyright treaty
- 1971 - Failed assassination attempt on King Hassan II of Morocco, 101 killed
- 1972 - Herd of stampeding elephants kills 24, Chandka Forest India
- 1973 - Bahamas declares Independence from UK & adopts constitution
- 1974 - OPEC ends oil boycott against Netherlands
- 1974 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalitinsk USSR
- 1981 - US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1982 - Zimbabwe beats Bermuda by 5 wickets to win ICC Trophy
- 1985 - Coca-Cola Co announces it will resume selling old formula Coke
- 1991 - Boris Yeltsin sworn in as 1st elected President of the Russian Federation
- 1992 - Spaceship Giotto (Halley 1986) approaches comet Grigg-Skjellerup
- 1994 - Nepal premier Girija Prasad Koirala resigns
- 2006 - Pakistan International Flight PK-688 crashes in Multan, Pakistan shortly after takeoff, killing all 45 people on board
- 2011 - British tabloid News of the World publishes its last edition after 168 years in the wake of a phone hacking scandal.

From KO Archives

Pandits To Join Hurriyat Conference

Observer News Service

JAMMU- Kashmiri Pandits who were forced to leave the Kashmir Valley due to the violence there will join a conclave organised by the Hurriyat Conference in Srinagar this month.

At a meeting here between leaders of the Pandits and an emissary of the moderate faction of the APHC, it was decided that Pandits would participate in the meeting to be held at the Hurriyat headquarters July 19.

Salim Gilani, the Hurriyat representative who interacted with several intellectuals and leaders of die Pandit community here over the past few days, told a news conference Wednesday that the Hindu leaders would take part in the conference.

Pandit leaders including Rattan Lai Bhan, who represents several migrant camps in the Jammu region and was at the news conference, said they had agreed to a Hurriyat's proposal to attend the meet.

Bhan said Pandits had more faith in the Hurriyat than the government. "The government cannot offer us any guarantee of our safety, whereas the All Parties Hurriyat Conference can," he said. He noted the people in the Kashmir valley responded to the calls of the Hurriyat on various issues and not to those of the government.

"Therefore, we feel the Hurriyat's efforts for our return (to the Kashmir Valley) are more sincere and genuine," Bhan remarked.

Currently, a 34-member group of various Pandit organisations is touring the Kashmir Valley to study conditions ahead of the possible return of migrants. The state government organised their trip, now in its second week.

(Kashmir Observer, 10 July, 2005)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of the
Kashmir Observer LLP
Published from: # 5- Boulevard, Srinagar-190001
Printed at: KT Press Pvt. Ltd, Rangreth Ind Area, Srinagar.
RNI Registration No: 69503/98
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16
Editor-in-Chief : Sajjad Haider
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NO HOLDS BARRED



The predicament in which
the youth of Kashmir find
themselves is both difficult to
understand and explain. The political
landscape of the valley leaves them with
very few opportunities. Lack of proper
functioning of schools and colleges, lack
of employment opportunities, and
curtailment of social spaces often force
them to take paths, which otherwise,

Smoking a Crisis and Rolling an Alarm: Drug and Young in Kashmir

Suhail Ahmad Khan

There is an issue
of curtailment of
public spaces. Social
spaces such as
educational institutions,
public parks and picnic
spots, restaurants, etc.,
serve as recreational
places where, usually, the
youth refresh
themselves. As these
places have been
unavailable for three
years due to continuous
lockdowns, drug abuse
has increased among the
youth. And as such, it is
expected to rise if
measures are not taken
to curtail it

In Kashmir, discourses about conflict take precedence over other important societal matters, possibly because it seems to pervade all spheres of lives here. Nonetheless, it never leaves room for us to ever get to issues such as domestic violence, environmental degradation, structural problems in the education system, etc., are often overlooked. Moreover, issues that concern the youth are also not given due attention. Given this, an increasing number of the Kashmiri youth have indulged in certain harmful and unproductive activities. Activities such as reckless driving, loitering, and stalking have become frequent. Besides, more and more youth are indulging in drug abuse, which needs the urgent attention of the administration and society to control it.

The number of people who use drugs is rising at an alarming rate, and the most commonly used drug is the heroine. In 2016, only 15 per cent used heroin in the valley, and it rose to 90% by the end of 2019. What is more worrying is that a growing number of school-going children are using drugs. According to a recent study by the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS), 57% of the total respondents who used opioids were teens. It does not bear well for Kashmir that such an overwhelming number of teens are involved in drug abuse. Their involvement suggests that, in future, the social fabric of society will severely get impacted as social relations will hardly last long. The development of Kashmir is also at stake given that the youth, who often prove to be skilful, will not be able to hone and use their skills. Moreover, looking at the patterns of drug inflicted societies of Latin America and Punjab, it is prudent to argue that youth gangs would rake up. As and when these things will unfold due to continuous drug abuse, the socio-cultural identity of Kashmir will be lost. Thus, to rehabilitate the Kashmiri youth, and, at large, to preserve the socio-cultural identity of the valley, two things are essential: (I) identifying the causes of drug abuse among the youth and (II) addressing these causes by taking necessary measures.

Several social factors drive the youth to use drugs, like familial problems, failed love relations, forced marriages, etc. However, in essence, it is the political violence and its associated factors that drive the youth of Kashmir towards drug abuse. The predicament in which the youth of Kashmir find



themselves is both difficult to understand and explain. The political landscape of the valley leaves them with very few opportunities. Lack of proper functioning of schools and colleges, lack of employment opportunities, and curtailment of social spaces often force them to take paths, which otherwise, they would not have taken.

The ongoing conflict has a detrimental effect on the education of Kashmiri students. Most of the time, schools and colleges do not function properly. Nonetheless, students chart new ways and methods to continue educating themselves, and eventually, in exams, they pass with good grades. However, it is not the grades, but the atmosphere of educational institutions that shapes the identities of students or youth. In this atmosphere, students exchange ideas, discover and create meanings of life, and are involved in certain recreational activities. Devoid of all these things, Kashmiri students/youth cannot shape their talents and fulfil their aspirations. Besides, everyday violence puts tremendous pressure on their mental health and turns them hopeless. Given such circumstances, drugs may be seen as stress relaxant by the youth.

Even if Kashmiri students succeed in shaping their talents and completing their education, against all odds, they have few employment opportunities. Due to the ongoing turmoil, the informal sector is almost non-existent in Kashmir, and government jobs are scarce. As such, unemployment is one of the problems for the Kashmiri youth.

As per the data of a Mumbai based think-tank, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMEI), the unemployment rate in J&K was 9 per cent in March 2021. However, it is hard to come to terms with this data as the Union Territory has been under lockdown for three consecutive years since 2019. Besides, a recent analysis highlighted that the think tank's survey method is "biased towards better-off households." Therefore, in absence of any updated and reliable data, unemployment in Kashmir can be gauged by comparing the number of job applicants with the number of available posts. In 2020, 5.3 lakh applications were received for 8000 class IV jobs across Jammu and Kashmir. These numbers suggest that unemployment persists in the valley. Off late, in Kashmir, unemployment has driven the youth towards drug abuse as they become depressed and pessimistic, and consequently, use drugs as a last recourse.

As if the above-mentioned problems were less to leave the youth dejected, there is an issue of curtailment of public spaces. Social spaces such as educational institutions, public parks and picnic spots, restaurants, etc., serve as recreational places where, usually, the youth refresh themselves. As these places have been unavailable for three years due to continuous lockdowns, drug abuse has increased among the youth. And as such, it is expected to rise if measures are not taken to curtail it.

A set of constructive measures, both at the administrative and communitarian levels, are required to end the

drug menace in Kashmir. The administration needs to use its capacity and resources to bust the drug networks in Kashmir. For the engagement of the youth, alternate public spaces should be made available in the absence of proper functioning of schools and colleges. In this regard, the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of J&K, Manoj Sinha, in a recent speech, hinted towards the establishment of the Youth Clubs to engage the youth; what becomes now more important is to ensure that these clubs run smoothly. Besides, mental health infrastructure should be upgraded in the valley so that people suffering from mental stress can consult experts rather than indulging in drug abuse. Also, the administration needs to set up de-addiction centres in every district of the valley. Generating employment opportunities and conducting awareness programs will also help in reducing drug abuse.

As far as the role of the community is concerned, it should put social pressure on those who indulge in poppy cultivation. Further, it needs to listen to the concerns of the youth, engage with them and help them rather than using old Kashmiri cliches such as "yim chi darbadar," they are vagabonds. In this regard, Mohalla committees need to reach out to the youth and educate them about the impact of drug abuse on society as a whole, and parents need to create a friendly atmosphere at home so that children can share their concerns with them. Moreover, parents need to regulate the amount of money they give to their school-going children, as they can use it to buy drugs. Among the educated groups, discussion and discourses should emerge as to how to end rising drug abuse. These measures are not exhaustive, but they can prove helpful to end drug abuse and other social evils that can emerge from it.

Concerning the drug abuse in Kashmir, a Kashmir-based doctor reportedly said, "we are sitting on a ticking time bomb..." Therefore, now is the time to act against drug abuse. Once the bomb explodes, the actions taken will bear little results.

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

The author can be reached at skhan737662@gmail.com

BISHKEK – On July 2, the US military handed control of the vast Bagram Air Base to the Afghan government. US troops and their NATO allies are now on track to leave Afghanistan by mid-July, well ahead of US President Joe Biden's September 11, 2021, withdrawal deadline. According to a new analysis by researchers at Brown University, America's two-decade war in Afghanistan cost it nearly \$2.3 trillion. Now, Afghanistan's neighbors – Pakistan, Iran, China, India, and the Central Asian countries – are wondering just how much it will cost them to maintain security after the United States is gone.

In late June, the US intelligence community concluded that the Afghan government could collapse within six months of the US withdrawal – a stark downward revision of its earlier, more optimistic assessment. As the Taliban has swept through northern Afghanistan, capturing dozens of districts and major cities, Afghan security forces have often surrendered without a fight. According to a June report from the United Nations Afghanistan Sanctions Monitoring Team, the Taliban now exercises direct control over more than half of the country's regional administrative centers, and controls up to 70% of the ter-

ritory outside urban areas.

The tremors from these Taliban victories are already being felt across the region. Fierce fighting has occurred a mere four hours from Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe. On June 20, Taliban militants operating in northern Afghanistan surrounded government forces in Kunduz, the country's sixth-largest city (population 300,000). Then, on June 22, the Taliban captured the Afghan-Tajik border outpost of Sher Khan Bandar without a fight.

Meanwhile, Tajikistan's border service reported that 134 Afghan servicemen had received asylum at the crossing. Another 53 Afghan border troops and local militiamen retreated from a Taliban onslaught in Afghanistan's Shortepa district by crossing into Uzbekistan; and on July 5, more than 1,000 Afghan soldiers reportedly fled across the border from Badakhshan Province into Tajikistan.

A complete Taliban takeover of the Amu Darya and Panj Rivers divid-

ing Afghanistan from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan will likely occur within weeks. Since this outcome would allow the Taliban to control Afghanistan's international borders along this front, the risk of large refugee flows from Afghanistan into Central Asia, and then on to Russia and Europe, has sharply increased.

After clandestinely supporting the Taliban as a means to undermine the US war effort, Russia now fears broader destabilization in Central Asia and beyond. In response to recent developments in Afghanistan, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu says that, "By the end of this year, the command of the Central Military District will have to re-equip two aviation regiments with modernized Su-34M fighter-bombers and MiG-31BM fighter-interceptors." These reinforcements of Russian airpower in the region "will significantly increase the district's capabilities to engage the enemy with fire and combat cruise missiles in the Central Asian strategic direction."

Similarly, after having made nice with the Taliban, China also now fears the greater regional instability that the US withdrawal may incite. In addition to disrupting Chinese President Xi Jinping's Eurasia-spanning Belt and Road Initiative, a revitalized Taliban could re-energize the Islamist extremist threat in China's western Xinjiang province.

The prospect that Afghanistan will become a source of deepening poverty, mass migration, and instability is quickly becoming everyone's problem. But it is Central Asian governments that will be on the front lines. Still, many regional officials remain surprisingly optimistic. Following a recent visit to the US to discuss Afghanistan and regional security, the Uzbek foreign minister, Abdulaziz Kamilov, gave an extensive interview in which he argued that only Afghans, including the Taliban, can resolve Afghanistan's problems.

"We have some optimism," he explained, "Because the situation has changed. First, the two sides began di-

rect contact for the first time in 40 years. The Taliban also want direct negotiations to reach a peaceful agreement." While stressing that he is no defender of the Taliban, Kamilov pointed to an official publication on the group's website where it claims to want to build an independent, sovereign Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan without any outside interference. In this new country, the rights of women, girls, and minorities would supposedly be guaranteed.

It is hard to believe that a seasoned diplomat like Kamilov would fall for such honeyed words. Yet, in also arguing that Afghanistan should be more deeply integrated into the Central Asian economy, he is on sound strategic footing. Even the Taliban would be attracted to the idea of a renewed "Greater Central Asia" that could recreate some of the economic dynamism of the glory years of the Great Silk Road (1100-1600 AD).

With China determined to deepen its trade, investment, and infrastructure ties across Eurasia, this vision has a chance of becoming reality. But first, peace must prevail, above all within Afghanistan.

Project Syndicate

A Case for Ethical Shopping

Conspicuous Consumption to Help the Vulnerable

Wajahat Qazi

What will the daily wage of vulnerable people do? In the context of Kashmir, can society help, while maintaining their dignity and even pride? A lot, is the answer. In the context of Kashmir which is neither a productive economy nor an advanced one, consumption is the name of the



Post Covid world will be a different one in many dimensions. Politics, economics, society and government will not be transformed but will be impacted. On the level of economics, in the less developed contexts, life will be (and is) hard for the underprivileged and the vulnerable. The privileged and the laa dee daa classes will shop online and buy their Armani belts or Gucci shoes online. Oh yeah, Amazon will even return the product if it does fit a given indulgence, say a set of Burberry sunglasses with anti-glare for added effect. They will, if and when cooking by domestic help become bored, order exotic foods online. (Momos anyone? Or makhmali kebabs?). But what will the daily wage of vulnerable people do? In the context of Kashmir, can society help, while maintaining their dignity and even pride?

A lot, is the answer.

In the context of Kashmir which is neither a productive economy nor an advanced one, consumption is the name of the game. But consumption takes a hit when the broader economy is reeling under pressure(s), especially extraordinary and unprecedented ones like the Covid pandemic. When this happens, the underprivileged and the vulnerable - the redi wallas (who earn on a daily basis), or the corner store that sells, say crockery or shoes, or Tupperware suffer. Given that end of the day, society is composed of 'self interested' individuals, the vulnerable actually have nowhere to go. They are already on shoestring budgets;

how much can they scrimp and save? (There's no bank account as well. The economically marginalized are excluded by banking systems).

If a crisis, like Covid, gets prolonged, what options do the vulnerable have?

Crime is one. The other is cheating. Both not only have negative social returns but also degrade both the victim and the perpetrator.

Under these circumstances, it is society that has to rise to the occasion.

How?

Not merely by charity. There are other ways to boost consumption and thereby help the vulnerable.

One prudent and effective social intervention is ethical shopping. While definitions of ethical shopping vary, I will use one that is appropriate for the purpose: 'ethical shopping can be a form of consumption where a given good or service is almost superfluous to a shopper's needs but can help the seller and where the motivation and intent is to help the seller'.

How can ethical shopping work in Kashmir?

While naysayers and cynics will invent a host of reasons to discredit ethical shopping in Kashmir, but, honestly it works to the benefit of both the shopper (consumer) and the seller. What can you do as a conscientious shopper?

If you are in the precincts of Lal Chowk, for example, you can hail an auto rickshaw to Jehangir Chowk. After you hail it, don't argue and haggle with the rickshaw walla. Engage him in po-

lite conversation till you reach your destination. When you disembark, and when the auto walla fumbles for change, don't insist on it. In fact, pay 20 or 30 rupees more as a tip. Smile and wave goodbye or salaam.

Wander to Batmaloo. You'll definitely be accosted by a bag seller. Stop, inspect the bag and pay the seller - inevitably a very poor person who's probably moonlighting, the full amount. For mere effect, tell him, he's ripped you off and smile.

Return to Residency Road and stop by the vendor stalls. Pick, for example, a piece of artificial jewellery. Praise the stuff. Pick one or two items. Ask for the price. Pretend to haggle but then pay the full price.

These are just a few instances that you, as an ethical shopper, can do your bit to help. There's other stuff you can devise and help.

I am telling you, no matter how bad your day has (had) been, you'll feel decidedly better if you shop ethically. In fact, you may even feel happy. I say this from experience: I am not boasting, and I should not be stating this publicly. But I shopped ethically today. I had been on a bit of an emotional low since the past couple of days. But after taking recourse to ethical shopping, I not only felt better but I also made new friends. All, as they say, in a day's work!

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A Rapid Move to E-Learning

Hazim Ramzan

As the coronavirus pandemic had locked the doors of markets, industries, offices, schools, universities and other business establishments, people were being forced to stay indoors which had a deep impact on the education scenario worldwide. However, even in these conditions, countries are witnessing a positive trend as e-learning platforms have opened up hundreds of windows for learning for young buds.

Covid-19 has resulted in schools shut, initially, all across the world. As a result education has changed drastically with the distinctive rise in e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. As there has been a massive upsurge in the traffic on online platforms, more and more students want to engage in this meaningful learning.

With schools shut across the world, millions of children have turned to online application and e-learning strategies and have had to adapt to new types of learning methods to stay upto date with their course curriculum. Research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information and takes less time. This way of learning has a lot of potential as it does not require any large investments and is easily doable and accessible. It is especially appealing because of multiple entry and exit options. As part of an unconventional campus, learners are attending with eager participation within their house compounds, thereby unsealing the sealed structures. With this sudden shift away from the classroom in many parts of the globe, some are wondering whether the adoption of online learning will



continue to persist post-pandemic and how such a shift would impact the world wide education market.

Even before covid-19 there was already a changing trend towards a rise in adoption of new education technology. However, there has been a significant surge in usage since covid 19 in the form of language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools and online learning software. As there can't be an alternative for offline classroom teaching being bounded and rhythmic in nature however to bridge these learning gaps and in response to the significant demand many online learning platforms have offered free access to their services, including platforms like Byju's, a Bangalore based education technology and online tutoring

This way of learning has a lot of potential as it does not require any large investments and is easily doable and accessible. It is especially appealing because of multiple entry and exit options. As part of an unconventional campus, learners are attending with eager participation within their house compounds, thereby unsealing the sealed structures.

firm founded in 2011 which is now a leading market player with the highest market share in India's growing edtech space. Besides it, Google classroom and Umang application are bolstering capabilities to provide one stop shop for teachers and students.

In this time of pandemic, without the physical presence of teachers and educators, the online search has been challenging. From language to figuring out how to code, there have been various applications out there to keep students' minds sharp and keep them from detaching from the studies and curriculum.

While some believe that the unplanned and rapid move to online learning with no training, insufficient bandwidth and little preparation would result in poor user expe-

rience that is conducive to sustained growth but some others believe that a new hybrid model of education will emerge with significant benefits and well being satisfaction.

Not only has the work of online platforms seen an upsurge but there have been many successful transitions amongst many universities such as Imperial college of London which has started offering courses online. A course on the "Science of Virus", is now the most enrolled class launched in 2021 on Coursera.

Therefore, even as this mode of education faced some major challenges, on the other hand this crisis stimulated innovation within the education sector. We have seen some approach in support of education and training continuity; from radio to television to take home packages. Also, there are some NGOs who are neither made of parents of students nor have any vested interest in the future of a child but still are playing a proactive role in promoting education.

A school is a sanctuary. Offline or online, parents who are deemed to be the guardians of students should not waste time with the past but fast forward to a new tomorrow so that their children become their hub of knowledge, innovation and learning with ignited minds.

In this calamity, it is acceptable to have more queries than responses. In this emergency we all should be learners. We shall follow the saying that "no matter how much falls on us, we shall keep plowing ahead. Remind them that is the only way to keep the roads clear".

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Covid-19: LG Cautions Against Lowering Guard

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Taking a detailed assessment of the present Covid scenario in the UT, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Friday chaired series of meetings with members of Covid Task Force, Deputy Commissioners, and SPs on Covid Containment efforts of the J&K Administration.

During the meetings with the senior officers, Div Coms, DCs and SPs, the Lt Governor was apprised about the Covid Scenario in the UT, vaccination and other measures to effectively tackle the spread of the corona virus.

The Lt Governor observed that J&K's performance is better than many other regions of the country in terms of vaccination, daily testing and sampling, and advised everyone for not lowering their guard against Covid. "We need to keep following all SoPs, Covid Appropriate Behaviour religiously with utmost sensitivity and responsibility", added the Lt Governor. Taking a strict note of people flaunting Covid protocols, the Lt Governor observed that although the Government has been successful in bringing the situation under control, we cannot afford to lower our guard at this juncture.

Underlining the importance of heightened awareness among the masses to keep the positivity rate and infection rate low, the Lt Governor directed the DCs and SPs for intensifying the awareness campaign at all tourist places ensuring full compliance of the Covid protocol and Covid appropriate behaviour by tourists and locals. "Public parks should allow entries to persons who are inoculated,



wearing mask with Covid negative report. The concerned officials should appoint Nodal officers for strict adherence".

The Lt Governor directed the DCs and SPs to ensure strict adherence to the already imposed restriction. To contain the spread of the deadly virus, the Lt Governor directed the concerned DCs to focus on the Blocks with high positivity rate and increase testing in such areas with Covid containment measures. Expressing satisfaction over the vaccination percentage in 8 districts with 100% coverage and the ones near saturation, the Lt Governor directed the remaining districts which are lagging behind to adopt a more proactive approach and micro-level planning to meet the targets.

The Lt Governor said that with continuous augmentation of health infrastructure and decentralization of health system with accelerated vaccination drive, better management of patients and other crucial timely interventions, J&K Government has created a greater covid clinical management capacity reforming healthcare delivery system.

To further ease the process of availing healthcare benefits of

SEHAT scheme, the Lt Governor directed the senior officers to develop an institutional mechanism so that the empanelled health institutions can directly avail the claims of patients treated under the scheme. The Lt Governor passed strict direction for increasing and saturation of the coverage of SEHAT Scheme.

Meanwhile, Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department gave a detailed briefing on scientific data-driven analysis and other important aspects of the Covid management.

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; Mukesh Singh, ADGP; Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Vijay Kumar, IGP Kashmir; Dr. Raghav Langer, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Deputy Commissioners and SPs, attended the meetings, in person and through virtual mode.

Biden Set To Sign Competition Order Targeting Big Business

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden is set to sign on Friday an executive order that the White House bills as an effort to target anticompetitive practices in tech, health care and other parts of the economy while boosting workers' wages and consumer protections.

The sweeping order includes 72 actions and recommendations that the White House says will lower prices for families, increase wages for workers, and promote innovation and even faster economic growth.

The order includes calls for banning or limiting noncompete agreements to help boost wages, allowing rule changes that would pave the way for hearing aids to be sold over the counter at drugstores and banning excessive early termination fees by internet companies.

It also calls on the Transportation Department to consider issuing rules requiring airlines to refund fees when baggage is delayed or in-flight services are not provided as advertised.

In total, higher prices and lower wages caused by lack of competition are now estimated to cost the median American household USD5,000 per year, the White House said in a fact sheet outlining the order Biden is expected to sign at an afternoon ceremony.

Inadequate competition holds back economic growth and innovation.

The White House said Biden's order follows in the tradition of past presidents who took action to slow growing corporate power. Teddy Roosevelt's administration broke up powerful trusts that had a grip on

huge swaths of the economy, including Standard Oil and J.P. Morgan's railroads.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration stepped up anti-trust enforcement in the 1930s.

Biden's order includes a flurry of consumer-pointed initiatives that could potentially lead to new federal regulations, but it also includes plenty of aspirational language that simply encourages agencies to take action meant to bolster worker and consumer protections.

The order seeks to address noncompete clauses an issue affecting some 36 million to 60 million Americans, according to the White House by encouraging the Federal Trade Commission to ban or limit such agreements, ban unnecessary occupational licensing restrictions and strengthen antitrust guidance to prevent employers from collaborating to suppress wages or reduce benefits by sharing wage and benefit information with one another.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said earlier this week that the provision would help workers in construction, hotel services and other blue-collar industries whose ability to seek better wages is often stymied by noncompete clauses.

The Biden administration in the order also calls on the Federal Maritime Commission to take action against shippers charging American exporters exorbitant charges and the Surface Transportation Board to require railroad track owners to strengthen their obligations to treat other freight companies fairly.

The White House argues that

rapid consolidation and sharp hikes in pricing in the shipping industry have made it increasingly expensive for U.S. companies to get goods to market.

In 2000, the largest 10 shipping companies controlled 12 per cent of the market. They now control about 82 per cent, according to the Journal of Commerce.

The World Shipping Council, an industry trade group, pushed back in a statement that normalized demand, not regulation, "is the answer to rising costs.

Eleven of the past 12 months have seen year-on-year growth of more than 10 per cent, the council noted. In the 18 years before the coronavirus pandemic, the average growth rate was 4.7 per cent.

There is no market concentration problem 'to fix,' and punitive measures levied against carriers based on incorrect economic assumptions will not fix the congestion problems," said John Butler, president and CEO of the council.

The order also seeks to take aim at tech giants Facebook, Google, Apple and Amazon by calling for greater scrutiny of mergers, especially by dominant internet platforms, with particular attention to the acquisition of nascent competitors, serial mergers, the accumulation of data, competition by 'free' products, and the effect on user privacy.

It notes that over the past two decades the U.S. has lost 70 per cent of the banks it once had, with around 10,000 bank closures. Communities of color and rural areas have been disproportionately affected.

To begin addressing the trend, the order encourages the Justice Department as well as the Federal Reserve, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency to update guidelines to provide greater scrutiny of mergers.

It also encourages the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to issue rules allowing customers to download their banking data and take it with them.

The order includes several provisions that could affect the agricultural industry.

It calls on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to consider issuing new rules defining when meat can use Product of USA labels. It also encourages the FTC to limit farm equipment manufacturers' ability to restrict the use of independent repair shops or DIY repairs such as when tractor companies block farmers from repairing their own tractors.

Democratic lawmakers and union leaders cheered the order.

Marc Perrone, president of the United Food and Commercial Workers International, a private-sector union representing 1.3 million workers, said the order sends a clear message that this White House is committed to creating a level playing field for American workers.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Minnesota Democrat who serves as chair of the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on competition policy, said that Biden's executive order needs to be buttressed by congressional action.

CONTD. FROM PAGE 3

2 Dozen Politicians,

official from the Estates department said.

Pertinently, Jammu and Kashmir High Court had directed the government to take all necessary steps for eviction of the former ministers, legislators, retired officers and politicians from government accommodations and ministerial bungalows.

Hospitals In Kashmir

few separate well-equipped oxygenated beds should be kept available for emergency purposes including gynaecology/obstetrics and paediatrics.

In addition, the officials said, the standard operating procedures and guidelines laid down by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare from time to time must be adhered to in letter and spirit. The OPD and other routine services in the hospital across the valley were stopped when the second wave of COVID-19 hit the Union territory and cases spiked.

Vaccination Ordered

Superintendents & Block Medical Officers to carry out vaccination drive upon the staff/eligible students working in all the religious institutions fall in their respective districts on war footing basis, so that the staff/eligible students are kept away from the possible 3rd wave variants," the circular adds.

Gunmen In Army

was guarding maize crop from wild animals during night when he spotted the four suspects," the official said, adding "The father-son duo immediately informed Ghagwal police about those suspects. They spotted four persons in Army uniform near the railway bridge. They were carrying bags and guns on their shoulders. When they asked them to stop, they ignored them," an unnamed police official told local news agency KNO.

The police official said that soon after Ravinder Kumar informed them, security forces launched a massive cordon and search operation (CASO) in border district Samba."

The development came a day after a fierce encounter on the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district, which is few kilometres from International Border, where army foiled an infiltration bid by killing two militants. Two soldiers were also killed in the exchange of fire. Defence sources said: "An alert has been sounded in border areas of Samba and Kathua districts with the deployment of additional forces on both sides of the 'vulnerable' Jammu-Pathankot national highway."

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Samba, Rajesh Sharma was quoted by the news agency as saying "We are on a high alert. Checking has been intensified and forces have been deployed at all sensitive points".

He added it was only after information of a local youth that a massive search operation has been launched.

Sources said that patrolling vans of police have been deployed on the highway to conduct random checking

of vehicles and all entry points have been plugged.

Out of a total length of 100 km, nearly 44-km stretch on Jammu-Pathankot highway runs almost parallel to the border with Pakistan in Kathua and Samba districts.

Although the Jammu-Pathankot national highway has never been affected by the shelling from across but this track is always vulnerable to militant attacks—(KNO)

Militants Give Slip

Redwani area of the district during the intervening night of Thursday and Friday when the area was placed under siege and a search operation was started.

However, after a brief exchange of fire between the joint team and the militants, the guns fell silent.

"It seems that the militant escaped in the initial phase of the operation," SSP Kulgam Gurinderpal Singh (IPS) was quoted by a local news agency GNS.

The encounter in Redwani broke out hours after four local militants were killed by state forces in two separate encounters in south Kashmir's Pulwama and Kulgam districts. The four slain militants, as per police were associated with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Al-Badr outfits and were part of groups involved in various militancy related incidents. (With GNS inputs)

D Panel Rules

visit to Jammu and Kashmir along with its other members to gather "first hand" inputs on the conduct of the mega exercise to redraw constituencies and carve out new ones in the union territory.

The commission said the exercise would be done according to the Census of 2011 and that the 24 assembly seats falling in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir (PcK) will remain vacant and are out of its preview.

"I assure you from myself and my colleagues that the exercise is going to be transparent as per laid down law. I do not think anybody should have any such apprehensions," Justice (ret'd) Desai told reporters here.

She was replying to a question about apprehensions expressed by a section of political parties and people in Kashmir that it is a pre-planned exercise guided by the agenda of a political party.

"The exercise will be transparent in nature and there should be no fears and doubts. We can only talk to those who want to participate in the process. Those who don't want to, have their own choice," she said.

She said, "We are confident that we will finish this task as per laid down law in a transparent manner. Otherwise we would have not been coming here and spending these days hearing all."

Replying to another question about the PDP staying away from its proceedings, she said the commission wishes they had taken part. "All other parties participated," she added.

The Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP stayed away from its proceedings stating that

there was a perception that the outcome of the process was preplanned.

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra, who is also part of the commission, said they had come here with an open mind.

"If we had something in mind and had decided earlier, the commission would not have come here to hear from people. We are very clear on this that nothing has been decided," he said.

"Before starting the exercise, we want to have the views of all persons. These apprehensions in the mind of any person, if at all, should go away," he said.

Chandra said the draft prepared by the commission will be put in public domain for objections and queries. They said the associate members of the commission will also be consulted when preparing the final draft.

He said the exercise to re-draw boundaries of Assembly constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir is a very complex issue and not mere arithmetic.

On the demand of defreezing of 24 PcK seats, he said that it is clearly mentioned in the law that these constituencies should remain vacant and will be out of the preview of the Delimitation Commission.

A delegation of the BJP's Jammu and Kashmir unit on Thursday met the Delimitation Commission and demanded the unfreezing of the 24 assembly seats falling in PcK to grant reservation to people displaced from PcK, Kashmir Pandits, SCs and STs.

The commission met different delegations in Kashmir on July 6 and July 7 and in Jammu on July 8 and July 9.

The commission met over 290 delegations comprising over 800 people.

Asked whether Jammu will get justice this time as it has faced discrimination with regard to political empowerment, Chandra said that for the commission, Jammu and Kashmir is one union territory.

"We see it as one entity. We do not bifurcate between Kashmir and Jammu," he added.

He said the visit of the commission was to ascertain ground realities. It is not arithmetical exercise, it is not mathematical exercise, it was to know genuine concerns of the public, to know genuine difficulties of the people," he said.

Probe Ordered

two decades, more than 1500 persons have been appointed illegally in the Urban Local Bodies of Kashmir Valley on recommendations of ministers, legislators and officers.

The organized job racket in the department flourished due to political patronage by different governments.

A committee constituted during the NC- Congress regime found that around 1800-2000 illegal appointments were made in the Urban Local Bodies of Kashmir between 2003 to 2010.

The inquiry team concluded that more than 20 officers are involved in the scam.

It had also recommended

disengagement of illegal appointees as well as constitution of a special team of Vigilance to fix the responsibilities.

Govt To Train

and work in convergence for a better outcome," Sinha said.

"We must put all our efforts to upgrade the skill sets of the youth according to the needs of the Market and make them ready for future jobs," he added.

As per the official spokesperson, the LG further said that keeping in view the objective of Make in India program, skill development is necessary for social and economic betterment, hence there is a need for skilling, re-skilling of the youth.

"A lot of new job skill-sets will be required in the post-Covid world and our training centres must be fully equipped for that," the LG said.

According to the official spokesperson, the LG also passed necessary directions for ensuring on the ground effective implementation of skill development related schemes envisioned by the Central and the UT Government.

Sinha, he said, directed the officials to revamp the admission process in the Polytechnics and ITIs across the UT for ensuring 100% capacity utilization of these institutions, and improving the intakes of the students.

"On the recruitment front, the Lt Governor instructed for recruiting the faculty through a transparent process. He further called for conducting a detailed assessment to get an analysis of the success of the placement drives," the official spokesperson said.

"The Lt Governor asked the officials to train local youth for film shooting purposes, besides imparting training in local cuisines, hospitality and other sectors," he added.

The official spokesperson said that Dr. Asgar Hassan Samoon, Principal Secretary, Skill Development Department gave an overview of the overall functioning of the department.

"Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, CEO, Mission Youth, while briefing the chair about the achievements and targets set under various programmes, informed that around 18000 youth in 35 identified sectors will be trained under various skill development programmes," he said

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lt Governor; Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; Bishwajit Kumar Singh, Administrative Secretary, School Education Department; HoDs, Nodal officers of various schemes and senior officers attended the meeting.

Court Orders Framing

militants who have been slain by the security forces.

The last part, though does not directly seem to be a funding to the militant activities, but is in fact an integral part of militant activities.

I say so because, it is human tendency to take care of one's family and that tendency can become a de-motivating factor to some of the militants if they

know, that after their capture or death, their family would be left in penury, the judge said.

He, however, said if a militant organization continues to provide for the families of its members who have been killed or captured, it is a huge motivational reassurance to its prospective cadres and cadres in strength to continue to operate for that organization.

Therefore, provision of funds to jailed cadres and their families and the families of slain militants is funding of militant activities, he said while ordering framing of charges against Mohd Shafi Shah, Talib Lali, Muzaffar Ahmad Dar and Mushtaq Ahmad Lone for prima facie entering into a larger conspiracy (section 120-B of IPC) of waging war against India (Section 121-A of IPC).

They were also charged for the offence of raising funds and distributing it for militant acts (section 17 and 40 of UAPA), being a member of proscribed militant organization (section 20 of UAPA) and other offences.

The court said that the fact that JKART is a frontal organization of HM is established prima facie by the testimonies of protected witnesses. The witnesses have further stated that overall control i.e. administrative and operational control (of JKART) is with Syed Salahuddin.

The objectives were to raise funds in the garb of relief for 'affectees' of militancy in Jammu & Kashmir. Though, it is an irony that these 'affectees' were either militants or their family members.

The witnesses have further stated that these funds were raised by different individuals, organizations and countries including ISI of Pakistan, the court observed.

It noted that the funds that were raised were utilized for militant activities of HM.

The funds were also used for injured, arrested militants and for families of killed militants. These funds were also used for incurring expenditure on general establishment, procurement of arms and ammunition, ration, clothing, training camps etc., the court noted.

It said that a larger conspiracy to wage war against government of India and to commit militant activities and funding of those militant activities was prima facie established by evidence.

The court observed that HM was a proscribed militant organization which has been waging war against Indian State for a very-very long time. Sheltered, armed, trained and funded in our neighbourhood, it has left a long trail of blood and deaths in the State of J&K, the judge said.

While ordering the framing of charges, the court noted that the accused Mohd Shafi Shah was then militant commander of HM and used to receive money from HM and JKART and used to distribute them to the militant cadres as their stipend, for funding of arms and shelter etc. and to the families of the militants who had been killed.

He used to receive money from Pakistan and distribute monthly

remunerations to active militants of North Kashmir, the court noted.

The court said there is sufficient evidence which raises grave suspicion against accused persons .

The court noted that prima facie accused Talib Lali had been raising, collecting and distributing funds for militant acts and militant organization HM.

The court noted that there was a direct witness who has stated that this accused had recruited him for HM and then trained in the forests of Buzipora, J&K.

Regarding accused Muzaffar Ahmad Dar, the court noted that he has been a high ranking operative of HM and is continuing its activities as its member is prima facie established by documents and oral evidence and thus, there is evidence raising grave suspicion against this accused of being a part of the larger conspiracy of waging war against Government of India and conspiring to commit militant activities.

The court said there are testimonies of witnesses who have collected money directly from Lone and who were provided list of family members of militants to whom these amounts were to be distributed.

Militant Arrested

the movement of militants towards Hajin town was received.

"Incriminating material along with live arms and ammunition which includes one Chinese pistol along with live rounds were recovered from his possession," the police spokesperson said.

Sheikh, he said, had joined LeT recently and was tasked to carry out subversive activities in and around Hajin town.

"In this connection FIR under relevant sections of law stands registered in police station Hajin and further investigation has been initiated," he added.

Bomb Scare In Soura

a pressure cooker inside the bag, they said.

Meanwhile the movement along the road resumed after remaining halted for nearly an hour. (GNS)

Landslide Blocks

restored for traffic tomorrow.

"Our teams are on job to clear the debris from the highway, which is presently closed for movement of traffic." Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) National Highway Traffic, Shabir Malik told a local news agency KNO.

Over 4000 Violators

Kashmir valley during the last 24 hours for violating various covid-19 related guidelines and rules. Besides, he said, 2 vehicles were also seized for violating Covid norms.

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

Kulgam Link Roads In Shambles, Locals Rue Govt Apathy

Observer News Service

KULGAM: The link roads connecting Akhal-Lammar, Brenal-Valtengoo, Rangdab-Safapora, Akhel-Gujranwala, Hadlam-Lankar Pombai and Gream Babapora in Kulgam district are in shambles and the locals have rued the indifferent approach of the government to address the issue.

The local residents of the district said that the roads have not been repaired, and no macadamisation has been done for the past 10 years. They blamed the authorities for turning a blind eye towards their genuine issue.

They said that the dilapidated condition of the roads causes inconvenience to the commuters.

The locals said that while all the main roads in the district were macadamised, the brief stretches

of the link roads have been forgotten by the concerned department and despite bringing the issue into the notice of the concerned authorities, there has not been any response by the authorities.

"It has been almost 10 years since the road was macadamised last time and the condition of the road is so bad that drivers refuse to ply their vehicles on it," Muhammad Yaqoob Naik, a local resident lamented.

Similarly roads in four constituencies of Devsar, HS-Bugh, Noorabad and Kulgam are in dilapidated condition.

Commuters are facing a lot of difficulties, particularly pregnant ladies and patients.

The residents appealed to the district administration to macadamise the roads on priority basis so that commuters do not feel inconvenience.

OPD Services Resume In Covid Hospital Kupwara

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Imam Din Friday inaugurated that OPD services have been resumed in Covid Hospital Kupwara so that people are facilitated.

He also reiterated the appeal to the people to continue the use of mask and maintenance of Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB) and other SOPs to overcome the resurgence of Covid.

Giving details about the current Covid scenario in the district, the DC said positivity rate

has declined to 0.5 percent, while, Recovery rate has gone up to 98 percent which is a good sign of satisfaction for the district. He said the district has currently 161 active cases.

Regarding vaccination, he said that 69.35 percent of the target population of above 45 years has been vaccinated till date. While 17.80 percent of 18-44 year aged people have been vaccinated so far in the district. He said the only way to keep the Covid at bay is to follow the Covid appropriate behaviour and vaccinate yourself.

Medical Staff At Shopian Gets Training On Sero Survey-2021

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: A team of expert doctors from SKIMS Medical College Srinagar today imparted training regarding sero survey-2021 to Medical staff at Shopian to monitor the trends in the prevalence of Covid-19 virus.

Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Bhat, (HOD Community Medicine) SKIMS

Medical college; Dr Yasmeen, Associate Professor Community Medicine SKIMS Medical College; Dr Benish, Lecturer Community Medicine SKIMS Medical college were part of the team who imparted Training to participants.

District Epidemiologist Shopian, Medical officers, Lab Technicians, Paramedic staff from all 3 blocks were among the trainees.

Authorities Impose Penalties On FBOs At Anantnag

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Anantnag, Gulzar Ahmad who is also Adjudicating Officer for the district under Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, Friday imposed a penalty of Rs 455000 on various Food Business Operators (FBOs) for violating different provisions of the Act.

It was informed that the cases were filed by the Food Safety Officers against 20 FBOs for manufacturing and sale of substandard and misbranded products, not obtaining license/ registration besides violating Good Hygienic, Good Manufacturing practices as man-



dated in Schedule 04 of the Act.

During the trial of the cases, the ADC directed the Food Business Operators to strictly adhere to the provisions of the Act and desist from such illegal acts in future. He also called for creating awareness among the stakeholders to implement the FSSAI in letter and spirit for the benefit of both FBOs and consumers.



TOURISTS CLICKING PICTURES inside famous Mughal garden, Nishat, in Srinagar on Friday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Various Tourist Destinations In J&K To Get Helicopter Services Soon

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir is set to undergo a change with various tourist destinations in both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir getting helicopter services in near future. In a move meant to cater to high end tourism in the UT, the government has also decided to launch Air Safari and Air rides over certain tourist locations including a ride over Dal Lake and adjoining areas.

This was revealed during a meeting at the Civil Secretariat here chaired by Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan.

The Advisor said that the move will boost tourism in Jammu and Kashmir and add an interesting experience to the visit of tourists. He added that



the department is looking at helicopter services to build connectivity between important destinations and attract more visitors. Advisor directed the officers to identify a few tourist destinations from both Jammu as well as Kashmir so that helicopter services could be started on pilot basis. Many places came up under discussion for introduction of helicopter services from both the provinces of Jammu and Kashmir.

Advisor said that the whole exercise is meant to change the

façade of travel and tourism in Jammu and Kashmir and will open up new tourist destinations at far flung places. The Advisor said that the directions in this regard have already been given by the Lieutenant Governor for mapping out the tourist destinations for pressing in the Helicopter services.

Pertinently on November 23, 2015, the then Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had flagged off helicopter service between the Srinagar and health resorts of Gulmarg and Pahalgam, and had also launched Air Safaris.

Sayeed had then said, "To boost the appetite for Kashmir's exotic locales amongst affluent clientele, Sayeed flagged off the first-ever helicopter service to health resorts of Pahalgam and Gulmarg from Srinagar Airport."

PERTINENTLY ON NOVEMBER 23, 2015, THE THEN CHIEF Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had flagged off helicopter service between the Srinagar and health resorts of Gulmarg and Pahalgam, and had also launched Air Safaris.

Many Initiatives Being Taken To Improve Quality Of Life Under Smart City Mission: Govt

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Amit Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, Jammu & Kashmir e-Governance Agency (CEO, JaKeGA) Friday shared the growth story of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir over the past few years while addressing the virtual gathering in the National Smart Cities Conclave as a Keynote Speaker in the Inaugural Session along-with other prominent speakers from all across the nation. This exclusive Virtual Conclave at the National Level was organised by GovConnect in collaboration with Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation.

CEO, JaKeGA shared lot of important aspects related to growth which has taken place all across J&K especially with the usage of e-Governance tools during the inaugural session "Smart Sustainable & Resilient Cities - Towards Improving Quality of Living" wherein he also shared that a historically important Project is going to be launched very soon known as "Digital Village



Centres" (DVC) through which a direct connectivity shall be established between the top offices led by LG, J&K Office and the Gram Sabhas (Panchayats) across UT which are located at the grass-root level with the usage of latest MPLS network and related technologies.

He mentioned that lot of initiatives have been taken under Smart City Mission in J&K for improving the quality of living which include Automated Parking System at Bus Stand Jammu, introduction of Intelligent Traffic Light Systems in both the capital cities of Jammu & Srinagar, Installation of CCTVs in all the major crossings and prominent areas alongwith setting-up of Command and Control Centres in

both Smart Cities, installation of Signboards and Hoardings, etc in both Smart Cities, etc.

Apart from this, Amit Sharma mentioned that recently, e-Office Project was successfully launched by JaKeGA in both the Civil Secretariats of J&K wherein all departments have switched over to e-Files and all paper work and physical file work has been dispensed with and now, all HoD and field offices are to be included in e-Office network in the coming days, State Data Centre is being upgraded in a big way to host data of all departments here with the set-up of a DR Centre outside J&K. Other major Smart projects of JaKeGA which are being implemented in a big way include State Wide Area Network (SWAN), Establishment of ICT and CAL Labs for e-learning in all schools of J&K, automation of operations of Jammu and Srinagar Municipal Corporations, Jammu and Srinagar Development Authorities, J&K Tourism Development Corporation, Automation of Hospitals and many other important departments and organisations of the UT.

DC Budgam Stresses On Timely Completion Of Projects



Observer News Service

BUDGAM: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Shahbaz Ahmed Mirza Friday stressed that construction work at all designated sites should be completed within stipulated time failing which necessary action as warranted under law shall be initiated against erring contractors or officials concerned.

He instructed all executing agencies to expedite the construction works and ensure deadlines fixed for various projects are

adhered to in letter and spirit.

The DC took detailed review of all 45 HWCs and instructed the Executing agency and BMO concerned to compulsorily visit the construction site once in a month to take stock of ongoing work and monitor progress.

The DC further said that all Covid-19 and Non Covid-19 activities by the health Department should go on without any laxity to ensure better health facilities and other necessities in hospitals to the patients across the district.

DH Pora Gets Maiden Playground

Observer News Service

KULGAM: The District Development Commissioner, (DDC) Kulgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat Friday inaugurated a playfield at Damhal Hanji Pora (D H Pora).

This is a maiden playfield in the village and was a long pending demand of the youth of the area and has been constructed and developed by the Rural Development Department with an estimated cost of 17.87 lacs.

At the inaugural function, the DDC said that the Administration is focused on developing sports infrastructure across the district in order to channelise



the energy of youth towards sports activities.

The DDC inaugurated a Cricket League and interacted with the players who extended their gratitude to the administration for developing a playfield in the village.

Progress On Implementation Of Behtar Nizam-e-Hukumat' Resolution Reviewed



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Union Additional Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, V. Srinivas Friday reviewed the progress made on the decisions under the 'Behtar Nizam-e-Hukumat-Kashmir Aelmia' resolution recently adopted in the backdrop of two day Regional Conference on Replication of Good Governance Practices in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

During a meeting it was desired that for development of District Governance Index, a functional working group having representative from IMPARD, E&S Department, NCGG, 2-3

academicians be set up to study the availability of data with Economics and Statistics Department vis-à-vis data shared regarding Good Governance Index and District Governance Index of Himachal Pradesh.

It was also decided that there would be 03 Capacity Building Programmes of one to two weeks duration, covering Smart Policing, Soft Skills, Education, Health and Financial requirements like GFR, PFMS, GEM for officers of UT of J&K being conducted by National Centre for Good Governance, Government of India. It was also agreed that few Success Stories of J&K shall be documented as Case Studies by Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance (CIPG).

AP Govt Announces Rs 50L Compensation For Slain Army Personnel

Observer News Service

AMARAVATI: The Andhra Pradesh government Friday announced an ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh to the kin of an Army personnel killed in a gunfight with militants in Jammu and Kashmir.

M Jaswanth Reddy (23), hailing from D Kothapalem village in Guntur district, was killed in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday.

Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy condoled the death and extended his sympathies to the bereaved family. The valour of Jaswanth in fighting the terrorists on the border is highly commendable, he said.

Two Dead In Sopore Road Accident

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: Two youth were killed late Thursday evening in a road accident in Batengo area of Sopore town in North Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Officials said that a bike had a head on collision with a vehicle, resulting in injuries to three persons

who were riding the bike. Two of the injured succumbed to injuries while another is under treatment at SMHS hospital and his condition is said to be stable.

"Although they were rushed to a sub-district hospital Sopore, where one succumbed, the other two were referred to Srinagar hospital

for specialised treatment" a senior police official said.

He said that one among the two succumbed at SMHS hospital while the condition of another is said to be stable.

Meanwhile, a police senior official said that a case has been registered and investigation is going on to ascertain the cause of the accident.

Petrol Pump Sealed In Hajin

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: Authorities sealed a petrol storage unit after the owner allegedly resorted to retail sale of the fuel without prior permission, in Pushwari area of Hajin in north Kashmir's Bandipora district on Friday.

Officials said that the storage unit had permission to store twenty-five thousand litres of petroleum.

However, they said, complaints against the storage unit having resorted to retail sale of the fuel without approval were pouring in, and an enquiry committee comprising



of Tehsildar, AD Food alongside a Legal Meteorology Department official was set up on the directions of District Magistrate office.

Missing Minor Girl Traced

Observer News Service

KULGAM: The Jammu and Kashmir Police in Kulgam Friday traced a missing minor girl and handed her to her family.

In a statement, a police spokesperson said that on July 8, 2021, police station Kulgam received a complaint stating that her daughter was missing since July 4, 2021.

Taking cognisance of the complaint,

a case was registered in Police Station Kulgam and a team was constituted to trace the missing girl.

The statement said that the investigating team traced and recovered the missing girl from Manzagam and handed her over to her family.

"Further investigation of the case is going on and the circumstances leading to the incident are being ascertained," the spokesperson said.

DG Horticulture Stresses On Skill Development Of Employees

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Director General Horticulture, Kashmir Ajaz Ahmad Bhat, Friday highlighted the importance of updating knowledge and stressed on the skill development of all the employees of the

Department which will subsequently improve the performance level of the Department.

He said a systematic plan will be formulated for imparting training to officers/officials of the Department.

Moreover, Director General took review of all the Departmental schemes and emphasised on their timely completion.

He further instructed the officers to make frequent visit to the field and provide the growers with latest technical knowhow.

PM Modi Reviews Olympic Preparations, To Interact With Athletes On July 13



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi took stock of India's Olympic preparations on Friday and also announced an interaction with the country's Tokyo-bound sportspersons on July 13, three days before the first batch departs for the Japanese capital.

The interaction with the athletes will be held virtually owing to the COVID-19 situation.

"Reviewed preparations for facilitation of India's contingent at @Tokyo2020. Discussed the logistical details, their vaccination status, the multi-disciplinary support being given," Modi tweeted.

"On behalf of 130 crore Indians, I would be interacting with the

Olympics bound athletes on 13th July to wish them luck. Let us all #Cheer4India," he said.

The earlier announcement of his July 13 engagement with athletes was made on government's citizen engagement platform, MyGovIndia's twitter page.

The first batch of India's Olympic-bound athletes will depart for Tokyo in a charter Air India flight on July 17. More than 120 athletes are bound for the Games, even though the Indian Olympic Association is yet to officially divulge the strength of the contingent.

In view of the raging COVID-19 cases, the Tokyo Olympics will be held under a state of emergency in Japan without spectators from July 23 to August 8.

Sri Lanka's Data Analyst Tests COVID Positive, Second Case After Coach Grant Flower

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan team's data analyst G T Niroshan has tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of the limited overs series against India, the country's cricket board said on Friday, a day after its batting coach Grant Flower contracted the virus.

Niroshan is currently being treated as per the medical protocols.

"The Data Analyst of the Sri Lanka National Team, G. T. Niroshan, has tested positive for Covid 19," Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said in a statement.

"He was found to be positive, following a PCR Test carried out among the National Players, Coaches, and Support Staff yesterday, following the identification of Grant Flower as Covid Positive. "Niroshan is now undergoing due medical protocols."

On Thursday, Sri Lanka's batting coach Flower tested positive for COVID-19, 48 hours after the squad's arrival from England and less than a week before the home series against India.

All the other players who are quarantining have also been tested.

Before testing negative, Sri Lanka's squad had faced an anxious wait for the results of their PCR tests on returning home, following a COVID-19 outbreak in the England squad after the final match of their tour in Bristol on Sunday.

Sri Lanka are set to take on India in

a six-match white-ball series starting July 13. Flower had been isolated from the rest of the squad which is undergoing hard quarantine on arrival. Flower is a former Zimbabwe batsman and was with the team in England where it lost both the T20 International and ODI series.

Already, three Sri Lankan players are facing an inquiry for breaching the COVID-19 protocols in UK during the tour.

England's entire ODI squad and support staff were forced into self-isolation after a number of COVID positive cases, forcing the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to name an entirely new 18-man squad ahead of the first ODI against Pakistan on Thursday.

Dasun Shanaka To Replace Kusal Perera As Captain For ODI Series Against India

All-rounder Dasun Shanaka is all set to replace Kusal Perera as the captain of Sri Lanka's limited-overs team ahead of the ODI and T20 series against India, beginning July 13. The 29-year-old, an explosive batsman and a seam bowler, will become Sri Lanka's sixth captain in less than four years if he gets the job.

Dinesh Chandimal, Angelo Mathews, Lasith Malinga, Dimuth Karunaratne and Perera had captained the side at some point since the start of 2018. Shanaka had led the national team when it clean-swept Pakistan in a three-match T20I series in 2019.

PREMIER UT LEAGUE

Bank XI, Avengers FC, 3 Other Teams Qualify For 3rd Phase



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: J&K Bank XI, Kashmir Avengers FC, Dar Sports Kupwara and Ferrari Lions Ganderbal have all qualified from the Kashmir division for the 3rd phase of the Premier UT League 2021.

The four football clubs qualified for the 3rd Phase on Thursday, July 8. Meanwhile on Friday, SWFC Baramulla defeated Khudwani Quimoh FC by 7 goals to nil on Friday.

Earlier on Thursday two matches were played at the Synthetic Turf Ground TRC in Srinagar. In the first match Dar Sports defeated Etihad FC by 3 goals to 2 to qualify, while the second match between Ferrari Lions and Shopian FC ended as a goalless draw. Ferrari Lions qualified for the 3rd phase of the UT League on the basis of their earlier win against Shopian FC.

The Premier UT League is organised by the Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council in collaboration with the JKFA. The 3rd phase will see 8 teams, 4 teams each from Jammu and Kashmir provinces, lock horns with each other.

Talking to Kashmir Observer, a JKFA official said that he was pessimistic about the 3rd Phase taking place any time soon.

"The 2nd Phase hasn't even started in Jammu. Many teams from different districts of Jammu have been left out. I think we might see the 3rd Phase happening after at least 5 to 6 months," the official said.

JKFA Announces Fixture List For JK Pro League 2021-22

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Football Association (JKFA) has released the much-awaited fixture list for the JK Professional League 2021-22 season. The top two teams will get nominated to play in this year's Hero I-League 2nd Division.

Organised by the JKFA, the Pro League will start from July 12 with

two matches set to be played at the Synthetic Turf Ground TRC in Srinagar. The opening day fixtures will see Kashmir Avengers FC take on Downtown Heroes FC, with kick off at 3:00 pm. The second match will see Lonestar Kashmir FC lock horns with Jammu-based club Shaheen FC at 5:15 pm.

J&K Bank XI will play their first match of the League on July 13 against Hyderya Sports FC while

Sports Council Football Academy (SCFA) will take on Real Kashmir FC (Reserves) on the same day.

It is worth mentioning that J&K Bank XI, SCFA and Real Kashmir FC will not be able to play the I-League 2nd Division, being a departmental team, a Government academy and a reserves team, respectively. Leaving the rest of the five clubs to battle it out for the top two positions.

DDC Kulgam Inaugurates Maiden Playfield At D H Pora

Observer News Service

KULGAM: District Development Commissioner (DDC), Kulgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat on Friday inaugurated a playfield at Damhal Hanji Pora (D H Pora).

"This is a maiden playfield in the village and was a long pending demand of the youth of the area and has been constructed and developed by the Rural Development

Department with an estimated cost of 17.87 lacs," a Government press release said.

"At the inaugural function, the DDC said that the Administration is focused on developing sports infrastructure across the district in order to channelise the energy of youth towards sports activities," the release said.

"Present on the occasion were ACD, Mohammad Imran Khan, ACR,

Mir Imtiyaz-ul-Aziz, BDO, Tehsil-dar, and other officers," it added. Besides PRI members and a good number of people from the area were also present on the occasion.

"Later, the DDC inaugurated a Cricket League and interacted with the players who extended their gratitude to the administration for developing a playfield in the village," the release concluded.

First African American Spelling Bee Champion Makes History With Flair



Agencies

FLORIDA: Zaila Avant-garde understood the significance of what she was doing as she stood on the Scripps National Spelling Bee stage, peppering pronouncer Jacques Bailly with questions about Greek and Latin roots.

Zaila knew she would be the first African American winner of the bee. She knew Black kids around the country were watching Thursday night's ESPN2 telecast, waiting to be inspired and hoping to follow in the footsteps of someone who looked like them. She even thought of MacNolia Cox, who in 1936 became the first Black finalist at the bee and wasn't allowed to stay in the same hotel as the rest of the spellers.

But she never let the moment become too big for her, and when she heard what turned out to be her winning word — "Murraya," a genus of tropical Asiatic and Australian trees — she beamed with confidence. It was over.

Declared the champion, Zaila jumped and twirled with joy, only flinching in surprise when confetti was shot onto the stage.

"I was pretty relaxed on the subject of Murraya and pretty much any other word I got," Zaila said.

The only previous Black champion was also the only international winner: Jody-Anne Maxwell of Jamaica in 1998. The bee, however, has still been a showcase for spellers of color over the past two decades, with kids of South Asian descent dominating the competition. Zaila's win breaks a streak of at least one Indian-American champion every year since 2008.

Zaila has other priorities, which perhaps explains how she came to dominate this year's bee. The 14-year-old from Harvey, Louisiana, is a basketball prodigy who owns three Guinness world records for dribbling multiple balls simultaneously and hopes to one day play in the WNBA or even coach in the NBA. She described spelling as a side hobby, even though she routinely practiced for seven hours a day.

"I kind of thought I would never be into spelling again, but I'm also happy that I'm going to make a clean break from it," Zaila said. "I can go out, like my Guinness world records, just leave it right there, and walk off."

Many of top Scripps spellers start competing as young as kindergartners. Zaila only started a few years ago, after her father, Jawara Space-

time, watched the bee on TV and realized his daughter's affinity for doing complicated math in her head could translate well to spelling. She progressed quickly enough to make it to nationals in 2019 but bowed out in the preliminary rounds.

That's when she started to take it more seriously and began working with a private coach, Cole Shafer-Ray, a 20-year-old Yale student and the 2015 Scripps runner-up. "Usually to be as good as Zaila, you have to be well-connected in the spelling community. You have to have been doing it for many years," Shafer-Ray said. "It was like a mystery, like, 'Is this person even real?'"

Shafer-Ray quickly realized his pupil had extraordinary gifts.

"She really just had a much different approach than any speller I've ever seen. She basically knew the definition of every word that we did, like pretty much verbatim," he said. "She knew, not just the word but the story behind the word, why every letter had to be that letter and couldn't be anything else."

Sometimes she knew more than she let on. Part of her strategy, she said, was to ask about roots that weren't part of the word she was given, just to eliminate them from consideration.

Only one word gave her trouble: "nepeta," a genus of mints, and she jumped even higher when she got that one right than she did when she took the trophy.

"I've always struggled with that word. I've heard it a lot of times. I don't know, there's just some words, for a speller, I just get them and I can't get them right," she said. "I even knew it was a genus of plants. I know what you are and I can't get you."

Zaila — her dad gave her the last name Avant-garde in tribute to jazz musician John Coltrane — is a singular champion of a most unusual bee, the first in more than 25 months. Last year's bee was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic, and this one was thoroughly modified to minimize risk to kids and their families.

Most of the bee was held virtually, and only the 11 finalists got to compete in person, in a small portion of a cavernous arena at the ESPN Wide World of Sports complex in Florida that also hosted the NBA playoff bubble last year. The in-person crowd was limited to spellers' immediate family, Scripps staff, selected media — and first lady Jill Biden, who spoke to the spellers and stayed to watch.

Euro 2020: Diverse England Football Team Wins Fans In Nation Eager For Good News

Agencies

LONDON: Hannah Kumari has been an English soccer fan since childhood, but she never wanted to fly an England flag. Until now.

Kumari is one of millions of fans ecstatic that England's men's team has reached the final of a major tournament for the first time since it won the World Cup in 1966. But like many British people of colour, she's had an ambivalent relationship with symbols of Englishness.

Yet embracing them has come more easily thanks to the young, multi-ethnic squad that is on the cusp of triumph in the European Championships. After beating Denmark 2-1 in a semifinal on Wednesday that was watched by half the country's population, England faces Italy in the final at London's Wembley Stadium on Sunday.

"When I woke up this morning I thought, I'm going to buy a St. George's flag to hang out the window for Sunday," Kumari, who was born and raised in England to an Indian mother and Scottish father said the day after the Denmark game.

"I've never owned an England shirt," the actor-writer said.

"Something has definitely changed," she said.

"I feel almost like that team has given me permission to feel like I can wear an England shirt."

The last few years have been hard on England and the rest of the Unit-



ed Kingdom. Britain's exit from the European Union — a decision driven in part by a backlash against immigration left the country scratchy and divided. During the coronavirus pandemic, more than 128,000 people have died in the U.K., the highest toll in Western Europe.

Euro 2020 — the name is a year out of date due to the pandemic — has provided a much-needed jolt of excitement and fun. Millions weary of lockdowns and bad news are backing a team whose members speak out against racism, take a knee before games, support LGBT pride, campaign against poverty and, crucially, win games.

For decades, supporting England has been synonymous with dashed hopes. The lyrics of the country's most popular soccer anthem, "Three Lions," originally released in 1996, evokes England's 1966

triumph and the long drought that followed: "Thirty years of hurt, never stopped me dreaming."

Those 30 years have become 55, but once again England is dreaming. The country's hopes rest on a team very different from the all-white squad of 1966. A poster created by the Museum of Migration showed what the England team would look like if players without a parent or grandparent born abroad were excluded: Just three of the 11 starting players remained.

Missing were stars who included team captain Harry Kane, whose father is Irish; Marcus Rashford, whose mother is from Saint Kitts; Jamaica-born Raheem Sterling; and Buyako Saka, a Londoner with Nigerian parents.

The team is known less for wild off-the-pitch antics than for social responsibility, epitomized by 23-year-

old Rashford's campaign against child poverty, which convinced the government to restore free lunches for thousands of poor children. Last week, Kane, 27, wore a rainbow armband to support LGBT pride during England's match against Germany.

The players may be young multi-millionaires, but they celebrate their local as well as international roots. Rashford's childhood in a working-class Manchester community inspires his anti-poverty work; Kalvin Phillips is a proud son of the northern city of Leeds; Sterling calls himself the "boy from Brent," after the London borough where he grew up. For some, their success is helping to make Englishness a source of pride rather than awkwardness. The English make up 56 million of the U.K.'s 67 million inhabitants, but English patriotism and the country's red-and-white St. George flag were long shunned by liberal-minded Britons, associated with football hooligans and narrow-minded "Little Englanders."

Britishness was regarded as a more welcoming identity by many UK-born and foreign-born citizens alike.

England's rugby, cricket and soccer teams have done much to strip the English flag of its negative associations in recent years. The increasing prominence of Scottish and Welsh flags and symbols as those countries gained more political autonomy over the last two decades has also made many people reflect

on what English identity means.

"There has been an enormous intergenerational shift towards a civic and inclusive English identity that crosses ethnic and faith grounds," said Sunder Katwala, director of the equality think-tank British Future.

"Most migrants to Britain haven't identified as English, but interestingly, their children have."

Katwala said sports teams and tournaments don't drive social change but "ratify that shift that has been happening in society."

"It's changed the public conversation about what is English," he said.

Not everyone thinks the national soccer team represents all that is best about England. Some conservative commentators have derided the players as uncomfortably "woke." Team members have been booed by some fans while taking a knee against racism before games. Home Secretary Priti Patel has criticized the kneeling, calling it "gesture politics," and declined to condemn the booing.

Victory has silenced much of the criticism, at least temporarily. Politicians have jumped on the England bandwagon. Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has often criticized protests over racism and Britain's imperial past, attended Wednesday's game, awkwardly wearing an England jersey over his dress shirt. He's under pressure to declare a national holiday if England wins the final on Sunday.

No. 1 Barty To Face Pliskova In 1st Wimbledon Final For Both



Agencies

WIMBLEDON: Women's singles world number one Ashleigh Barty is all set to take on eighth seed Karolina Pliskova in the final of the 2021 Wimbledon on Saturday.

She is now one win from a second Grand Slam title after beating 2018 champion Kerber 6-3, 7-6 (3) on Thursday.

Barty is aiming to win a second Grand Slam crown and a maiden one at Wimbledon. Pliskova, who has reached her second Slam final, is hoping to win her maiden title.

"I've had ups and downs and everything in between and I

wouldn't change one day or one moment or one, kind of, road that we've taken in my path and my journey," said Barty, who was the 2011 junior champion at the All England Club and stepped away from tennis for almost two years starting in 2014 because of burnout. "It's been unique. It's been incredible. It's been tough. There have been so many things that led to this point."

Her opponent Karolina Pliskova emerged from a power-hitting and serving display to come back to defeat World No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

"Super proud about the way how I handled the situation out there," Pliskova said.