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P7 STATE

RTO BARAMULLA EARNS RS 26.50 CR REVENUE IN 9 MONTHS

Regional Transport Office in North Kashmir's Baramulla district has generated a whopping Rs 26.50 Core revenue in the 9 months of current year. This revenue is far greater than...

THINK

P5 LAST OF VARIANTS?

It is controversial whether viruses are alive, but – like all living things – they do evolve. This fact has become abundantly clear during the pandemic, as new variants of concern have emerged every few months. Some of these variants have been better at spreading from person to person, eventually



P8 SPORTS

REAL KASHMIR KICK OFF I-LEAGUE CAMPAIGN WITH WIN

Tiago Adan and Mason Robertson found themselves on target as a determined Real Kashmir eked out a thrilling 3-2 win over Aizawl FC in their first game of



Quote!
If you can't make a mistake you can't make anything
Marva Collin

NEWS DIGEST

2 Jaish 'Associates' Held In Pulwama

SRINAGAR: Two alleged militant associates of Jaish-e-Muhammad (Jem) were arrested by government forces in south Kashmir's Pulwama district, police said Monday. Adil Ali of Achan and Asif Gulzar of Hajidarpura were arrested by a joint team of police, army's 4RR and the personnel of CRPF 182 battalion on the basis of a specific **More on P6**

2 Technicians Hurt In Oxygen Plant Blast

SRINAGAR: Two technicians were injured on Monday in an explosion in an oxygen plant at the Government Medical College (GMC) in North Kashmir's Baramulla district. Reports that two technicians identified as Asif Mushtaq Bhat, 25, son of Mohammad Ashraf Bhat resident of Delina Baramulla and Mohammad **More on P6**

Mortar Shell Defused In Jammu

SRINAGAR: Police recovered and defused a mortar shell in Paloura area of Jammu outskirts, a police official said Monday. The 51 mm mortar shell was found on Sunday evening found during digging for widening of road following which a Bomb Disposal **More on P6**

Fire Damages Hotel In Kangan

SRINAGAR: A hotel was gutted in a fire incident on Monday in Kangan area of central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. Flames emanated on Monday morning from the Snow Land Hotel which belongs to one Sirajuddin Beigh, a local of Mamar Kangan, officials said. **More on P6**

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Hunt Begins For New KU Vice Chancellor

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The University of Kashmir has begun search for a new Vice-Chancellor as the three-year term of the incumbent has ended in August this year as per the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019.

As per notification of the KU, the University is currently in the process of appointing the new Vice-Chancellor for the University who will be the Principal Executive and Academic Officer of the University.

"Consequent upon the constitution of the Search Committee for the appointment of Vice-Chancellor for the University of Kashmir, applications are invited from eligible distinguished academicians **More on P6**

5.3 Magnitude Earthquake Jolts J&K

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale hit Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, officials said.

There were no reports of damage due to the quake when this report was being filed at around midnight.

Tremors were felt around 7.01 pm, the officials said.

The earthquake was 5.3 in magnitude and its epicentre was at a depth of 10 kilometres in the Astora area of Gilgit Baltistan, they said.

Pertinently, an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale hit Kashmir region on October 8, 2005 leaving behind a trail of destruction besides claiming tens of thousands of lives in both this part of Kashmir.

Kashmir comes under Seismic Zone V and is prone to earthquakes. Experts give varied reasons for earthquakes in J&K including various faults run through Kashmir and exploding of gases. Kashmir valley is vulnerable to disasters.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department, most parts of Kashmir covering the districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal, Baramulla, Kupwara, Bandipora, Budgam, Anantnag and parts of Jammu region, Doda, **More on P6**

Govt Opens J&K To Real Estate Investors

39 Pacts Worth Rs 19,000 Crore Inked In First 'Historic' Reality Summit

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday opened the union territory to the country's real estate investors by signing 39 MoUs worth nearly Rs 19,000 crore for the development of housing, hotel and commercial projects.

Terming the signing of the MoUs at J&K's first Real Estate Summit here as "historic", Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said it is a major step towards transformation of the UT.



Addressing a press conference at the summit, he said the government has already implemented the realty law RERA and adopted the Model Tenancy Act in the UT. He assured realtors that the government will reduce

stamp duty on registration of properties in line with other states and set up a single-window system for faster approval of projects.

"We have signed 39 MoUs today. We have received investment proposals of Rs 18,300

crore," he told reporters here. The industry body NAREDCO said in a statement that MoUs worth Rs 18,900 crore have been signed by many developers including Hiranandani group, Signature Global, NBCC and Raheja Developers.

We will break all such walls that will try to create hurdles in development for the interest of the common people of the J&K"

The summit was organised by the J&K government, Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and realtors' body NAREDCO.

Sinha said these MoUs will help generate employment opportunities in J&K, and also boost the **More on P6**

J&K Put Up For Sale: Mainstream Camp Fumes

Mainstream leaders, including two former Jammu and Kashmir chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti on Monday hit out at the administration for opening the union territory to real estate investors, alleging that it is being done to change the demography of the region. The comments came after the Jammu and Kashmir administration signed 39 MoUs worth Rs 18,300 crore with the country's real investors for the development of housing and commercial projects in the union territory. "Once again the true intentions of the government are brought to the fore. While offering to secure the land, jobs, domicile laws & identity **More on P6**

LG On AFSPA Review: 'Don't Feel Any Such Need'

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said there is no need to set up a panel to review the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in the union territory.

Sinha was asked if Jammu and Kashmir feels the need to set up a panel to review or repeal the AFSPA as is being done in Nagaland.

"Do not be concerned about it. I am looking into it. I do not feel any such need (to set up panel to review it)," Sinha told a press conference here.

The Centre on Sunday constituted a high-level committee, headed by a secretary-rank officer, to examine the possibility of lifting the controversial Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Nagaland, apparently to soothe the rising tension in the northeastern state following the killing of 14 civilians.

Vivek Joshi, who is Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, will head the five-member committee while Additional Secretary in the Union Home Ministry Piyush Goyal will be the member secretary of the panel. Other members of the committee are chief secretary and DGP of Nagaland and DGP of the Assam Rifles, a government official privy to the development had said.

LG Sinha outright rejected apprehensions among some political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir about demographic change in the union territory. "I outright reject it. I will not react to statements of leaders," Sinha said while replying to another question.

In bid to address such apprehension, the LG said, a large chunk of local youth have been given employment in hydro power, **More on P6**

More Snow On Upper Reaches Closes Highways



A tourist enjoying sledge ride in the skiing resort of Gulmarg after fresh snowfall: File Photo, Abid Bhat

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Higher reaches including Gulmarg received fresh snowfall while rains lashed plains in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Monday.

The snowfall has led to closure of Bandipora-Gurez as

well as Srinagar-Leh roads besides Machil, Keran and Karnah. Mughal road, connecting Shopian with Poonch and Rajouri districts, as well as Kishtwar-Sinthan road were also closed.

Reports said that there were 3 inches of fresh snowfall around Razdan **More on P6**

J&K Metro Rail Projects In Final Stage Of Approval

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday said the proposals for metro rail projects in Jammu and Srinagar cities are in the final stage of approval from the Public Investment Board.

Addressing Jammu & Kashmir Real Estate Summit, Puri urged the UT government to organise an annual summit like World Economic Forum at Davos, in J&K and assured full support from the Centre. The minister highlighted that metro projects will soon be a reality in J&K.

"Metro projects are in final stage of PIB approval," Puri said.

He further said the Centre would consider the demand to extend the metro projects to the proposed AIIMS hospital outside Jammu.

He complimented the J&K government for implementing the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) law and also



Model Tenancy Act, circulated by the Centre to all states and UTs.

He also praised the UT government for implementation of Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY) under which nearly 13,000 houses have been completed out of around 80,000 units.

Puri noted that real estate is second largest employment generator in the country and it has a multiplier effect in the overall economy.

He said the states which have done well in real estate are on top of the economic index.

Puri also sought to allay apprehensions **More on P6**

125 JK Policemen Killed In Attacks In Last 5 Years

Agencies

SRINAGAR: At least 125 policemen including 47 constables and 24 special police officers were killed in Jammu and Kashmir in militancy related incidents since 2017, official figures revealed.

The figures disclose that constables and senior grade constables comprised the highest number of victims who fell to the bullets of militants in various attacks across J&K in the past five years.

The data reveals that two deputy superintendents of



police (DySPs), four inspectors, five sub-inspectors, six Assistant Sub-Inspectors, 24 senior grade constables (Sgts) and **More on P6**

Grenade Attack On CRPF Picket In Anantnag

Militants on Monday lobbed a grenade towards a picket of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in south Kashmir's Anantnag district. According to reports, unidentified militants hurled a grenade on the bunker of CRPF 90 battalion near Arwani Bridge on Monday afternoon that missed the intended target and exploded on the roadside with a bang. In the attack, **More on P6**



City set to complete 100% 2nd Covid dose

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The three districts in Kashmir division that include Srinagar, Budgam and Anantnag are set to complete the second dose vaccination of eligible population.

As per the data , Budgam district has so far given second dose vaccination to 97 percent of the eligible population followed by Srinagar and Anantnag where 96 percent population have received the second dose.

The data shows that 93 percent of the population has been given second dose vaccination in Kulgam, 89 percent in Shopian, 87 percent in Bandipora, 89 percent in Baramulla, 86 percent in Kupwara, 90 percent in Pulwama and 82 percent in Ganderbal.

Sikh delegation calls on DC

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR DECEMBER 27: A delegation of members of Sikh Community called on Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad in his office chamber here on Monday.

The delegation highlighted various issues pertaining to the management of the Gurdwaras in Srinagar.

The delegation stressed on earlier conduct of Elections for Gurdwara Parbandhak Committees and demanded conduct of audit of the functioning of various committees and sought support of Deputy Commissioner Srinagar in smooth management of all the Gurdwaras in the District.

On the occasion, a threadbare discussion was held with regard to future course of action for conducting election of Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

The Deputy Commissioner gave patient hearing to the delegation and assured all possible support from the District Administration Srinagar in ensuring smooth running of day to day affairs and management of all Gurdwaras in Srinagar City.



Amid 'Omicron' threat, employee of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) sprays disinfectant at Residency Road in Srinagar Pic Abid Bhat

First Soil Testing Laboratory To Come Up In City

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 27: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, Monday chaired a meeting of District Level Executive Committee (DLEC) in his Office chamber, here.

On the occasion, the DC, who is also the Chairman DLEC gave approval for setting up of the first ever Village Level Soil Testing Laboratory(DLEC) in District Srinagar.

The case was put forth before the District Level Executive Committee after completion of all codal formalities as laid down under the scheme.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC asked the officers to give wide publicity to the Government sponsored farmer centric schemes so that they are benefitted.

While highlighting the objective of the Village Level Soil Testing Laboratory, the DC said it is the initiative of the Government through which farmers of the district will get the facility to set up a Soil Testing Laboratory at the Village level.

The DC further said under the scheme financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh is being provided to

the desirous farmers for setting up the laboratory out of which 75 percent i.e. Rs 3.75 lakh will be given by the Government as subsidy. In addition, the rural youth shall also get employment avenues.

Earlier, Chief Agriculture Officer apprised the chair that as per laid guidelines, the wide publicity of the scheme was given through publication of Advertisements in local leading Newspapers for inviting applications.

With regard to the progress achieved under issuance of Kissan Credit Cards, the meeting

was informed that all the farmers of Srinagar District have been registered with the Agriculture Department and 100 percent saturation has been achieved by handing over Kissan Credit Cards to the Farmers of the District.

Besides, Chief Planning Officer, Mohammad Yaseen Lone, the meeting was attended by the members of the Committee including Chief Agriculture Officer, Srinagar, Mohammad Younis Chowdhary, District Agriculture Officer, District Horticulture Officer and Assistant Soil Chemist.

Certificate Programme In Dairy Farming Commences At SKUAST

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar: A month-long industry exposure certificate programme on dairy farming commenced at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Kashmir on Monday.

The programme is being organised by the university's Division of Animal Nutrition, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences in collaboration with the Centre of Excellence for Dairy Skills in India (CEDSI) and Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI) under the World Bank-ICAR funded National

Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) for the institutional development of SKUAST-K.

Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai was the chief guest at the inaugural function. While lauding the organisers for choosing the industry-relevant training for the students, he said skills programmes oriented towards entrepreneurship and startups is the need of the hour.

Prof Ganai said Jammu and Kashmir has huge potential for dairy farming, milk processing and value addition of milk-based products, and SKUAST-K needs to train its students and interested youth for taking up such vocations. He said the trained veterinary pass outs from the university will not only help in filling the gap of required professionals in the industry but will also open their own units creating more employment.

Earlier Head Division of Animal Nutrition, SKUAST-K and Course Director of the Programme, Prof AM Ganai, while welcoming the guest, partner organizations: CEDSI, ASCI, and participants, gave a detailed overview of the programme.

NIT Srinagar Hosts Second OLIC Meeting

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar: The Official Language Implementation Committee (OLIC) on Monday held its quarterly meeting at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar to review the progress report of Hindi language on the campus.

Director NIT Srinagar, Prof. (Dr.) Rakesh Sehgal who is Chairman OLIC appreciated the work of OLIC members and stated that all things are being streamlined for implementation of the Hindi language on campus.

He said to increase the use of Hindi in the institute; training sessions will be arranged for interested employees of the Personnel Department soon in which they will be given basic knowledge of

Hindi language.

He said there is a need to promote and popularize the Hindi language among the people. The language has its own history and legacy; he said adding that in future NIT will use Urdu language along with Hindi for its sign boards.

In his message, Registrar NIT, Prof Syed Kaiser Bukhari said all directions from the Official Language Implementation Committee (OLIC) are being followed in letter and spirit.

'Several meetings were conducted this year to ensure its full implementation on the campus,' he said.

In the meeting, the chair directed that efforts will be made to make the printing material used in the institute bilingual in a phased manner such as nameplates, rubber stamps, departmental boards etc.

Notorious criminal arrested, booked under PSA

Agencies

Srinagar- Jammu and Kashmir Police booked a notorious criminal under Public Safety Act (PSA) and shifted him to Central Jail Kot Bhalwal.

As per police sources, a notorious criminal identified as Mushtaq Ahmad resident of shah colony fruit Mandi Bund Srinagar was booked under Public Safety Act under order no. DMS/PSA/105/2021 and has been kept under detention in Central Jail Kot Bhalwal.

It is pertinent to mention that the accused is a notorious criminal and a desperate character. He was involved in cases registered at Police Station Parimpora. The detention warrant was issued by DM Srinagar under section 8(1)(a) JK Public Safety Act, 1978. Finally the detention warrant got executed and the accused was shifted to Central Jail Kot Bhalwal Jammu. (CNS)

SAD DEMISE



We inform you the sad demise of Saja Begum W/o late Ghulam Mohammad Dar R/O Mandir Bagh Opposite Vikram Hotel Srinagar Left for heavenly abode on 25/12/2021. There will no Fateh Khawani .

Bereaved
Dar Family

6005613748 | 9797111610

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE SUB-DIVISIONAL MAGISTRATE, NOORABAD (D.H. Pora)

Subject: Conduct of Magisterial enquiry under section 176 CrPC into the Encounter that took place at village Pombay kulgam on 17/11/2021

NOTICE

The District Magistrate kulgam has appointed undersigned as enquiry Officer in the encounter that took place at village Pombay kulgam on 17/11/2021 in which 03 militants got killed. In this regard, general public having knowledge regarding the matter are invited to record their statement within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice in the office of undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-
Sub Divisional Magistrate,
Noorabad

DIPK-15347/21

DIAL-EMMA



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS



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

HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
23 Jumada al-awwal
1443

PRAYERS

FAJR	6: 06
ZUHR	12:32
ASR	3:51
Magrib	5:33
ISHA	6: 58

This Day In History

1308 - The reign of Emperor Hanazono, Emperor of Japan, begins
1612 - First observation of Neptune - Galileo observes and records a "fixed star" without realising it is a planet
1614 Sperm whale beached at Noordwijk
1732 - 1st known ad for "Poor Richard's Almanack" (Pennsylvania Gazette)
1781 - Comte de Rochambeau and Nicolas Luckner are the last generals to be made Marshal of France by Louis XVI before the Revolution
1828 - 6.8 earthquake strikes Echigo Japan, 30,000 killed
1832 - John C. Calhoun becomes 1st VP to resign (differences with President Jackson)
1877 - John Stevens, applies for a patent for his flour rolling mill.
1904 - 1st daily wireless weather forecasts published (London).
1908 - Earthquake strikes Messina, Italy, killing nearly 80,000.
1914 - Turks are repulsed by the Russians after fighting in Armenia for weeks.
1926 - Imperial Airways begins England-India mail & passenger service.
1948 - US announced a study to launch an Earth satellite.
1950 - Chinese troops cross 38th Parallel, into South Korea.
1957 - USSR performs atmospheric nuclear test.
1962 - UN troops occupies Elizabethstad Katanga.
1968 - Israeli assault on Beirut Airport.
1970 - Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) adopts constitution.
1973 - US President Nixon signs Endangered Species Act into law.
1973 - Comet Kohoutek at perihelion.
1974 - 6.3 earthquake strikes Pakistan; 5200 killed.
1975 - Earthquake in Pakistan, 4,000 die.
1983 - US say they will leave UNESCO on Dec 31, 1984.
1985 - Warring Lebanese Muslim & Christian leaders sign peace agreement.
2001 - OPEC oil ministers meeting in Cairo agree to reduce their crude oil output quotas by a combined 1.5 million barrels per day.
2007 - Nepal declared a federal democratic Republic by interim parliament, abolishing the monarchy.
2009 - 43 people die in a suicide bombing in Karachi, Pakistan, where Shia Muslims were observing the Day of Ashura.
2013 - Early signs of Ebola epidemic: 2 year old child in Guinea dies of an unidentified haemorrhagic fever; mother, sister and grandmother soon follow.
2014 - Indonesia AirAsia Flight QZ8501 crashes in bad weather in the Java Sea, killing all 162 people on board.
2015 - Japan and South Korea reach agreement over WWII "comfort women", Japan apologies and pays 1bn yen compensation.

From KO Archives

US steps up efforts for Kashmir breakthrough

Azim M Mian

NEW YORK: Efforts for the Musharraf-Vajpayee meeting have been accelerated, despite the Pakistani claim of no such invitation by India, sources told The News on Sunday.

According to these sources, the United States— whose quiet diplomacy has caused a ceasefire along LoC during Ramadan — fully supports such a meeting.

They believed Pakistan will get the dividends of this move; and the IMF decision on loans for Pakistan is one example.

Islamabad's acceptance of the ceasefire, coming a day after the IMF's decision on loans, indicates the link they said. They claimed that a change in the White House would not affect the peace process in Kashmir.

This has been confirmed by a much-controversial figure, Mansoor Ijaz, who has played a role in the US track-II policy on Kashmir. " We are making every effort for a meeting between General Musharraf of Pakistan and Atal Behari Vajpayee of India- and hope these efforts would bear fruit,"

Mansoor Ijaz said in a telephonic interview with the Pakistani newspaper, The News.

Known for his articles in the US media, Mansoor claimed his visits to Delhi Islamabad and Srinagar, and his meetings with Atal Behari Vajpayee, General Musharraf, Farooq Abdullah and others were fully supported by the Clinton administration.

He said that the peace proposal for Kashmir carried by him to South Asia was fully endorsed by President Clinton.

The US administration too never denied Mansoor's much-publicized claims of Clinton's backing. Rather, his article carried by International Herald Tribune in its November 22 issue is a good way of knowing current political developments in Kashmir.

I welcome the announcement by Pakistan who has put the ball in the Indian court by responding positively to the Indian offer of ceasefire in Kashmir. India has been running a public relations campaign against Pakistan on Kashmir.

Pakistan's Gen Musharraf has effectively countered the India move by his announcement of the ceasefire," Mansoor, currently in the Middle East, said.

He also said that he had carried a letter from Hizbul Mujahideen leader, Commander Salahuddin addressed to President Clinton seeking his support and confirmation for the peace process in the held region.

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K O V I E W

AFSPA Debate

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said there is no need to set up a panel to review the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the union territory. "Do not be concerned about it. I am looking into it. I do not feel any such need," Sinha told a press conference in Jammu. This is contrary to what the union government has done in Nagaland where it has constituted a high-level five-member committee, headed by a secretary-rank officer, to examine the possibility of lifting the AFSPA following the recent killing of 14 civilians.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the withdrawal of the AFSPA has been a longstanding debate but ultimately it has gone nowhere as the defense ministry has shown itself to do away with it, more so in the case of Jammu and Kashmir. Now the recent carnage in Nagaland has rekindled the debate in the Valley where it had all but faded out from public discourse in recent years. More so, following the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019 since when it is seen as a holy grail, an intrinsic fact of Kashmir's life. Former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti has once again called for a review of the law. National Conference Member of Parliament from Anantnag Hasnain Masoodi too supported the demand for repeal of AFSPA in parliament saying the law has impacted J&K the most.

However, it is very unlikely that the demand for the withdrawal of the AFSPA from J&K will find any traction at the national level where there exists a near political consensus about the continuation of the law which is seen as necessary to reign in the militancy.

The AFSPA was enforced in the Kashmir Valley in 1990, a year after the outbreak of militancy, and was extended to Jammu a decade later. The Act gives the armed forces immunity from prosecution while operating in the internal conflict zones. The army has consistently stonewalled the bids to revoke Article 370 by invoking worst-case security scenarios should the AFSPA be lifted, even if partially. Even at times, when militancy was at its lowest ebb in J&K.

The law gives the army and the paramilitary forces sweeping powers to conduct their operations as "under this Act, no prosecution, suit or other legal proceeding shall be instituted," against the security personnel acting in good faith in the line of duty. And it is these grounds that the Valley politicians have tapped into to often fashion a political narrative for the phase-wise rollback of the law. But the rationale of the defense forces is that they cannot operate freely without the AFSPA in a conflict zone like Kashmir. And the centre is least likely to overlook the opinion of the armed forces on security, more so, in a place like Kashmir.

O T H E R O P I N O N

The Next Step

India will begin 2022 with a new phase of Covid inoculation. On December 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that vaccination for children in the age group of 15-18 years will begin from January 3. Booster doses — PM Modi described them as precautionary shots — will be administered to healthcare professionals, frontline workers, and senior citizens with co-morbidities from January 10. While the decision on vaccines for children has been on the cards for about two months, the emergence of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus seems to have lent greater urgency to the government's efforts to introduce booster shots. ICMR's real-time tracker shows that breakthrough infections are less than 2 per cent in the general population and around 7 per cent in frontline workers. However, studies point to waning immunity after eight to nine months of receiving the second shot. And Omicron appears to have made the case for boosters even stronger with preliminary data indicating that the variant has evaded vaccine-induced immunity in 50 per cent of those it has infected in India. The highly contagious nature of the variant also increases the risk of infection in the unvaccinated younger population. The decision to broaden the ambit of the inoculation project is, therefore, welcome.

A large section of experts believes that a mix-and-match approach to vaccination is better for shoring up immunity compared to an additional jab of the vaccine administered in the primary phase of inoculation. In India, too, there is preliminary consensus that booster recipients shouldn't receive a third dose of Covishield or Covaxin. The country is well placed to meet this challenge. The government has made advance payments to the Hyderabad-based Biological E to reserve 30 crore doses of the Corbevax vaccine. The jab that teaches the immune system to make antibodies using spike proteins has been heralded as a stronger shield against variants such as Omicron compared to viral vector vaccines such as Covishield and Covaxin. Covovax, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India under licence from the US-based Novovax, also uses a protein-based platform. Though these vaccines take more time to develop, they are more affordable, and their production is easier to scale up. The SII-manufactured vaccine has already received an Emergency Use Approval from regulatory authorities in Southeast Asia and the WHO. The Drugs Controller General of India has, reportedly, asked the Pune-based company for more data over its EUA application for Covovax. The regulator's doubts must be cleared urgently to enable a decision on the most effective booster.

In October, the DCGI gave an EUA to Zydus Cadila's vaccine for children above the age of 12. On December 25, a few hours before the PM's speech, the regulator approved the use of Bharat-Biotech's Covaxin for the young population. But the Hyderabad-based company's performance during the inoculation project for adults — it complained of production constraints several times in the past six months — should be a cause of concern. There is no time to lose in sorting out such sticky matters.

Marriage And Gender
Roles In Islam

Amir Suhail Wani

Marriage is an institution of sanctity, responsibility and of foremost importance as a social institution in the scheme of things in Islamic cosmology. Islam didn't only discourage the Christian ideal of celibacy but the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) condemned it strongly by his teachings and practice. It is reported from the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) that "Marriage is part of my sunnah, and whoever does not follow my sunnah has nothing to do with me." This vivid and explicit emphasis on the practice of marriage in such strong words only works to highlight the importance that Islam attaches to the marriage and affairs revolving in its orbit. This thrust that Islam places on marriage is not without a reason and rhyme, but is rather rooted in the Islamic doctrine that marriage and therefore the family that arises out of this practise forms the foundation of society and governs modalities of social structure, their functional optimization, and guarantees the long term stability and sustainability of the same. Marriage is not seen merely a means of gratification of the needs and necessitates arising out of man's biological composure, but is more importantly identified as an institution and structure ensuring proper and desired upbringing of children so as to render them into paragons of individual virtue and social functionality. Though the context has been laid down in Islamic matrix, but that shall not limit the nature and scope of what we explore hereunder, for these preliminary observations hold universal



A still from designer Ali Xeeshan's controversial Bridal couture campaign advertisement

of operation, thereby marring their spirit and turning them into social abcesses of unmanageable order.

With distortion in the meta-structure of marriage as an institution, no wonder that gender roles which marriage

ISLAM LEAVES OPEN THE SPACE TO WOMEN TO actively engage in public life, in official and business roles, roles that don't compromise the chastity of women and provides proper opportunities to safeguard her modesty while at the same time providing her with possibilities to explore and realize her potential to the fullest

merit and apply equally to all human conditions and societies across religious and cultural divide.

The longstanding and evergreen tenure of relations, phenomenon and institutions is ensured by their commitment to their spirit and the central axis around which they revolve. Any deviation therefrom, not only leads to their self-disintegration, but causes damage and deterioration of peripheral phenomenon revolving in their orbit. Marriage, an institution of such social foregrounding has not only succumbed to parochial social moors, but has also metamorphosed into institution of mechanical recurrence without any commitment to the spirit, the attendant responsibilities and sensibilities thereof. What are those attendant responsibilities and sensitivities referred hereto? Primarily social bindings, irrelevant and burdensome cultural obligations have turned instant of solemnization of marriage into such a lavish and spendthrift affair that most of the people feel disqualified to be initiated to this very pious and socially indispensable act. The "externalities" and unnecessary practices in the form of dowry, serving sumptuous lunch to massive gathering and such takes such a central-stage in marriage that the very essence of it is lost under the debris of social constructions. Let it also be pinned that these constructions aren't an evil in their essence, but the problem has cropped because these otherwise legit norms have been stretched too much beyond their normal and desirable range and scale

confers upon spouses have inadvertently and inevitably suffered perversion and unassuming stalemate. Are gender roles, as they play out in our society, written on some stone? Do they have some eternal permanence guaranteed by some divine agency or are these gender roles mere human constructions, rather faulty constructions that have went on to assume quasi-divine character. Are these gender roles where woman is assigned household chores and made to do all manual work at home and man is seen as bread earner and his role deemed market oriented true and absolute, in consonance with religious teachings and social dynamics or do they subvert the essence of religion and society? Does Islam foster these parochial practices which enhance suppression of women and construct gender roles that augment domestic and structural violence against women and assign them roles undesired and uncalled for. A survey of Islamic doctrine and praxis, historically and as mediated by the text reveals facts contrary to common perception and brings forth not only equality guaranteed therein but also highlights the liberating spirit thereof. In the Islamic narrative, equality between the sexes is affirmed from the point of creation, with humanity originating from a single man and a single woman: "People, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another.

Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you." People are granted the high-

est form of equality—spiritual equality—such that there is no difference among them on account of their sex, race, or social status. Men and women, treated primarily as humans, are recognized as complete beings with the responsibility to fulfil their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs, duties, and potential, while keeping their higher purpose in life at the core of their personal and communal vision. Human flourishing, above and beyond gender roles, in this life and the hereafter, is the language that is adopted in the Quranic narrative. Marriage is regarded as an aspect of the Islamic faith that should be fulfilled with various benefits to the individuals involved (i.e., earthly and heavenly). Central is the custom that a groom provides a dowry (sum of money) to the bride or her family prior to marriage as a sign of commitment to the family. This dowry varies with cultures and traditions but is fairly universal in practice. Wives should expect to be supported by their husbands financially and are not expected to work outside of the home. This is what has been mediat-

leidoscopic vision into the workings of gender dynamics and gender roles in Islam. Ideally and at least in doctrinal aspect, Islam doesn't envisage wife as maid, as cook and doesn't place on him the legal responsibility of child rearing. Wife, on the other hand, discharges these roles and keeps herself attentive to these calls in the spirit of ethical imperative, not a legal binding. Islam leaves open the space to women to actively engage in public life, in official and business roles, roles that don't compromise the chastity of women and provides proper opportunities to safeguard her modesty while at the same time providing her with possibilities to explore and realize her potential to the fullest. On same note, Islam doesn't freeze man in the privileged frame of "market man", bestowed with liberties and perks, but binds him to filial ties and responsibilities, besides prompting and luring him to help his wife in chores without letting the exercise touch his male ego — this is what the character and practice of Prophet (PBUH) was. But the intersection of cultural norms of the liberating and equating spirit of Islam has more

THE INTERSECTION OF CULTURAL NORMS OF the liberating and equating spirit of Islam has more than often tended to disturb the equation and repeatedly the pendulum has swung in the direction of men, encouraging them to perpetrate chauvinism and gender asymmetry

ed through the historical experience of Muslim societies and the exigencies of temporal necessities.

In the wake of changing social dynamics, the interpretative exercise has been re-invoked and possibilities have been explored to revisit and reconceptualise gender roles. In this connection, the precedents found within the holy life of Prophet of Islam (SAW) itself leaves open wide spectrum of possibilities to re-imagine and reconstitute gender roles. The holy life of Prophet (SAW), his conduct in family as husband, and the instructions he issued to his companions pertaining to marital affairs and gender roles provides ka-

than often tended to disturb the equation and repeatedly the pendulum has swung in the direction of men, encouraging them to perpetrate chauvinism and gender asymmetry. It is only in recalling the true teachings of religion and Prophetic praxis that one can see this problem dissipating in the light of solution.

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

The author is a writer and columnist based in Srinagar



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Women And Pandemic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Last Of Variants?

Ben Krishna

OMICRON will therefore not be the final variant, but it may be the final variant of concern. If we are lucky, and the course of this pandemic is hard to predict, SARS-CoV-2 will probably become an endemic virus that slowly mutates over time



It is controversial whether viruses are alive, but – like all living things – they do evolve. This fact has become abundantly clear during the pandemic, as new variants of concern have emerged every few months. Some of these variants have been better at spreading from person to person, eventually becoming dominant as they out-compete slower versions of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This improved spreading ability has been ascribed to mutations in the spike protein – the mushroom-shaped projections on the surface of our cells, such as those that line our airways, that the virus attaches to in order to gain entry and start replicating. These mutations allowed the alpha variant, and then the delta variant, to become globally dominant. And scientists expect the same thing to happen with omicron. The virus cannot, however, improve indefinitely. The laws of biochemistry mean that the virus will

eventually evolve a spike protein that binds to ACE2 as strongly as possible. By that point, the ability of SARS-CoV-2 to spread between people will not be limited by how well the virus can stick to the outside of cells. Other factors will limit virus spread, such as how fast the genome can replicate, how quickly the virus can enter the cell via the protein TMPRSS2, and how much virus an infected human can shed. In principle, all of these should eventually evolve to peak performance. Has omicron reached this peak? There is no good reason to assume that it has. So-called “gain-of-function” studies, which look at what mutations SARS-CoV-2 needs to spread more efficiently, have identified plenty of mutations that improve the spike protein’s ability to bind to human cells that omicron doesn’t have. Besides this, improvements could be made to other aspects of the virus life cycle, such as genome replication, as I mentioned above. But let’s assume for a second that omicron is the variant with maximum spreading ability. Perhaps omicron won’t get any better be-

cause it is limited by genetic probability. In the same way that zebras haven’t evolved eyes at the back of their heads to avoid predators, it’s plausible that SARS-CoV-2 can’t pick up the mutations required to reach a theoretical maximum as those mutations need to occur all at once, and that is just too unlikely to emerge. Even in a scenario where omicron is the best variant at spreading between humans, new variants will emerge to handle the human immune system. After infection with any virus, the immune system adapts by making antibodies that stick to the virus to neutralise it, and killer T-cells that destroy infected cells. Antibodies are pieces of protein that stick to the specific molecular shape of the virus, and killer T-cells recognise infected cells via molecular shape as well. SARS-CoV-2 can therefore evade the immune system by mutating sufficiently that its molecular shape changes beyond the immune system’s recognition. This is why omicron is so apparently successful at infecting people with previous immunity, either from vaccines or infections with other vari-

ants – the mutations that allow the spike to bind to ACE2 more strongly also reduce the ability of antibodies to bind to the virus and neutralise it. Pfizer’s data suggests that T-cells should respond similarly to omicron as to previous variants, which aligns with the observation that omicron has a lower fatality rate in South Africa, where most people have immunity. Importantly for humanity, past exposure still seems to protect against severe disease and death, leaving us with a “compromise” where the virus can replicate and reinfect, but we do not get as severely sick as the first time.

Probable future

Herein lies the most probable future for this virus. Even if it behaves like a professional gamer and eventually maxes out all its stats, there is no reason to think that it won’t be controlled and cleared by the immune system. The mutations that improve its spreading ability do not greatly increase deaths. This maxed-out virus would then simply mutate randomly, changing enough over time to become unrecognisable to the immune system’s adapted defences, allowing waves of reinfection. We might have COVID season each winter in the same way we have flu season now. Influenza viruses can also have a similar pattern of mutation over time, known as “antigenic drift”, leading to reinfections. Each year’s new flu viruses are not necessarily better than last year’s, just sufficiently different. Perhaps the best evidence for this eventuality for SARS-CoV-2 is that 229E, a coronavirus that causes the common cold, does this already. Omicron will therefore not be the final variant, but it may be the final variant of concern. If we are lucky, and the course of this pandemic is hard to predict, SARS-CoV-2 will probably become an endemic virus that slowly mutates over time. The disease might very likely be mild as some past exposure creates immunity that reduces the likelihood of hospitalisation and death. Most people will get infected the first time as a child, which could occur before or after a vaccine, and subsequent reinfections will barely be noticed. Only a small group of scientists will track SARS-CoV-2’s genetic changes over time, and the variants of concern will become a thing of the past – at least until the next virus jumps the species barrier.

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Can We Raise Children Without Controlling Them?

Kavita Srinivasan

“I have to push them to swim or they wouldn’t do it,” a friend of mine recently confessed, after reading my last column about parenting not being a dictatorship. “I had to take control,” she said. “They have to be water safe.” It’s understandable — our need to make sure our children learn, grow, are water safe, healthy... the list goes on. The question is, HOW do we achieve this without them resenting us and wanting to run a mile away from our instructions? It is possible to teach our children everything we want to WITHOUT (a) making them feel controlled and (b) most importantly, by preserving the most vital thing in any parent-child relationship: CONNECTION.

Here’s how:

Pick three things you want to be firm about. Children stop listening when we’re constantly imposing our opinion on them. Learn to say ‘YES’ more than you say ‘NO’. This way they will actually take you seriously. There are three things that I am firm about. Everything else is up for negotiation: **1) Screen time:** Technology and social media are wonderful in many ways but not when they disconnect you from people and the world around you. It is important for our children to be bored and to learn from the natural world around them. Too much screen time can actually impede our child’s potential.

I say:

To a toddler (because I have one!): “I know you love watching xx. It is upset-



ting to stop. It is time to put it away. We can watch more tomorrow.” **How you can say this to an older child:** “I know you love your video game. Play for a little while, yes. Too much playing is not great (sleep, exercise, work...). Can we agree on a time to stop and spend some time together? Let’s figure this out together!” The key: Collaboration and saying the word ‘NO’ as little as possible. If they’re pushing back, repeat it over and over again whilst maintaining your calm. If they’re still not stopping, say the following: “You’re having a hard time not stopping. I’m going to take the remote away.

It’s okay to be upset. I am here with you.” Keep repeating this. Hold your boundary. The key is to stay calm when they’re screaming. You are the confident leader of your home. You are the adult. Consistency is the key. Never give in. **2) BEDTIME:** Having a predictable bedtime routine is hugely important in emotionally regulating your child. Children like stability, children need predictability and they thrive on a mundane, regulated schedule. This is especially true for toddlers — their brains can’t cope with change. They do best when they know what’s coming next. **If there is pushback for bedtime:**

“You’re having so much fun playing with that toy. It’s hard to say goodbye. It’s time for bed. We can play more tomorrow with anything you want.” (Start with empathy, move to the boundary and finally, give them control.) **If they still persist:** “I know it’s very hard to put the toy down. Let me help you with that.” With teenagers and older children, take a more collaborative approach. **3) Treating themselves (and by default, others) with kindness:** This begins with us treating them kindly. It is also directly related to how we treat ourselves. It’s important to always be

KEEP REPEATING THIS. HOLD YOUR boundary. The key is to stay calm when they’re screaming. You are the confident leader of your home. You are the adult. Consistency is the key. Never give in.

compassionate with ourselves — half our problems as adults stem from how little compassion we have for ourselves. If we change that voice in our children’s head, we give them a friend for life — themselves. Really, that is the only friend they will ever need.

EXAMPLE: Your child hits another child. Say: “You’re upset. You’re a good kid having some big feelings. It is not okay to hit. Come, my love. Something must’ve really upset you for you to behave like that. Let me hug you.”

Then, to the child that was hit: “That must have really hurt. How can I make you feel better? It is not okay that xx hit you.” **Turn to your child:** “How can we make your friend feel better? Can we ask him?” This is NOT encouraging them to hit someone. This is replacing the hurt with kindness and love. No one is bad; only feelings matter. But as always, the hard work begins with us. We need to regulate our feelings, maintain our boundaries and be kind to ourselves to show up for our children with calm, presence and compassion. Let’s begin now.

Khaleej Times

EC Asks Health Secy To Ramp Up Vaccination In 5 Poll-Bound States

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission on Monday asked the government to expedite the COVID-19 vaccination programme in five poll-bound states in a meeting with the Union health secretary, amid indications that polling may be held in time.

Separately, the Union health ministry issued a statement later in the day, saying the Centre has reviewed public health response measures and vaccination status with the poll-bound states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur.

The ministry has advised ramping up vaccination of all eligible population through a district-wise weekly plan with daily review, according to the statement.

During its meeting with Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, the commission noted that the percentage of those administered the first dose of coronavirus vaccine was still less in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Manipur, while it was nearing 100 per cent in Uttarakhand and Goa.

The poll panel also asked the top health official to expedite administering of second dose to those eligible in these five states, highly-placed sources said.

The health ministry statement said testing is to be "exponentially accelerated" to curb sudden surge of Covid cases.

"While Uttarakhand and Goa have reported vaccination coverage for the first and second doses higher than the national average, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Manipur have COVID-19 vaccination coverage numbers below the national average," it said.

The states, the statement said, have been advised to speedily ramp up COVID-19



vaccination of all eligible population for the first dose and ensure that those who were due for the second dose are administered the dose.

District-wise weekly vaccination implementation plans are required to be drawn up for this purpose, the five states were told.

State authorities have been advised to review the implementation status on a daily basis, the statement said.

The poll-bound states have been also advised to exponentially increase testing to ensure that infected cases are identified promptly for timely initiation of public health response measures, and to ensure there is no sudden upsurge in numbers due to low testing.

State authorities have been strongly advised to ensure that recommended Covid-appropriate behaviour is strictly followed and adequate measures are undertaken for

their effective enforcement, the health ministry said.

In a separate meeting with enforcement agencies and central forces, the Election Commission (EC) asked the top brass of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) to check the influence of drugs in elections.

The poll panel pressed upon top officials of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) for maintaining strict vigil on international borders some of the poll-going states share.

Sources aware of the meetings said Health Secretary Bhushan briefed the poll panel for nearly an hour on the Covid situation in the country, especially in poll-bound Uttarakhand, Manipur, Goa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

The issue of spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus was also discussed.

The commission assessed

the situation based on statistics provided by the health ministry, a functionary said.

The health secretary also briefed the EC about the Covid protocols and home ministry guidelines issued in the recent past to check the spread of the virus.

During the interaction with officials of the NCB, the ITBP, the SSB and the BSF, the poll panel asked the Narcotics Control Bureau to ensure drugs do not influence polls.

The commission "in particular" referred to Punjab and Goa with regard to drug smuggling, the sources said.

The terms of Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Manipur legislative assemblies are ending on different dates in March next year while the Uttar Pradesh assembly's term will end in May.

The EC is expected to announce election dates next month.

On Tuesday, the chief election commissioner (CEC) and fellow election commissioners are scheduled to visit Uttar Pradesh to take stock of the poll preparedness in the state.

An Allahabad High Court bench of Justice Shekhar Yadav had on Thursday last urged the government and the poll panel to consider postponing the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections for a month or two and banning all political rallies amid the fears of an impending third wave of Covid.

When asked about the observation, CEC Sushil Chandra had said in Dehradun on Friday that the EC would be visiting Uttar Pradesh soon and "an appropriate decision as required by the situation will be taken after we review it."

The commission has already visited Punjab, Goa and Uttarakhand as part of its pre-poll stock-taking exercise.

Sri Lanka To Shut 3 Foreign Missions As Dollar Crisis Worsens

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka announced on Monday the closure of three overseas diplomatic missions as part of a restructuring bid to save the country's much-needed foreign currency reserves and minimising expenditure in the wake of grave economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Sri Lanka High Commission in Abuja, Nigeria, the Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Frankfurt, Germany, and the Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Nicosia, Cyprus will be shut with effect from December 31, the foreign ministry said.

"The restructuring is undertaken with a view to conserving the country's much needed foreign reserves and minimising expenditure related to maintenance of Sri Lanka's missions overseas," the ministry said in a statement.

Sri Lanka's tourism-dependent economy was severely hit by the pandemic and the government in March last year imposed a broad import ban to shore up forex reserves, triggering shortages of essential goods such as fuel and sugar.

The island nation is currently facing shortages of essentials in the face of dwindling reserves. At the end of November, a little under USD 2 billion in reserves were able to meet only a month's imports.

The government in mid-November ordered the shutting of the only oil refinery due to the shortage of dollars to pay for crude oil imports.

The exporters have faced forced conversions of their export earnings into local rupees and the migrant workers were offered incentives to send dollars through the central bank system when the official conversion rate was pegged at 200 rupees to a dollar.



Fitch downgraded Sri Lanka's sovereign rating to 'CC' from 'CCC' this month, saying there is an increased probability of a default in coming months in light of the country's worsening external liquidity position underscored by a drop in foreign-exchange reserves.

The New-York based rating agency said it will be difficult for the government to meet its external debt obligations in 2022 and 2023 in the absence of new external financing sources.

Obligations include two international sovereign bonds of USD 500 million due in January 2022 and USD 1 billion due in July 2022, it said.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka, however, said last week that Sri Lanka's foreign reserves, which dropped to USD 1.58 billion in November, will double to remain above USD 3 billion by the end of this year, asserting that the country's economy showed resilience throughout 2021 despite the headwinds of the economic impact of COVID-19.

The bank said Sri Lanka has successfully met its debt obligations by repaying foreign loans, including the payments of the International Sovereign Bonds.

Progress is being made in negotiations other arrangements to bring in inflows, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) said in a statement on Wednesday.

Although no details of the expected inflows were given, the officials said a USD 1.5 billion swap with China was in the offing.

Court Sends Kanpur Businessman To 14-Day Judicial Custody In Tax Evasion Case

Press Trust of India

Kanpur: A day after his arrest, perfume trader Piyush Jain was sent to judicial custody for 14 days in a tax evasion case by a district court here on Monday, a senior prosecution official said.

Jain was arrested on Sunday after raids at his residence in Kanpur and residence and factory in Kannauj by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) led to the recovery of about Rs 257 crore in cash, 25 kg of gold and 250 kg of silver, according to another official.

Jain was produced in metropolitan court number 10 amid tight security and the court remanded him in judicial custody for 14 days, joint director (prosecution) Sanjay Kumar Tripathi said.

The businessman was taken to the Kanpur district jail following the court order.

He has been quarantined in the jail in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, a senior jail official said.

Prior to being produced in the court, Jain was taken for a medical examination and was also screened for Covid.

He tested negative for the viral infection, said an official who did not wish to be quoted.

Officials of the Income Tax department and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs conducted multiple raids at Jain's house in Kanpur's Anandpur as well as a house and a factory in Kannauj since Wednesday and seized alleged unaccounted cash stuffed in large wardrobes and huge quantities of jewellery.

Initially, the seized cash was estimated to be around Rs 150 crore, an official said, adding that after the searches ended, the amount went up to around Rs 257 crore.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

5.3 Magnitude Earthquake

Ramban, Kishtwar come under Seismic Zone V and are prone to earthquakes. The rest of the state comes under Seismic Zone IV.

Govt Opens

economy of the UT.

He also announced that a similar real estate summit will be held in Srinagar on May 21-22 next year.

Asked about opposition parties' allegations that land parcels of the local people will be taken away in the name of development, Sinha said this is an "effort to create fear and incite people". There will be no demographic change, he added.

Earlier addressing the event, Sinha said some people do not want the people of J&K get facilities and development like other states.

There have been attempts to mislead people of J&K, he said, and cited this as one of the reasons for unemployment and lack of development.

Stating that J & K has talent and potential, Sinha said the days are not far when the UT will be at par with other States. "We will break all such walls" that will try to create hurdles in development for the interest of the common people of the J&K, he asserted.

The Lieutenant Governor said the real estate developers have been asked to partner with local builders of the UT so that local people also get share of the development process.

There have been revolutionary changes in J&K during the last two years, he said asserting that the UT is providing 100 per cent more incentive than Uttar Pradesh.

The Article 370 was abrogated on August 5, 2019, and the state was divided into two Union Territories Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Sinha said the government has identified 6,000 acres of land for the development of projects and that it has also made rules for change of land usage of agriculture land.

Sinha highlighted that Rs 44,000 crore worth investment proposals under a new industrial scheme have been announced by his government and hoped that the number will reach Rs 60,000 crore soon.

He said that the government will also offer its own land under the new industrial policy for development of projects.

Sinha said people who own the land should have the freedom to decide how they want to use their land parcels.

As many as 20 MOUs were signed at the summit for development of housing projects, while seven were inked for commercial, four hospitality, three infratech, three film and entertainment and two finance projects.

The real estate companies that signed MoUs include Signature Global, Samyak Group, Raunak Group, Hiranandani Constructions and NBCC for housing projects. Chalet Hotels signed MoU for hospitality.

Raheja Developers, Goel Ganga, GHP Group and Shree Naman Group signed initial pacts for housing projects.

J&K Put Up For

of the people of Ladakh, J&K is being put up for sale. People of Jammu should beware,

'investors' will buy up land in Jammu long before Kashmir," Abdullah wrote on Twitter.

Mehbooba tweeted, "J&K's special status was illegally revoked to dehumanise, dispossess & disempower the only Muslim majority state in India. GOIs brazen loot & sale of our resources shows that the sole motive is to annihilate our identity & change the demography."

Apni Party President Syed Altaf Bukhari said that efforts that aim at a holistic development and job creation in Jammu and Kashmir are welcome but not at the cost of domicile laws that safeguard land and employment rights of its permanent residents.

"Our Party will always welcome any efforts that will foster progress and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir. But at the same time we are pledged to resist any plans that will do away with the exclusive rights of the people on their land and jobs," he said.

Taking a strong exception to the controversial agenda of the Jammu summit in which the term 'permanent resident of the State' has been omitted from J&K Development Act, Bukhari said that the exclusion of this legal guarantee is totally unacceptable to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Apni Party wants to make it crystal clear that we will always resist any such proceedings that are against the Domicile Law in J&K," he said, adding that Jammu and Kashmir is in dire need of infrastructural development but the same should revolve around its peoples' identity, demography and their special rights under law.

Bukhari said the Jammu summit seems to be a follow up to the recent attempts that were aimed at change in land use laws allowing re-classifying of agricultural land. "We want to caution the J&K government to desist from fiddling with the character and demography of Jammu and Kashmir," he observed.

The Apni Party president said that though the development in Jammu and Kashmir is of utmost importance primarily for job creation; the government of Jammu and Kashmir should ensure that the people of this land are not used merely as a labour class to move the wheels of the country's private sector.

"At a time when the unemployment rate of J&K is over 21 per cent as compared to the national average of 7.8 per cent, the government of India must address this burgeoning issue by creating more job opportunities rather than focusing on the sale of non agricultural land to non domiciles of Jammu and Kashmir," he remarked.

J&K Clocks

the officials said.

Also, they said that one more person died of Covid-19 related complications in Kashmir Valley, taking the death toll in the pandemic to 4524 in J&K—2197 in Jammu and 2327 in Kashmir.

LG On AFSPA

tunnel and road projects in J&K.

He said it is an attempt to incite people. "We will take people on board," he said.

In his address earlier in the day to the first ever investment summit, the LG said attempt

to create hindrance will be dealt with.

"We will bring down the wall of hindrance (in the development journey of Jammu and Kashmir). We will take swift steps in this development journey," he said.

He, however, advised investors to take on board people of Jammu and Kashmir.

More Snow On

top and other adjoining areas, leading to the closure of the Bandipora-Gurez highway.

Reports of 2 inches snowfall were recorded in Kishtwar—Machial (2 inches), Ishtayari (3 inches) Marwah (3 inches) and Warwan (6 inches).

Reports from Kupwara said that Machil recorded 5 inches, Z Gali (7 inches) Firkantop (6 inches) and Sadna top (7 inches) while it was still snowing.

"As expected, light snow/rain occurred at many places in both J&K and Ladakh," a meteorological department official said.

Regarding the forecast, he said, weather will remain generally cloudy in both J&K and Ladakh with chances of light snow at some places, mainly over higher reaches during the next 24 hours. "There's no forecast of any major snowfall till the end of December."

He said from tomorrow, "appreciable" rise in day temperature and fall in mercury during night. "There would be warmer days and colder nights till the approach of next Western Disturbance," he added.

Meanwhile Srinagar recorded a low of 2.2°C against last night's minus 1.8°C.

Kashmir is presently under the grip of 40-day long harshest period of winter, known locally as 'Chilleh Kalan, which started from December 21.

The mercury settled at minus 6.0°C against minus 7.5°C on the previous night at the ski resort of Gulmarg. Reports said Gulmarg received around 4 inches of fresh snowfall while tangmarg had 2 inches of fresh snowfall in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, the official said. It is normal for the famous resort.

Qazigund had a low of 1.2°C against minus 1.2°C on the previous night, he said.

Pahalgam, the famous resort in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 4.1°C against minus 3.8°C on the previous night.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 2.3°C against minus 0.3°C on the previous night, the official said.

Kupwara town in north Kashmir recorded a minimum of 1.5°C against minus 1.5°C on the previous night, the official said.

J&K Metro Rail

that investments in J&K will lead to unemployment. The minister was surprised over this "nonsensical argument" and wondered how someone can get away with such false logic.

He said there is a huge demand of real estate in the UT, there is a demand of up to 3 lakh units in housing and hotel segments.

The UT has the land and also demand for real estate development, he pointed out.

For ease of doing business, he stressed on the need for a single-window clearance for giving approval to real estate projects.

Puri said there will be impediments like

update of land records and it will take some time to realise the potential.

In his address to investors at the summit, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said investors have come here not to earn profits but to inculcate culture of business. He said the mindset of business culture has to change.

Allaying apprehensions that outside investments in Jammu and Kashmir will increase unemployment, he said in fact it will provide employment and ensure development.

Batting strongly for taking a cue from northern-eastern model of development, he said if the north-east can be built as the development role model of India, J&K can also move forward on this pattern of development journey.

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra also said metro projects will soon commence in J&K.

He said the UT government has agreed to create a separate cell to facilitate investments in J&K.

The development of real estate projects will usher change in J&K and open up lots of economic opportunities.

Hunt Begins

with the following credentials for the consideration of the Search Committee: A person possessing high level of academic credentials, administrative competence, integrity, morals and institutional commitment," reads a notification from University.

About the criteria, the notification reads that the candidate must be a distinguished academician, with a minimum of 10 years of experience as Professor in a University or ten years of experience in a reputed research and/ or academic administrative organization with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership.

"Not more than 65 years of age as on the closing date of receipt of applications as indicated in the advertisement," it said adding that appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a Search Committee constituted under the provisions of the Kashmir and Jammu Universities Act 1996(amended from time to time)," it adds.

J&K Health Index

Index Scores and rankings for states and UTs are generated to assess Incremental Performance (year-to-year progress) and Overall Performance (current performance).

It is pertinent to mention here that the report has also compiled the data on Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR), Under-five Mortality Rate (U5MR), Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) and Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) all over India.

Notably, the NITI Aayog report is an initiative by the Government of India under the GOI Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-5.

125 JK Policemen

47 constables were killed in militancy related incidents in J&K since 2017. Highest number of policemen were killed in 2018 at 46, figures suggest.

"The slain also include 24 SPOs and five followers," data reveals. As per the year-wise break-up, in 2017, 32 policemen were killed,

in 2018, 46 policemen were killed and in 2019, 11 policemen were killed. "In 2020, 16 policemen were killed while in year 21, 20 policemen were killed," the figures reveal.

August 29 of 2018 saw the deadliest attack when four policemen were killed in a militant attack. The policemen had gone to an automobile workshop near Arham fruit mandi in Shopian district to repair their vehicle but they were ambushed by the militants. Earlier in January 2018, four policemen were killed in an IED attack in Sopore area of Baramulla district.

The year 2021 also saw a deadliest attack on police when militants attacked an Armed Police battalion vehicle at Zewan on December 14 killing three policemen and leaving 11 others injured. The month also saw killing of two policemen in northern district of Bandipora on December 11 and also the killing of ASI Muhammad Ashraf in Bijbehara attack on December 23—(KNO)

Grenade Attack

reports said, there was no loss of life or property.

Soon after the attack, police and CRPF cordoned off the area and launched a manhunt to nab the attackers.

On Sunday, two policemen were injured when militants hurled a grenade at a police party in the neighboring Pulwama district.

2 Jaish 'Associates'

input, a police spokesperson said Monday. He said incriminating materials of JeM were recovered from their possession.

Preliminary investigations, the police spokesperson said, revealed that the arrested duo were in touch with JeM commanders & were involved in providing logistics, shelter as well as transportation of arms, ammunition and explosive materials to the militants JeM to strengthen "terror networks" operating across district Budgam.

"Accordingly, a case under relevant sections of law stands already registered at Police Station Litter and further investigation is under process," he added.

2 Technicians Hurt

Saleem Khan, 30, son of Ghulam Nabi Khan resident of Kandli Bagh Baramulla suffered facial injuries in the incident.

Both the injured were taken to a Srinagar hospital for treatment.

According to the Principal, GMC the oxygen plant is functioning normally.

Mortar Shell

Squad was immediately pressed into service, the official said. He further said that the shell was later defused in river Tawi bed.

Fire Damages

They said that fire tenders rushed to spot and with the help of locals and police it was doused, however, the hotel building suffered massive damage in the incident.

The cause of the fire is being ascertained and a case in this regard has been registered, a police official told a local news agency KNT.

Man Booked For Using Fake Certificate For Govt Job

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Crime Branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police on Monday booked a man in Kishtwar district for allegedly getting a government job on a fake certificate, officials said.

A criminal case was registered against Shamsher Singh of Pad-dar and others for managing to get a daily wage job in the forest division of Kishtwar by way of production of fake school leaving-cum-date of birth certificate, they said.

The crime branch had received written communication from the chief conservator of forests, Jammu, along with the allied documents of conservator of forests Chenab circle in Doda, regarding a complaint filed by one Bodh Raj of Kishtwar, wherein it was alleged that the suspect had managed to get school leaving certificates from two different schools depicting

two different dates of birth, the officials said.

The suspect fraudulently managed his engagement as a daily wage in the forest department through the fake certificate, they said.

The matter was also enquired through a committee constituted by the divisional forest officer (DFO) Kishtwar, which substantiated the allegations leveled against the suspect, the officials said.

The accused in connivance with others had intentionally and deliberately prepared fake and forged school leaving certificates for taking illegal benefit, thereby causing wrongful loss to the government exchequer and wrongful gain to himself, they said.

In view of omissions and commissions on the part of suspect Shamsher Singh, a formal case was registered for in-depth investigation, the officials said.

RTO Baramulla Earns Rs 26.50 Cr Revenue In 9 Months

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Regional Transport Office in North Kashmir's Baramulla district has generated a whopping Rs 26.50 Core revenue in the 9 months of current year. This revenue is far greater than what previous officers generated in the district since 2017.

Official record reveals that within just 9 months ARTO Baramulla Mubashir Bashir Bhat generated a sum of Rs 26.50 crore. Besides generating revenue, the process of obtaining a driving license has been made easier and so for 52,00 driving licenses have been delivered at the door steps of the aspirants.

The official record shows that the then ARTOs Baramulla in 2017 had generated a meager Rs 9 crore as revenue which declined in 2018 by Rs one crore. In 2019, Rs 10 crore was generated while in 2020, the generated revenue was substantial Rs 23 crore.

ARTO Baramulla Mubashir Bashir Bhat said there is a room for improvement and day by day things are being made easier for

the people.

"We started road trials in different divisions of the district and now people don't have to visit the main office to obtain the driving licenses. Besides, changes were made in rules that had become in a way redundant. Instead of creating impediments and bottlenecks during test drive trials, we lay thrust on skills of the drivers. There is no fun in denying a license to a person who crosses 30 kilometers in his own vehicle to reach the trial point for the 'try', he said.

Mubashir Bashir Bhat further said that for the first time under Rule 15 of Motor Vehicles Act, road trials were started for the benefit of the people. "We empowered 74 Community Service Centres across Baramulla district for the people. In the first 9 months, we renewed 1879 old driving licenses and issued international driving permits to six persons from the district," he said and appealed to all to obtain driving licenses legally instead of falling for touts that run illegal businesses. (KNT)

THDCIL Offered 2 Hydro Projects In Arunachal

RISHIKESH: The Government of India and State Government of Arunachal Pradesh have offered 2 Mega Hydro Projects to THDC in the State of Arunachal Pradesh for implementation.

These Hydro Projects are viz. 1200 MW Kalai-II and Demwe(Lower) 1750 MW in Lohit Basin of Arunachal Pradesh, a spokesperson said. He said these projects have been offered as a part of Basin wise Indication of Projects in North Eastern Region as overall development initiative of the State of Arunachal Pradesh.

"It is to mention that successfully commissioning and operating of Tehri HPP (1000MW) since 2006-07 and Koteshwar HEP (400MW) by THDC since 2011-12 was instrumental in offering of the above large hydro projects. THDC is one of the premier hydro power generators in the country and has attained very rich experience in Hydro Power Generation sector in the State of Uttarakhand," he said.

According to the THDC spokesperson, R.K Vishnoi CMD, thanked the Ministry of Power, Government of India and Government of Arunachal Pradesh and said that very soon THDCIL is going to open office establishment in Arunachal Pradesh to expedite the above mandate.

Dr Riyaz Farooq Named Principal GDC Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The government of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday appointed Dr Riyaz Farooq as Principal Government Dental College Srinagar.

According to an order issued by additional chief secretary H&ME department, Vivek Bhargava,

Dr Riyaz has been appointed as principal GDC Srinagar.

"Sanction is hereby accorded to the appointment of Dr Riyaz Farooq, Professor & Head, Department of Conservative/Operative Dentistry, Government Dental College, Srinagar, as Principal Government Dental College Srinagar," reads the order.



AN ELDERLY WOMAN waits on a wooden bridge for a boat to take her home in the interiors of Dal Lake

Pic: Abid Bhat/KO

Kathua Rape-Murder Case

Parents Of Victim Anguished As Two Convicts Walk Out On Bail

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The parents of an eight-year-old nomad girl, who was brutally raped and murdered in Kathua district of Jammu, are anguished that while their appeal for enhancement of sentence against six people remains unheard, two convicts were released on bail in the case described by a court as a "devilish and monstrous crime".

Mohammed Yusuf, who had adopted the eight-year-old girl, and Mohammed Akhtar, her biological father, said they had heard that two culprits -- former sub-inspector Anand Dutta and head constable Tilak Raj -- had been released on bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which suspended the rest of their sentences pending an appeal.

"I am surprised that two accused have been left on bail. Our appeal for enhancement of sentence is still pending while their appeal has been addressed. I wonder whether poor people like us will ever be heard.

"I hope the Supreme Court looks into the matter and takes some action as no one is hearing our petition," Akhtar told PTI.

Yusuf claims that efforts were being made to dilute the case to the extent that all the culprits were out. "When the accused are out on bail, I fear that one day, I will be booked under some frivolous charge and thrown into jail. They are very powerful people," he said.

"Already rumours have started doing the rounds that the case was going to be re-investigated by the CBI and all the accused will be out on bail," Yusuf alleged.

The case triggered a nationwide outrage when the eight-year-old girl was found murdered on January 17, 2018. After initial hiccups, the case was handed over to the crime branch on January 27 of the same year which unravelled the conspiracy behind the heinous

crime where the little girl was kidnapped and brutally raped for four days before being killed in a barbaric manner.

The Supreme Court, had in 2018, directed the case to be shifted out of Jammu and Kashmir and ordered the sessions court in Pathankot to hear it on a daily basis.

Sanji Ram, the mastermind and caretaker of the 'devasthanam' (temple) where the crime took place in January 2018, Deepak Khajuria, a special police officer, and Parvesh Kumar, a civilian, were sentenced to life imprisonment till their last breath for the ghastly crime, while three policemen, Dutta, Raj and SPO Suriender Kumar, were awarded five years' imprisonment for destroying evidence in June 2019.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court, earlier this month, suspended the remaining sentences of Dutta and Raj, pending hearing on their appeals against the verdict.

Justices Tejinder Singh Dhindsa and Vinod S Bhardwaj said in separate orders that both Dutta and Raj have been on parole for 11 months and nine months respectively.

Senior advocate R S Cheema, appearing for the Jammu and Kashmir government, and advocate Manbir Basra had objected to the suspension of the sentence, saying the accused could tamper with evidence and create a law and order situation.

However, in a near-identical order in both the petitions, the division bench ruled out the apprehension of Cheema about the possibility of a breach of peace, saying it "seems misconceived in as much as the applicant has availed of parole" during the period of his custody.

The sentences of the two convicts were suspended, and they were released on bail under provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Both Akhtar and Yusuf had

approached the high court in 2019 for enhancing the sentences of all the six accused besides challenging the sessions court's order of releasing Sanji Ram's son Vishal.

"There have been some hearings but because of the COVID-19 pandemic, everything is delayed," Basra said.

A 15-page charge sheet filed in April 2018 said the eight-year-old girl was kidnapped on January 10 that year and was raped in captivity in a small village temple, exclusively manned by Ram, after keeping her sedated for four days. She was later bludgeoned to death, it said.

The Crime Branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police had filed the charge sheet against eight people, including a juvenile. The trial against the juvenile is yet to begin as his petition on determining his age is to be heard by the Supreme Court.

Tejwinder Singh, district and sessions judge of Pathankot, termed the crime "devilish and monstrous", and said it was committed in the most "shameful, inhumane and barbaric manner" for which "poetic justice" needs to be done to its perpetrators.

"The circumstantial evidence led by the prosecution is definite which unerringly points out towards the guilt of the accused. The circumstances taken cumulatively from a chain so complete that there is no escape from the conclusion that within all human probability that the crime was committed by the accused and none else.

"The circumstantial evidence is complete in itself and is incapable of explanation of any other hypothesis that the guilt of the accused and such evidence is consistent with the guilt of the accused," the judge said, adding that the circumstantial evidence led by the prosecution has to be given "due weightage in the case".

Admin Warns Against Illegal Extraction Of Minerals In Shopian

SHOPIAN: The authorities here on Monday warned tough action against the people who illegally extract minerals including sand and bajri from nallahs across the district

The District Magistrate (DM), Shopian, Sachin Kumar Vaishya on Monday chaired a meeting to devise a strategy for effective enforcement of measures to check the menace of illegal extraction of minerals in the district, an official spokesperson said. The meeting, he said, discussed various preventive measures to control and curb the illegal extraction of minerals including sand and bajri from nallahs across the district.

On the occasion, he said, the DM stated that in view of complaints being received by the Administration against illegal material extraction in the district, the Administration is going to act tough against the violators.

He directed the concerned officers to ensure that no illegal mineral extraction activities are carried out in the district and stressed for Zero tolerance and said that coordinated efforts are required to curb the menace of illegal extraction of minerals in the district.

The DM gave directions to Police and other concerned departments to give full cooperation and support to the Geology and Mining department

in controlling illegal extraction of minerals from nallahs and stressed for inter-departmental coordination to curb this menace forever.

He said that field work by all stakeholders is necessary to make preventive measures much more successful.

He also said that the developmental works should not suffer and in this regard the extraction of legal mining shall be allowed after proper permission from the authorities.

The DM stressed for proper checking at all vulnerable sites to curb and stop the illegal mining.

He directed SDM, Zainapora to monitor and ensure that no illegal extraction takes place anywhere and that the concerned Tehsildars, Police and other concerned officers are informed well before the legal extraction of mining.

He added that the need of the hour is to monitor the process strictly and bring the violators under book to stop the illegal mining.

The department of Geology and Mining was directed to ensure cent percent control over illegal extraction of minerals from the nallahs as the DMO is regulating authority and the whole responsibility lies upon him.

SDM, Zainapora, Tehsildars and District Mineral Officer besides other concerned Officers were present in the meeting.

MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT

107 Incidents Reported This Year In Central Kashmir

Agencies

SRINAGAR: At least 107 incidents of man-animal conflict were reported in Central Kashmir this year, informed DFO Wild Life Warden on Monday.

Wild Life Warden, Central, Altaf Hussain while giving information to news agency Kashmir News Trust said that 43 incidents of man-animal conflict were reported in Srinagar alone followed by 39 in Ganderbal and 25 in Khrew.

He said 21 persons sustained

injuries in wild animal attacks, mostly from bears. "Two persons were injured in Srinagar, 17 in Ganderbal and two suffered injuries in Khrew," Altaf Hussain said.

He said one person lost his life in 107 incidents.

"Budgam district is excluded as it is the domain of wetland authorities. Srinagar, Ganderbal and Khrew ranges fall in our jurisdiction where till November 20 this year, 107 incidents of man-animal conflict were reported," he informed. (KNT)

First Model Common Service Centre Unveiled In Budgam

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Shahbaz Ahmed Mirza on Monday inaugurated a first of its kind model Common Service Centre (CSC) in Kashmir at Panchayat Halqa Rawatpora in Chattergam area.

This CSC is the second of its type model centre after similar one inaugurated earlier in Jammu.

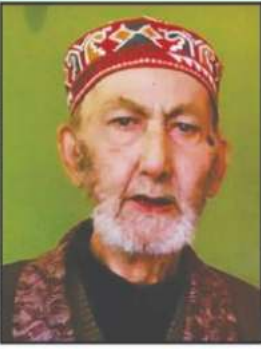
The model centre is equipped with latest facilities including laptops, desktops, printers including PVC and other internet connection to serve number of digital services to the general public.

Speaking on the occasion, DC said that the locals can avail almost all digital services including PAN card, e-SHRAM, Aadhar, Golden cards under Ayushman

Bharat, Passport, Election card Voter ID services, cash withdrawal and cash deposits, insurance schemes and other government sponsored schemes at the centre.

He stressed on the robust functioning of the centre and urged PRI members to aware people about the services they can avail at the centre. He instructed concerned to make best use of the facility and ensure prompt and shall-free services are provided to the general public.

On the occasion, PRI members including Sarpanch, President of local Auqaf committee and other respected called upon the DC and raised their issues and demands including fencing for panchayat ghar, improvement in electricity and other supplies in the area.



Sad Demise

With profound grief and sorrow, I inform the sad demise of our father Ghulam Nabi Bijli (Tatha) S/o Late Mohd Subhan Bijli, 27- Balgarden at present Batmaloo who passed away for heavenly abode on **27/12/2021** (Monday) after a brief illness. May Allah grant him highest place in Jannah.

Tatha you will be always alive in our hearts and memories.

GRIEF STRICKEN:
DR Rehana Bijli (K.A.S)
 DY. Director Department of information J& K Jammu.

SA vs IND 1st Test

2nd Day's Play Between India & South Africa Washed Out



Press Trust of India

CENTURION: The second day's play in the opening Test between India and South Africa here on Monday had to be called off without a ball being bowled due to heavy and persistent rain since morning.

What started as a drizzle this morning became a steady downpour in the afternoon.

Twice, the rain stopped and umpires decided on inspection but on both occasions just before they were to step out, heavens opened up once again.

At the end of the opening day's

play, India were strongly placed at 272 for three in 90 overs.

KL Rahul was going strong at 122 not out off 248 balls, during which he hit 17 boundaries and one six. Giving him company at the other end was Ajinkya Rahane, on 40 off 81 balls, with the help of eight hits to the fence.

Opener Mayank Agarwal made 60 off 123 deliveries before being dismissed by Lungi Ngidi.

Skipper Virat Kohli made 35 off 94 balls.

Ngidi (3/45) picked up all the three Indian wickets to fall on the first day of the match.

Right Way To Go: Shastri Backs Split Captaincy



Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: Former India coach Ravi Shastri has supported the splitting of captaincy in the red and white ball formats, saying it is the right way to go.

While Virat Kohli remains the Test skipper, one of the finest white-ball exponents and star opener, Rohit Sharma has been appointed as the T20 and ODI captain.

"I think it's the right way to go. This could be a blessing in disguise for Virat, and for Rohit, because I don't think in this era if the bubble life exists for another year or so, one guy can handle all, that is not easy at all," Shastri, himself a former India all-rounder, said on Star Sports show 'BOLD & BRAVE: THE SHASTRI WAY'.

Kohli, during his pre-departure press conference ahead of the tour of South Africa, said that he was never asked to stay

on as T20 skipper when he made his intent clear on relinquishing the post. Shastri, who has served Indian cricket in various capacities, also said he wanted to establish Rohit as an opener.

"It was very clear in my mind that I wanted to do it. I thought if I can't get the best out of him as a batsman then I am a failure as a coach because there is too much talent there," said Shastri. Meanwhile, the 59-year-old, who has played 80 Tests, also spoke about his relationship with Kohli, who was also the ODI and T20 skipper when Shastri was the head coach for a considerable amount of time.

"We're both pretty aggressive, we want to play to win. We realized very quickly that to win you need to take 20 wickets, deciding to play aggressive and fearless cricket. "It meant at times you would lose games but once you got one across the line, then it's infectious," said Shastri.

Real Kashmir FC Kick Off I-League Campaign With Win

Defeat Aizawl FC 3-2 thanks to 2 goals from Brazilian forward Adan

Press Trust of India

KOLKATA: Tiago Adan and Mason Robertson found themselves on target as a determined Real Kashmir eked out a thrilling 3-2 win over Aizawl FC in their first game of the I-League 2021/22 season on Monday.

While Tiago scored a brace in the match, Robertson scored the crucial third goal for the Snow Leopards in the second half. Aizawl FC did well to lead in possession stats, and remained in the contest till the final whistle.

Ayush Chhetri got the first shot of the match away in the 7th minute of play after he received a pass from a corner. But his long-range hit went wide off the target.

Two minutes later, Real Kashmir received a corner of their own and Surchandra Singh sent the ball straight into the box, which was headed in to the back of the net by striker Tiago Adan to give the Snow Leopards a 1-0 lead in the 9th minute.

Aizawl FC continued to enjoy the possession as the first half progressed but could create very little chances.

Aizawl FC received their second corner in the 29th minute, but the long-range shot from skipper R Malsawmtluanga



went awry and the opportunity was missed.

Nearly 10 minutes later, Aizawl FC received their third corner, and this time, Lalhakima Ralte latched on to the cross with a direct header and scored the equaliser in the 38th minute to make it 1-1.

Unfortunately for Aizawl FC, Real Kashmir's Tiago restored the lead in the additional minutes of the first half. A corner from Surchandra reached Mason, but his shot was parried away by the goalkeeper Lalmuansanga to Tiago, who latched on the rebound and struck it in to make it 2-1 as the first half came to a close.

The second half started with Aizawl continuing to keep the possession and searching for the equaliser.

In the 66th minute, Robertson got the third goal for Real Kashmir as he managed to get a header on the ball on a cross by Thoi Singh from the left flank. The ball went into the net and Real Kashmir went 3-1 up.

Just when it looked like Real Kashmir would run away with the win, a twist came in the 85th minute with Ramhlunchunga scoring a goal with a shot from outside the box to reduce the deficit.

Tiago Adnan, who was the star performer for Real Kashmir, was stretched off with three minutes remaining in the match.

Five additional minutes were added to the game and Real Kashmir comfortably defended the incessant attacks from Aizawl FC in the injury time.

U19 ASIA CUP

India Beat Afghanistan By 4 Wickets To Enter Semi-Final

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: A match-winning 65-run seventh wicket stand between Raj Bawa and Kaushal Tambe ensured a fighting four-wicket victory for India over a gritty Afghanistan as they entered the semi-final of the U-19 Asia Cup tournament here on Monday.

Bawa (43 not out) and Tambe (35 not out) joined forced when India were in trouble at 197 for six but they kept calm to take the 'Boys in Blue' to their required 260-run target with 10 balls to spare.

This was after in-form opener Harnoor Pannu (65) and his partner Angkrish Raghuvanshi (35) added 104 for the opening stand. However, the middle order caved in with skipper Yash Dull (26) and Nishant Sindhu (19) failing to convert starts. It was left to Bawa and Tambe to take the team home.

With this win, India were placed second in the group behind Pakistan team, which won all its matches.

India will face the winners between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, who are pitted against each other in the last group league encounter.

With India finishing second,



they would meet the topper of the other group.

It was a game where India returned to winning ways.

Put into bat at the ICC Academy Oval 2 here, Afghanistan skipper Suliman Safi's patient 73 coupled with a blistering unbeaten 86 off 68 balls by Ijaz Ahmad Ahmadzai propelled Afghanistan to respectable 259/4.

Chasing 260, Harnoor, who hit nine boundaries and Angkrish were off to a flyer as India raced to 44 for no loss in six overs.

It was raining boundaries at the ground, with the two openers hammering the Afghan attack with utmost ease.

India was cruising at 74/0 after 12 overs. However, Raghuvanshi was trapped in the front

by left-arm unorthodox spinner Noor Ahmad (4/43) as he broke the 104-run opening stand.

India slipped to 116/3, as Afghanistan removed Harnoor and Shaik Rasheed (6) cheaply. Then skipper Dhull and Sindhu tried to take the game deep, but Khaleel Khaleel pegged back India by removing Sindhu with India reeling at 162/4.

Then Noor Ahmad got his third, after Ishaq stumped Dhull in the 36th over, as India lost half its side for 183. Noor then trapped Aaradhya Yadav (12) to leave India teetering at 197/6.

Bawa and Tambe had an enormous task at hand but they forged a match-winning stand to take their side to the last four stage with Tambe fittingly finishing the game with a boundary.

ASHES 3RD TEST

England In Big Trouble Amid Virus Scare



Agencies

MELBOURNE: England was hit by Covid-19 dramas within its support staff on Monday before its batsmen sustained another top-order collapse at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as Australia moved within sight of a series-clinching victory in the Ashes.

Before play even began on Monday, Cricket Australia called for calm after a Covid-19 scare involving England's support staff resulted in a 30-minute delay to the start of the second day of play in the third Test.

Australia were bowled out for 267 as the home side grabbed a first-innings advantage of 82 runs, before England struggled to 31-4 in its second innings at stumps on Monday.

England seamer James Anderson gave a masterful display, claiming the key wickets of Marcus Harris (76) and Steve Smith (16) in his tally of 4-33 off 23 overs.

But England's batters were soon under attack again. Mitchell Starc (2-11) dismissed Zak Crawley, caught behind for 5, and Dawid Malan, leg before without scoring, in consecutive

deliveries.

Debutant Scott Boland (2-1) delighted his home crowd of 42,626 roaring fans by removing opener Haseeb Hameed for 7 and Jack Leach without scoring in the penultimate over of the day.

With Ben Stokes and Joe Root at the crease, England had lost four wickets after just 12 overs and still required another 51 runs to make Australia bat again.

England's all-time leading wicket-taker, James Anderson, said the tourists were "pretty pleased" to bowl Australia out for 267.

"We knew that last 12 overs were going to be pretty tough with the new ball. But even so, to lose four wickets was really disappointing," Anderson said. Australia captain Pat Cummins was unable to play in the second Test after becoming a close contact of a Covid-19 case.

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, England's tours of South Africa and Sri Lanka were abandoned mid-tour due to Covid concerns.

Australia lead the five-match series 2-0, which means England need to win all three remaining matches to regain the Ashes.

No Need To Relocate Remaining Ashes Tests: ACA CEO



Agencies

MELBOURNE: Former England captain Michael Vaughan's call to Cricket Australia (CA) to relocate the remaining two Ashes Tests to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) in the wake of the evolving COVID-19 situation in the country has elicited a strong response from Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) CEO Todd Greenberg, who has said there is no need to change the schedule.

The fourth Test is scheduled at the Sydney Cricket Ground, while the fifth and final Ashes game is in Bellerive Oval (Hobart), and Vaughan opined that to minimise the risk to players of the two sides, their support staff and families, the remaining two games should also be played at the MCG. The MCG is currently hosting the Boxing Day Test.

On Monday, four people in the English camp -- two support staff and two of their family members -- tested COVID-positi-

tive, causing a scare in the team and all the members of the touring party had to undergo Rapid Antigen Tests before the start of Day 2 proceedings. Play also was delayed by half an hour.

Responding to Vaughan's comments, Greenberg said the ACA was "confident and hopeful" that the final two games would go ahead as scheduled.

"I don't think (there's any need to change the schedule)," Greenberg told SEN Test Cricket on Monday.

"Talking with Cricket Australia, we're confident we can continue to do what we're scheduled to do and the protocols aren't that much different in Sydney than (what we're doing) in Melbourne anyway. Cricket is a big ecosystem, there's lots of venues, stakeholders and fans so making changes on the run isn't easy to do.

"We are confident and hopeful that we will continue the summer as planned," Greenberg added. (IANS)

EPL: City Win 6-3 At Leicester, Spurs Rout Palace 3-0

Agencies

LONDON: Manchester City isn't short of goals in the title defense, and the champions found a way to make it unintentionally even more entertaining against Leicester.

A 6-3 victory — featuring a double from Raheem Sterling — put City six points in front at the top of the Premier League at the halfway point on Sunday, with second-place Liverpool having a game in hand.

It was a compelling second half on Boxing Day just when it looked like Leicester was completely out of sight after City had scored four times in the opening 25 minutes.

Three goals in 10 second-half minutes offered Leicester a glimmer of hope of a comeback that was snuffed out by Aymeric Laporte's header and Sterling's second.

It secured a ninth successive victory for Pep Guardiola's side, with the last three seeing 17 goals scored by City.

And while title rivals

Chelsea and Liverpool are busy with two-legged League Cup semifinals at the start of January, the end of City's defense of that title does give some recovery time after the packed Christmas and New Year schedule.

There was little doubting City's fitness levels from the outset against a Leicester team that was too easily picked apart.

It was a high ball over the top from Fernando Torres that reached Kevin De Bruyne, who had the space to maneuver the ball around Leicester territory before scoring the opener after five minutes.

A foul by Youri Tielemans on Laporte secured a penalty that was converted by Riyad Mahrez.

Bernardo Silva's ability to coast past Leicester players created the opening for the third, with João Cancelo squaring for Ilkay Gundogan to net from close range.

Leicester was struggling to contain the threat and conceded another penalty when Tielemans tripped Sterling, who struck into



the top corner in the 25th.

A game that seemed over was brought to life again 10 minutes into the second half when Laporte's slip allowed Leicester to launch a counter-attack that ended with Kelechi Iheanacho setting up James Maddison.

The midfielder turned provider in the 59th when he muscled his way past City players before slipping the ball through to Iheanacho whose through-ball set up Ademola Lookman.

The third Leicester goal came in the 65th after Maddison's shot was tipped onto the crossbar by Ederson and the ball dropped for Iheanacho to send over the line to re-

duce City's lead to 4-3.

It took only four minutes for Laporte to restore City's two-goal lead as the eighth different scorer in the match.

Sterling had the final say with a close-range strike after Ruben Dias headed down a corner.

Moura, Kane, Son give Tottenham 3-0 win over Crystal Palace

Lucas Moura scored one and set up goals for Harry Kane and Son Heung-min as Tottenham beat Crystal Palace 3-0 in the Premier League on Sunday.

Palace had failed to get the game called off after a coronavirus outbreak in the squad and manager Patrick Vieira was absent

after testing positive himself.

Wilfried Zaha compounded Palace's woes with a needless red card in the 37th when the south London club was already trailing 2-0.

Tottenham remains unbeaten in six league games under Antonio Conte and is six points behind fourth-place Arsenal with three games in hand.

A decisive five-minute period swung the game in Tottenham's favor with two quickfire goals and Palace then reduced to 10 men.

Kane scored in the 32nd minute from Moura's center after he was set free by Emerson Royal.

The Brazilian pair combined again two minutes later when Emerson's cross was headed in from close range by Moura.

Palace's capitulation was complete as, 11 minutes after picking up a first yellow card, Zaha foolishly flung his arms at Davinson Sanchez and was sent off by referee Jon Moss.

Tottenham had to wait until the 74th before ex-

tending its lead further. Moura again found space down the right and his cross was turned home at the near post by Son for his fourth goal in five games.

CONDOLENCE MESSAGE



With profound grief and pain, Fairdeal Motors Pvt Ltd family condoles the demise of Sajad Ahmad Trambo (Branch Manager) Ganderbal who lost his life due to sudden heart attack.

"May his soul rest in peace"

We pray for the solace of the departed soul and express deepest sympathies with family of the deceased during this difficult time.



From: Team Fairdeal Motors & Workshop Pvt Ltd.