



P7 STATE

GOVT ASKS PDD TO STICK TO POWER CURTAILMENT SCHEDULE

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday directed the power development department (PDD) to adhere to the schedule already announced ensuring no unscheduled power

P5

GREAT AT TENNIS, BAD AT SCIENCE

What's worse than an anti-vaxxer in a pandemic? An anti-vaccine star athlete. That paragon of physical health, cloaked in a cape of defiance, declares to the world by example that you don't have to follow public health policy after all — as long as you win.



P8 SPORTS

I AM FIT, SAYS KOHLI AHEAD OF 3RD TEST AGAINST SA

India captain Virat Kohli on Monday said he will return to the team for the series-deciding third Test against South Africa here as he is "absolutely fit"...



Quote!

The world is changed by your example not by your opinion

— Paulo Coelho

NEWS DIGEST

Missing Youth Found Dead

SRINAGAR: A missing youth was found dead on Monday in Khanabal area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district. Sajad Ahmad Dar of Mirgund Khanabal was found hanging from a tree by the residents in Gurdgund Seepin area on Monday afternoon, a day after he went missing, reports said. Dar had left his home on Sunday evening but failed to **More on P6**

Electric Shock Injures PDD Worker

SRINAGAR: A lineman in the power development department (PDD) on Monday suffered injuries after receiving an electric shock in south Kashmir's Anantnag district. Lineman Abdul Hamid Mir was repairing an electricity transformer at Adhal Vailoo village of the district when he received an **More on P6**

Fire Damages Jamia Masjid In Bandipora

SRINAGAR: A Jamia Masjid in north Kashmir's Bandipora district was damaged in an overnight fire incident, reports said Monday. Fire broke out on the second floor of Jamia Masjid Noor in Malangam village of the district around 1:00 am Monday, causing extensive damage to it, reports said. **More on P6**

Ladakh Logs 89 New Covid Cases

Leh: Ladakh has reported 89 fresh Covid cases, taking the tally to 22,561, while active cases in the union territory has gone up to 340, officials said on Sunday. The Union Territory has recorded 221 Covid-related deaths — 163 in Leh district and 58 in Kargil district — since the outbreak of **More on P6**

Coronavirus Surges In J&K

706 More People Catch Infection, Four Die

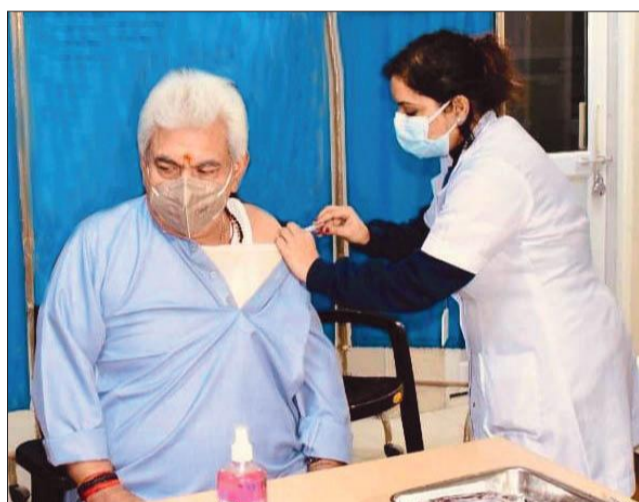
Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases continue to show an alarming spike in Jammu and Kashmir as over 700 people in the Union Territory on Monday tested positive for the virus while four more people lost their lives to the deadly infection during the last 24 hours.

According to the officials, Kashmir Valley registered 361 fresh cases of coronavirus while the remaining 345 were detected in the various districts of Jammu division, taking the total number of people infected since the outbreak of pandemic in J&K to 345358.

In the Valley, officials said, Srinagar **More on P6**

LG Launches Booster Dose For Frontline Workers



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Monday launched the precaution dose vaccination for healthcare & frontline workers and those over 60 years of age with co-morbidities.

The drive for precaution dose was launched for Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory from district hospital, Gandhi Nagar here where the LG, his advisor Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, JMC Mayor, Chander Mohan Gupta, besides health care workers received the vaccine shot, an official spokesperson said Monday. **More on P6**

GMC Srinagar Cancels Winter Vacation

The Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar on Monday cancelled winter vacations to its faculty as well as those working in associated hospitals in view of the "sudden upsurge of covid-19/omicron cases. "In view of sudden upsurge of covid-19 and omicron cases, the winter vacation-2022 of faculty members stands cancelled and all the faculty members in this institution on vacation shall resume their duties on January 11 2022 (Tuesday) without fail," reads an order by **More on P6**

Director SKIMS Pitches For Booster Dose

Director Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Prof. Parvaiz A Koul Monday emphasized upon all healthcare/frontline workers to get the 'precautionary dose'. "Koul said that it is to ensure that the work force stays adequately protected for the coming days of imminent surge of Covid-19 and Omicron threat which has already hit many states in India," said a circular issued by SKIMS. He also impressed upon all the Heads of Departments /Sectional **More on P6**

MOREOVER, 209 MORE COVID-19 PATIENTS have recovered and been discharged from various hospitals including 91 from Jammu Division and 118 from Kashmir Division."

Police Officer Nabbed While Taking Bribe

Agencies



SRINAGAR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Monday arrested an Assistant Sub-inspector of police on allegations of taking bribe, official sources said.

They said that an ACB team apprehended one Mohammad Sultan presently posted in Police Station Kupwara while taking bribe from Kupwara market.

"The alleged cop said to be a resident of Dardpora Kralpora was apprehended on the spot," they said.

Meanwhile, a senior police officer also confirmed about the arrest of the cop. **More on P6**

Little Girl Turns Reporter To Show Bad Roads; Video Goes Viral

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: An undated video of a little girl from Kashmir who turned reporter to show the bad condition of lanes and bylanes has created a storm on the internet, with netizens complimenting her for her coverage.

Dressed in a pink jacket, the girl, whose name as well as the place where she was shooting the video could not be immediately confirmed, is complaining that guests cannot come to her place because of the bad road condition. "Itni gandi road hai ki mehman bhi nahi aa sakte (the road is so bad that guests also cannot come)," the girl said while directing her camera person, whom she refers to as "mom", to show the pot holes.

The Kashmir valley recently



witnessed heavy snow and rain.

Narrating how mud and rains have made the condition worse, the girl walked on a road showing the potholes in a 2.08 minute video apparently shot on a mobile phone.

The girl showed how people were also dumping garbage on roads **More on P6**

KPC Calls For Release Of Journalist

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Press Club on Monday asked the authorities to release and revoke charges against journalist Sajad Gul and allow him to pursue his media education and career in journalism.

In a statement issued here on Monday, the KPC said that it was deeply disturbed by the arrest of Gul who, apart from contributing news reports for an online portal, is pursuing Masters in Convergent Journalism from the Central University of Kashmir.

Also, the journalists' body requested the authorities to immediately drop the alleged charges against Gul for his journalistic work and said the FIR against him is purely aimed at criminalising the reportage and journalistic work in Kashmir.

Gul was picked up from home in **More on P6**

Kashmir Valley In Grip Of Freezing Cold

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Gulmarg tourist resort in north Kashmir continued to reel under extreme cold as the minimum temperature stayed below the freezing point at most places in the valley, officials said on Monday.

The resort recorded a low of minus 10 degrees Celsius for the second consecutive night, MET officials said.

They said Pahalgam in south Kashmir Anantnag district recorded a low of

minus 2.6 degrees Celsius.

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, was the one of the two places to record minimum temperature above freezing point as the minimum settled at 0.2 degrees Celsius on Sunday night, the officials said.

They said Qazigund recorded a minimum of 0.6 degrees Celsius, while the nearby south Kashmir town of Kokernag recorded a low of minus 1.7 degrees Celsius. **More on P6**

Banihal Highway Reopens After 3 Days

The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was reopened for traffic on Monday after remaining closed for the past three days owing to heavy snowfall and multiple landslides in Ramban district, officials said. Senior Superintendent of Police, traffic-national highway, Shabir Ahmad Malik said the traffic from both the twin capital cities was **More on P6**

Rs 2000 Cr Loan to Fund Languishing Projects

Agencies

SRINAGAR: In a significant move, the Jammu & Kashmir Infrastructure Development Corporation (JKIDFC), a special purpose vehicle (SPV) set-up for completion of languishing/unfunded projects in J&K, has decided to raise a loan of Rs 2000 crore to be availed in the remaining months of the ongoing financial year and the first quarter of the next fiscal.

To begin with, the JKIDFC has invited has invited expression of interest (EOI) from financial institutions for providing a long-term loan of Rs 2000 crore for funding languishing projects in the Union Territory.

"Sealed expression of interest

(EOI) is being invited from reputed RBI regulated banking and financial institutions/companies of the country, to submit written proposals for advancing loans of Rs. 2,000 crore to be availed during remaining months of the current financial year 2021-22 and 1st quarter of next financial year (2022-23)," reads the EOI.

The EOI was issued by the Corporation on January 3, 2022. It is worthwhile to mention that the JKIDFC was set-up in 2018 by the J&K administration for funding unfinished/languishing infrastructure projects in the State.

The State Administrative Council (SAC) authorized it to raise a loan not exceeding Rs 8000 crores from various financial institutions **More on P6**

Why Fruit from Iran Has Become 'Apple of Discord' In Kashmir?

Auqib Javed

Decrying the fact how a bad apple spoils the whole barrel, the Kashmiri growers have upped their ante against what they call the free flow of the "tax-free" Iranian apples "eating" their market share.

Kashmir valley's apple traders and growers have expressed their resentment over this "illegal trade" via Afghanistan—resulting in huge losses.

Asia's second largest fruit Mandi in North Kashmir's Sopore has already witnessed some protests over the "permitted passage of Iranian apples".

The disgruntled apple-growers argue that the Iranian apples in large quantity have flooded Indian markets and threatened to consume Kashmir valley's



market share in the coming years unless the imported fruit is taxed.

It may be noted that both

Afghanistan and India are members of the South Asian Free Trade Zone (SAFTA) and hence they do not impose duty on

imports from each other.

However, Iran is not part of SAFTA but apple crop from there reach India via Afghanistan, bypassing import duties.

The "illegal trade" is also hitting the growers of Uttarakhand, Himachal and Nagaland.

Apple is the mover and shaker of Kashmir's Rs 10,000 crore (annually) strong Horticulture sector—employing about 2.3 million people.

Amid the growing apprehensions, resentment and concern, Kashmir Observer spoke to President, Sopore Fruit Mandi, Fayaz Ahmad Malik aka Kakaji, to gauge the grouse of the growers.

Why're Kashmiri apple growers suddenly up in arms against Iranian apple?

It's a genuine concern about our livelihood. At Sopore, we recently protested against the import of Iranian apple that have flooded Indian markets.

Their free flow has created a low demand for our apple cart.

But how has the import affected the prices of apple?

Well, a Kashmiri apple box in this season would be sold at Rs1000-1200, but the rate has gone down. We've no option but to sell it at Rs 600 or 700 now.

The price for the high quality apple in cold storages has also fallen.

It's happening because the Iranian apple is imported to India via Afghanistan, and from Dubai via Gujarat in ships. As a result our produce remains unsold. **More on P6**



To place an advertisement

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از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار کریری ا کلترہ با اجلاس نائب تحصیلدار کریری ا کلترہ
درخواست منجانب تارقی احمد خان و محمد انور خان اولادان غلام نبی خان ساکن شیخ پورہ ہرادر
حصول RBA سرٹیفیکٹ مکتوب
اشعار ہرادر آگاہی ہر خاص و عام
معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں درخواست ساکن دفتر ہذا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اس نسبت پٹواری
حلقہ سے رپورٹ بشمول مطلوبہ نقوالا رت ریکارڈ طلب کے لئے جس سے کہا جاتا ہے کہ ساکن
ساکنہ موضع شیخ پورہ میں رہائش پذیر ہے۔ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے
1 غلام نبی خان ولدانی خان سربرہ 52 زمینداری
2 رفیقہ بیگم زوجہ 57 گھریلو کام
3 تارقی احمد خان پسر 27 زیر تعلیم
3 نبیر احمد خان پسر 24 زیر تعلیم
محمد انور خان پسر 23 زیر تعلیم
شامید بیگم زوجہ تارقی احمد 30 گھریلو کام
اسکے علاوہ کوئی بھی افراد کہیں بتلایا گیا ہے سرٹیفیکٹ زیر بحث اجراء
کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا شخص کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا اعتراض یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم
کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی اعتراض یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔
fko تحصیلدار

از نیابت منٹن با اجلاس ایجوکیشنل سٹریٹ ڈیوڈل
مضمون درخواست منجانب: عمر افضل پرمجھ افضل میر ساکنہ کرکس تحصیل منٹن ضلع ہٹ ناگ
بغرض حصول :- RBA سرٹیفیکٹ
اشعار ہرادر آگاہی ہر خاص و عام۔
معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل نے ایک درخواست بغرض حصول بیک دارڈار یا سرٹیفیکٹ دفتر ہذا
میں پیش کیا ہے جو کہ زیر کاروائی ہے۔ پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل کا
کنڈیشنل افراد ہیں۔
نمبر شمار نام ولدیت پیشہ عمر آمدنی
01 محمد افضل ولد محمد شہباز میر سرکاری ملازم 50 سال LPC
02 ارشدہ زوجہ افضل میر گھریلو کام 45 سال
03 عمر افضل پرمجھ افضل میر زیر تعلیم 19 سال
04 شادیز افضل پرمجھ افضل میر زیر تعلیم 17 سال
05 ساحلہ افضل دختر محمد افضل میر زیر تعلیم 22 سال
اسکے علاوہ اور کوئی افراد کہیں میں موجود نہیں ہے۔ لہذا سرٹیفیکٹ مذکورہ حاصل کرنے میں اگر کسی کو کوئی
اعتراض ہوگا وہ ایک ہفتہ کے دوران دفتر میں اپنا اعتراض پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد
کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔
(تحریر صدر ایجوکیشنل سٹریٹ ڈیوڈل)
RNA

**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL
TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR
NOTICE**

Where a application for transfer of ownership has been recieved from one. Shri : Bashir Ahmad Dar S/o: Haji Gh Ahmad Dar R/o: Nasrullapora Budgam (Transferor) of LMV Endeavour Vehicle bearing registration number JK04E - 0010. Chasis number 26669 Engine no. 26669 Model 2010. In favour of Shri.. Zee-shan Hussain Rather S/o. Ali Mohammad Rather R/o Dandoosa Budgam (Tranferee)

Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed transfer of ownership shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper .

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.5460
Dated 04/01/2022

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

mcb

**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL
TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR
NOTICE**

Where a application for transfer of ownership has been recieved from one. Shri : Syed Idrees Amin Qadri S/o: Syed Mohammad Qadri R/o: Ompora Budgam (Transferor) of LMV Swift. Vehicle bearing registration number JK04B-7860. Chasis number 37944 Engine no. 235011 Model 2012. In favour of Shri.. Sajad Hussain Khan S/o. Mohammad Jaffar Khan R/o Dadina Budgam (Tranferee) as well as HPA cancellation with M/S J & K Bank B/U Budgam. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed transfer of ownership shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper .

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.5458
Dated 04/01/2022

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

mcb

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LOST PASSPORT

Passport No. J3558832 belonging to Sahil Zahoor was lost in srinagar on 9-01-2022. If found pls contact Sahil Zahoor on the below mentioned contact details. The passport owner will apply for a reissue of passport as well, if any one has any objection towards the same, he/she is requested to come forth within a week's time following which no objections will be entertained

Sahil Zahoor R/o 90ft Soura Illahi Bagh
+91 70063 65711 tko

**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL
TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR
NOTICE**

Whereas an application has been recieved from one. Shri : Ishfaq Ahmad Mir S/o: Abdul Samad Mir R/o: Banderpora Kremshore Budgam owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04B 6373 for cancellation of hire purchase agreement with M/S J&K Bank B/U Kremshore. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed cancellation of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper .

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.5483-84
Dated 07-01-2022

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

mcb

**The Jammu and Kashmir
Board Of School Education
Sub Office Pulwama**

The candidate whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost hi/her Original Marks Card of Secondary School Examination (Class 10th)/Higher Secondary Examination Part- I (Class 11th)/ Higher Secondary Examination Part-II (Class 12th) issued by the Board of School Education with followng particulars.

Name Zubair Mohi-ud-Din
Parentage: Gh Mohi-ud-Din Najar
Class: 10th Roll No: 749211 Session A/R Year 2012

Now the candidate has applied for Duplicate Marks Card. Anybody (if) having any objection may file the some before undersigned with (07) Seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides, the original marks card is teated as cancelled.

Sd/ Assistant Secretary
Sub Office Pulwama

m.pul

**The Jammu And Kashmir State
Board Of School Education
BRANCH OFFICE SOPORE**

The candidates whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost the original Migration Certificate of 12 th under Below mentioned particulars
Name: Junaid Ul Islam
Father's Name: Fairoze Ahamd Malik
Mother's Name: Jawahira Begum
Roll No: 3175314 Year 2018 session Annual 2018

Now the candidate has applied for Duplicate Migration Certificate . Anybody (if) having any objection may file the some before undersigned with (07) Seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides, the original marks card is teated as cancelled.

Sd/ Assistant Secretary
Sub Office Sopore

RB-C

**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL
TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR
NOTICE**

Whereas an application has been recieved from one. Shri : Sajad Ahmad Sofi S/o: Ghulam Mohammad Sofi R/o: Gulnaz Panzan owner of vehicle bearing Registration No: JK04E 6169 for Endorsement of hire purchase agreement with M/S Shri Ram Transport Finance Ltd B/U Sringar . Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed Endorsement of hire purchase Agreement shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office ARTO Budgam within a period of 12 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper .

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.5477
Dated 06-01-2022

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

mcb

**THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR BOARD
OF SCHOOL EDUCATION
NEW CAMPUS, BEMINA, SRINAGAR.
ATTENTION PLEASE.**

The candidate whose photograph is above reports that he /she has lost his/ her qualification certificate/s having the following description:-
ROLL NO 148201
CLASS 10TH
YEAR & SESSION DEC-1993
REGISTRATION NO 6212-1HA-IX-92
NAME RAIS AHMAD HAFIZ
FATHERS NAME ABDUL MAJID HAFIZ
MOTHERS NAME SARA BEGUM
DATE OF BIRTH 26-10-1977
RESIDENCE KHABAZAR JANGLATMANDI ANANTNAG

Now the candidate has, applied for issuance of DUPLICATE QUALIFICATION CERTIFICATE/S. Before the case will be processed under rules, if somebody have any kind of objection in this regard he/ she shall approach the office of the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publishing of this notice after expiring date no objection shall be entertained.
(Besides, the losted "QUALIFICATION CERTIFICATE", bearing Serial No /s 370824is /are be treated as "CANCELLED").
No: - F (Certs-I-DQC) B/KD/18
Dated: - 10-01-2022

Sd/= Assistant Secretary
Certificates, KD

RNA

Study Finds Gender Stereotypes In Computer Science, Engineering Begin By Age Six

Agencies

A new study has found that the perception that boys are more interested than girls in computer science and engineering starts as young as age six. The research has been published in the 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Journal'. That may be one reason why girls and women are underrepresented in these STEM career fields, reported study co-author Allison Master, assistant professor at the University Of Houston College Of Education. "Gender-interest stereotypes that say 'STEM is for boys' begin in grade school, and by the time they reach high school, many girls have made their decision not to pursue degrees in computer science and engineering because they feel they don't belong," said Master. Researchers at UH and the University of Washington surveyed nearly 2,500 students in first through 12th grade from diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds. The results of those studies were combined with laboratory experiments to provide important insights into how stereotypes impacted children's motivation. More children believed girls had less interest than boys in key STEM fields. Specifically, 63 per cent of the students believed girls were less interested in engineering than boys were, while 9 per cent believed girls were more interested in the subject. Regarding computer science, 51 per cent



thought girls had less interest while 14 per cent thought girls had more interest than boys. These interest patterns played out in the job market. According to United States Census Bureau statistics, while women made up nearly half of the workforce, they accounted for only 25 per cent of computer scientists and 15 per cent of engineers. Researchers said educators, parents, and policymakers can help close these gender gaps by introducing girls to high-quality computer science and engineering activities in elementary school before stereotype endorsements take root. They also suggested educators who wish to promote girls' interest and engagement in STEM should consider using inclusive programs designed to encourage girls' sense of belonging in STEM.

The laboratory experiments gave children a choice between computer science activities. Fewer girls (only 35 per cent) chose a computer science activity they believed boys were more interested in, compared to the 65 per cent of girls who chose an activity for which they believed boys and girls were equally interested. "It's time for all stakeholders to be united in sending the message that girls can enjoy STEM just as much as boys do, which will help draw them into STEM activities," added Master, who directs UH's Identity and Academic Motivation (IAM) Lab. Co-authors on the study are Andrew N. Meltzoff of the University of Washington, Seattle's Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences; and Sapna Cheryan, University of Washington, Seattle's Department of Psychology.

'Re-Enrolling To Complete Bachelor's Degree May Increase Annual Income'

Agencies

According to a new study by Kansas State University, returning to college to earn a bachelor's degree leads to both an immediate increase in annual income after graduation and an increase in annual income growth each year after graduation. The research has been published in the 'Economics of Education Review Journal'. Amanda Gaulke, assistant professor of economics in the College of Arts and Sciences, found that students who returned to college and finish a bachelor's degree earn on average USD 4,294 more immediately after graduation and experienced extra income growth of USD 1,121 per year, on average. "No matter how I looked at the data, those who returned and finished a bachelor's degree see an economically meaningful increase in income after degree completion," Gaulke said. "The average age at graduation for this sample is 27, so they certainly have a lot of working years left to experience improved labour market

outcomes," she added. While current economic literature mainly focuses on the traditional college student -- those who graduate high school, go to college, earn a degree, and then start a career -- Gaulke wanted to determine if returning to finish a bachelor's degree resulted in improved economic outcomes compared to both those who never returned and those who returned to complete a bachelor's degree but dropped out again. "This information is important for people who are wondering if they should return to school," Gaulke said. "When thinking in terms of weighing costs and benefits, it is important for those people to know that there are real economic benefits of going back and completing a bachelor's degree," she added. Gaulke's study also showed students who re-enroll and earn a degree are significantly more likely to be employed, work more weeks and work more full-time weeks each quarter. Additionally, those students who return but do not complete a degree also realised slight income gains.

Ultimately, businesses and the U.S. economy also benefit from having a trained workforce. "To maximize economic output, we have to use resources efficiently. If employees are not as productive or skilled because they are unable to make well-informed decisions about re-enrolling and completing their bachelor's degrees, this reduces worker productivity," Gaulke said. Gaulke said that another benefit of this study is that many institutions of higher education have concerns about enrollment numbers and are expanding their recruitment efforts beyond students coming straight from high school. Many private sector companies now offer services to help colleges and universities re-enroll students who left without completing their degrees. The results of this study suggested that colleges and universities that develop or implement policies to help students re-enroll and finish a bachelor's degree can potentially improve enrollment numbers and also help improve economic outcomes for these students as well.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION BARAMULLA. AUCTION NOTICE

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir UT, auction for 03 (Three) number poplar trees dry/semi dry on Sgr Baramulla NH Way Road in Km 50th L.H.S bearing survey number 01,02, and 03 shall be conducted by auction committee in premises of (R&B) Sub Division Baramulla on 13.01.2022 at 2.00 pm. The bidders have to deposit CDR for an amount of Rs.3000/-pledged to the Executive Engineer, (R&B) Division Baramulla in the Divisional Office on or before 12.01.2022 upto 4.00 pm. The General Conditions of auction are as under:-

- The base cost of the auction starts from Rs.1,27,506/- (Rupees One lac, Twenty Seven thousand Five hundred and Six) only.
- The intending authority has a right to reject any or all bids without assigning reason.
- Bidders need to visit the spot and assess the condition of auctioned trees in advance, no claim shall be accepted at the time of auction.
- Bidders need to check the condition of the auctioned trees before submitting the CDR as the CDRs once deposited are to be released only after participating in auction process. Any bidder who refuses to participate in the auction process his CDR will be forfeited.
- The successful bidder has to deposit 30% of bid amount (By cash) at the time of auctioning.
- The successful bidder need to cut and remove the trees within one week after issuance of allotment order.
- The successful bidder has to ensure that no untoward incident takes place during cutting of trees.
- The successful bidder need to carry out the trees only in presence of representative of (R&B) Department.
- The successful bidder has to ensure that the movement of traffic is not affected during loading/unloading of trees.
- The deposited amount in the shape of CDR shall be forfeited in case the bidders refuse to bid at the time of auction.

All other terms and conditions shall be same as in vogue in PWD.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
(R&B) Divn. Baramulla.

NO:- 12579-83
Dtd:- 10/01/2022.

DIPK-16454/21

Advisor Khan Visits Govt Hospitals To Review Covid Preparedness

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 10: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Farooq Khan on Monday visited various government hospitals in the Srinagar city to take stock of the Covid preparedness.

The hospitals he visited include Chest Disease Hospital Dalgate, SMHS hospital and SKIMS Medical College Hospital, Bemina.

During his visit to the hospitals, he reviewed the bed capacity and other facilities available to fight the Covid cases. He said that a proper mechanism should be kept readily available at all the hospitals in order to fight the rising number of Covid cases. He also visited various wards of the hospitals and reviewed the facilities available to the patients and directed the administration to provide quality treatment to the patients in all respects.

Underlining the importance of COVID-Appropriate Behaviour

(CAB) Advisor said that following proper COVID protocols should become a routine habit for people and said we should not resort to behaviour that facilitates transmission.

He directed the authorities to strictly enforce CAB at all places and said that violators should be dealt with strongly. He said that anybody found without mask should be highly penalised and said that announcements highlighting the need for CAB should be made on a regular basis.

He was informed by the hospital administration that they are ready to face any eventuality and have prepared a mechanism in case there is a spurt in the rising number of cases.

The Advisor was accompanied by Principal GMC Srinagar, Principal SKIMS Medical College Hospital, Bemina, Medical Superintendent, CD Hospital and other officers of Health and Medical Education Department.

8 Butchers Booked For Violating Sanitary & Hygienic Requirements

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 10: A joint team of Officers of various departments headed by Assistant Commissioner Food Safety Srinagar found 8 Butchers violating sanitary and hygienic requirements of Food Safety & Standards Act (FS&SA) during a dive here, besides, fine to the tune of Rs. 4500/- was also realized on spot for violation of Legal Metrological rules.

The special drive was conducted on the directions of Divisional Commissioner Kashmir to check quality of meat and hygiene of Butcher shops by a joint team comprising the Food Safety Officers, Assistant Veterinary Surgeons from

the department of Sheep Husbandry and the officers of legal Metrology.

It was given out that cases against 8 Butchers found violating sanitary and hygienic requirements of FS&SA shall be filed in the competent court within the shortest possible time.

The butchers were directed to use stainless steel utensils and blades and good quality chopping board for the processing of meat.

Commissioner Food and Drugs Administration J&K, Shakeel Ur Rehman has directed all Food business operators especially chicken sellers, butchers and Nanwais to maintain high standards of Hygiene otherwise action under FS&SA shall be initiated against them.

Power Woes Wanbal Residents Urge PDD To Install Additional Transformer

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The residents of Umer Colony, Wanbal on Monday appealed to Power Development Department (PDD) for installation of an additional transformer in the Colony due to the current one being insufficient for meeting the surge during the ongoing months of winter.

A delegation of the residents comprising around 17 households told Kashmir Observer on Monday that while the overall input of power remains low during winters, the flow dips sharply to 10 to 20 KVs especially for the houses who are located at the tail end of the colony and far away from the current transformer.

"We have been running from pillar to post to get the transformer installed, however, our pleas are falling on deaf ears," the residents said here.

"Subsequent to our efforts the Power Development Department (PDD) had approved/allotted an additional transformer for the residents living at the

tail end of our colony given the drop in voltage reaching 10-20 (incoming) from the last one and half a year, especially during winters. Even the areas of the hinterland border have more voltage than the tail end households of our colony which is in the heart of Srinagar," the residents added.

They also alleged that a few residents of the colony are continuing to sabotage their efforts to get the transformer installed.

"These opposing residents are of the opinion that the installation of the transformer would entail laying of High tension (HT) wire inside the colony which will be hazardous for residents. However, the logic behind this apprehension is not only baloney & illogical but also goes against government policy wherein installation of a transformer for every three households is now a technical requirement for preventing thefts, preventing T&D losses and rationing electricity equally to each and every household," the residents added.

COVID-19 Third wave

Admin intensifies CAB enforcement

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR:- On the directions of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, the District Administration Srinagar Monday conducted a massive Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB) enforcement drive to ensure that there is no violation of Covid guidelines to protect the people from the possible 3rd wave of deadly Corona virus.

In wake of recent surge in Covid-19 positive cases, the special CAB enforcement teams headed by respective Tehsildars of the Srinagar under the supervision of Sub Divisional Magistrate West, Akshay Labroo and Sub Divisional Magistrate East, Owais Mushtaq conducted surprise checks across the City to ensure implementation of all the guidelines issued by State Executive Committee (SEC) and District Disaster Management.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner, who is also the Chairman District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Srinagar has appealed to general public, traders and transporters to cooperate with District Disaster Management Authority Srinagar and strictly follow Covid-19 SOPs, guidelines and precautions to control the Covid-19 infection.

He urged people to visit nearest vaccination centers and get vaccinated at an earliest to defeat any possibility of Omicron, a new Covid-19 variant.

The DC directed the concerned officers to monitor adherence to SOPs by service providers and called for strict legal action against



Monitor adherence to SOPs by service providers and called for strict legal action against the violators of Covid SOPs.

the violators of Covid SOPs.

The DC has cautioned the people to remain careful in future regarding wearing of Masks besides adopting Covid-19 Appropriate Behavior to avoid contracting virus. He said strict adherence to SoPs is imperative to counter any possible third

wave of COVID-19 and protect all fellow citizens from the deadly disease.

Meanwhile, the District Administration is also making announcements regarding CAB and other Covid-19 related precautions through PAS mounted vehicles in Srinagar.

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No.: - RO/JKMPCL/Election/08

Date: - 10-01-2022

PRESS RELEASE

Elections to the Board Directors of JKMPCL have been concluded successfully on 8th of January 2022. Following members have been elected as Board Directors of JKMPCL: -

S. No.	Name of Members	Segments	Result	Divisions
1	Abdul Hamid Sofi S/O Abdul Gani Sofi R/O Arwah Budgam	Srinagar & Budgam	Elected unopposed	Kashmir
2	Imtiyaz Ahmad Bhat S/O Abdul Majeed Bhat R/O Khajapora Shopian	Pulwama & Shopian	Elected unopposed	
3	Ghulam Rasool Lone S/O Mohammed Jabar Lone R/O K-kalan Anantnag	Anantnag & Kulgam	Elected by contest	
4	Abdul Hameed Lone S/O Ghulam Rasool Lone R/O Kreshama Baramulla	Bandipora & Baramulla	Elected by contest	
5	Ranjit Singh S/O Major Singh R/O Chanjwan Jammu	Jammu (Akhnoor)	Elected unopposed	Jammu
6	Darshan Kumar S/O Kanshi Ram R/O Bedipur Jammu	Jammu (R. S. Pura)	Elected by contest	
7	Avtar Singh S/O Rangil Singh R/O Chak Kripalpur Jammu	Jammu (Khour)	Elected unopposed	
8	Sahib Singh S/O Bahadur Singh R/O Dollian Jattan Kathua	Kathua & Samba	Elected unopposed	

Place: - Srinagar

Date: - 10th January 2022

(Mushtaq Ahmad Malik)

Returning Officer

Deputy Registrar (HQ),

in the office of Addl. Registrar

Cooperative Societies, Srinagar

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- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
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- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
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- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
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- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



**HIJRI
CALENDAR**
07 Jumada al-Sani
1443

PRAYERS

FAJR	6: 08
ZUHR	12:37
ASR	4:01
Magrib	5:45
ISHA	7: 08

This Day In History

- 1055 - Theodora is crowned Empress of the Byzantine Empire.
- 1158 - Vladislav II of Bohemia becomes king
- 1599 - Jacob van Neck's fleet leaves Bantam, Java in modern day Indonesia with 1 million pounds of pepper and cloves and a further half a ship full of nutmeg, mace and cinnamon
- 1693 - Mt Etna in Sicily erupts with estimated 74 magnitude, most power Italian earthquake, killing around about 60,000
- 1787 - Titania & Oberon, moons of Uranus, discovered by William Herschel.
- 1838 - 1st public demonstration of telegraph message sent using dots & dashes at Speedwell Ironworks, Morristown, New Jersey by Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail.
- 1861 - Mexico City captured by Juarez (Lib) in War of Reform
- 1861 - Alabama secedes from the Union (US Civil War)
- 1865 - Battle of Beverly, West Virginia, Confederate forces attack Union post.
- 1879 - Zulu war against British colonial rule in South Africa begins.
- 1923 - French & Belgian troops occupy Ruhr to collect reparations.
- 1924 - A republic is proclaimed in Greece; King George II is deposed and Eleutherios Venizelos is named Prime Minister of the Greek National Assembly.
- 1942 - Japan conquers Kuala Lumpur, Malaya.
- 1943 - US & Britain relinquish extraterritorial rights in China.
- 1959 - Hanif Mohammad completes 499 runs for Karachi, then 1st class cricket world record.
- 1964 - Panama ends diplomatic relations with US.
- 1972 - East-Pakistan becomes independent state of Bangladesh

From KO Archives

Nazla bar uzwe-za'eef

Drastic 11-hr power cut in valley ordered

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR - The power development department (PDD) today revised its curtailment schedule to deliver yet another rude shock to the valley consumers by reducing availability of the direly essential commodity to a little over 12 hours per twenty-four hours. Depending upon the whims and caprices of its underlings to enforce irritating unscheduled cuts, power supply would now be something like the proverbial 'once in a blue moon'.

According to the revised schedule effective from today, load shedding will be enforced during mornings, evenings, day and night. During a week, there will be three evening cuts of 4.5 hours each from 5.30 to 10; four night cuts of 6.5 hours each from 11 p.m. to 5.30 a.m. and two morning cuts of two hours each from 5.30 to 7.30. A day cut of five hours will be enforced in two groups all of seven days. The total duration of the 'night-mare' aggregates to 78 and a half hours, or 11 hours and 13 minutes a day.

Power supply to essential services like hospitals, water supply, telecommunications, besides the security force camps and VIP installations, as usual, will be unaffected. According to the chief engineer, maintenance and rural electrification, Qazi Muhammad Syed, supply to the organised industrial units at Khonmoh, Rangreth, Zainakot, Baghe-Ali Mardan Khan and other places would be maintained.

Sources told Kashmir Observer the recent northern grid failure which had plunged several northern states into darkness, disrupted essential supplies and services and, on top of it all, embarrassed the centre, served as an immediate provocation for the drastic measure. The northern grid authorities attributed the failure to over-drawal of energy by all the states in the northern region.

Obviously, as the Persian saying, Nazla bar uzwe-za'eef (wrath on the weak), goes, the axe fell on Jammu and Kashmir. On Thursday evening, the northern grid authorities directed the deputy general manager of the Power Grid Corporation of India based at Wagoora grid station to switch off the 220-KV Wagoora, Zainakot transmission line to stop valley's power imports to the extent of 240 megawatts. Similar steps are understood to have been taken in Jammu region.

Following the massive brakes from northern grid, sources said, the valley's imports have been more than halved, from 400 mw to a mere 160 mw. With the generation of around 40 mw from local power stations - Uri, lower Jhelum, Upper Sindh, phase I and II, and Ganderbal - the total availability adds up to 200 mw against the peak requirement of 700 to 750 mw.

Caught in a desperate situation, the PDD authorities are going to come down heavily against defaulters. The chief engineer asked the consumers to clear their arrears to avoid disconnection. Power supply to Zainakot-based central public peptor Hindustan Machine Tools was cut off today. Supply to various flour mills and units owing more than Rs one lakh in tariff is being snapped early. Qazi said power supply to various central and state government departments in the red would also be stopped immediately.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 11 January, 2001)

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OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

5 State Elections

The Election Commission of India on Saturday announced the dates for Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab and Manipur. The polls will be scheduled over seven phases between February 10 and March 7, and will conclude with the counting of votes on March 10. The political parties and candidates have been advised to conduct their campaign as much as possible virtually to ensure strict compliance of Covid safety norms. However, the significance polls goes beyond how they are conducted. The elections are not just crucial for the ruling BJP in UP, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur but also for its challenger Samajwadi party in UP and the ruling Congress in Punjab. More so in Uttar Pradesh where polls are of profound significance not only for the future of the state but also for India as a whole.

The polls in the country's most populous state are a high-stakes contest between an invincible BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the opposition comprising Samajwadi Party, Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party and Congress. At stake is not only the mundane question of who rules UP over the next five years but where India is headed as a country. A win for a party other than BJP will go some way to arrest the disarray among secular forces and give them confidence to stand up to Modi. But a victory for BJP will yet again reinforce the political dominance of Modi and further power his political cult. A Modi victory will be an emphatic endorsement of his seven years of rule.

After winning India in a landslide victory in 2019 general election, the BJP's battle to recast the idea of India has now come down to state after state. BJP as a party has now got complete sway over India. True, the spectacular loss in Bengal went a long way to hold back the rampaging march of the saffron across the country. But a UP victory could change that. And also the victory in Punjab and the three other states Manipur, Goa and Uttarakhand. State victories will give the Hindutva party the necessary political to further remould India in its own image.

So UP elections matter a lot. So do the Punjab polls. An unlikely loss in the UP on the pattern of that in New Delhi, and Bengal could be a big setback for the BJP in the run up to 2024 national polls. But as things stand, the odds seem to be stacked in favour of the BJP.

OTHER OPINION

Growth concerns: On economic forecasts amid Omicron surge

At that pace, India's economy would regain its pre-eminent as the world's fastest growing major economy. A key pillar of this growth assumption is the upbeat outlook for net tax receipts on products, which the NSO sees expanding by a robust 16.2%, after shrinking by 18.4% in the preceding period. Gross Value Added, which aggregates output in the various sectors of the economy, is projected to grow by 8.6% year-on-year on the back of a continued healthy showing by the farm sector and a heartening double digit (12.5%) rebound in manufacturing. However, when compared with the pre-pandemic FY2020's GVA, the projected output of 135.2 lakh-crore is barely 2.5 lakh-crore, or 1.9%, higher, clearly pointing to the fact that the economy has a fair distance to travel before it can regain the growth momentum that is crucially required to create more jobs and help narrow the widening income inequality. Tellingly, the NSO's forecast, which relies on varied data spanning the first six to eight months of the current fiscal, has not factored in the impact of the ongoing Omicron-induced surge in COVID-19 cases. After all, it is anyone's guess as to how much of a blow the current wave may deal to already fragile supply chains, consumption demand and contact-intensive services. In fact, private final consumption expenditure, which two years ago accounted for close to 60% of GDP, is still struggling to recover from the crushing compression it suffered in the first full year of the pandemic, when it shrank 9.1%. While the NSO posits consumer spending to grow by 6.9% this fiscal, the assumed figure is still a sizeable 2.9% shy of the FY2020 level. Equally significantly, the omnibus services category that spans trade, hotels, transport, communication and broadcasting and makes up a fifth of the GVA is estimated to post a mere 11.9% expansion after shrinking by 18.2% last fiscal. As a result, even without factoring in the impact of a third wave, this vital services sector would still be lagging behind its pre-pandemic output by 8.5%. With the Union Budget barely a few weeks away, policymakers have a clear choice to make: introduce consumption and investment supportive measures, even if it means loosening the fiscal purse strings, or risk seeing the growth momentum faltering for want of a fair wind.

The Hindu

The Unheeding Unvaccinated

Shoaib Mohammad

Of the many oddities that the last two years in a global pandemic have shown us, perhaps the strangest has been the phenomena of fake vaccine certificates. In a world of pretense and pomp, a shoddy vaccine certificate is too useless to flaunt. Perhaps, people realise that as covid-19 vaccines are becoming readily available, it may soon require one to be fully vaccinated to access public life. What most with fake certificates fail to realise is that this incompetent proof will not give them any protection against a deadly virus which has altered our reality for two years now.

What explains this reluctance towards being vaccinated? At what point does one think that something that is meant as a token of protection for one's personal health is unnecessary or dangerous? The reasons for this hesitance may have stemmed from various factors: the general mistrust of people with the government, the fear of dangerous side-effects, our dogmatic insistence on fate, 'yi khudae yech tee gachi' or the skepticism regarding the unusually fast produced vaccines by corporate big pharmaceutical companies.

The last two years saw an intense struggle against the COVID-19 pandemic. After the first reported case in December 2019, apart from the employed first step actions of quarantining and social preventive measures, the question of a viable vaccine for the virus was raised. As the virus ravaged through the world, a hastened and imperative struggle of vaccine development was underway via unprecedented collaboration in the multinational pharmaceutical industry and between governments. This resulted in production of many clinically tested vaccines which awaited approval from the healthcare agencies of the respective countries. Russia, China, UK, US and UAE became the first countries to approve some of the COVID-19 vaccines which then were followed by other countries across the world. This pace of the production of viable vaccines was a feat that was never achieved before in the history of making vaccines.

India began its vaccination process in January 2021, approving three vaccines: the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine (Covishield), Covaxin, by Bharat Biotech and recently, Sputnik V. The vaccination program was rolled out throughout India, including J&K in a three phase plan with the setting up of CoWin, a digital registration platform linked with the Union Government's National Health portal. Despite the government's attempts to ensure vaccinations, people were more hesitant than thrilled about government-issued vaccines. This hesitance is genuine as one has every right to be sure about what they consume. However, this hesitance is often allied with wilful ignorance, which can put one's own and other lives in danger.

Although the general hesitance of the public towards vaccines has reduced as the number of vaccinated people is increasing, there still exists an anti-vax sentiment.

Recently, SKIMS's newly appointed Director, Dr Parvaiz Koul urged people to get vaccinated. Reaching out to the young and connected, he shared encouraging details from the world regarding the efficacy of vaccines as well. It said that according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, severe illness and death in vaccinated people was extremely rare. With such promising results, it is quite an anomaly that some people are consciously choosing to stay unvaccinated.

This hesitance may have also stemmed from initial details about some side effects that were overstated. This was especially true of the vaccine first available in India i.e., the Oxford AstraZeneca Vaccine. Even as much was done to dispel the myths and fears associated, some still seem unconvinced. This hesitance may also be attributed to many rumours related to the adverse effects of vaccines on one's fertility. While the government along with the civil society tried their best to counter this misinformation, there are some who refuse to give them a benefit of doubt.

However, as we know now, more and more each day, Vaccines work. Although they do not



Over the past few months, most covid-19 related deaths have been in unvaccinated people. In November 2021, it was reported that around 67% of people who died of covid-19 were unvaccinated

always prevent one from getting infected, they reduce one's chances of getting severely ill. According to WHO the efficacy rate of AstraZeneca (Covishield), which is available in India is 76% which means that one is 76% less likely to catch the virus than the unvaccinated one and even if the vaccinated one catches the virus, it is highly unlikely that the person will need to be hospitalized. The numbers and statistics favour vaccines and the side-effects reported, though at times grave, are very minute in number. The best course of action, according to experts of the field, is to take the vaccines as its benefits far out-weigh its risks.

What most with fake certificates fail to realise is that this incompetent proof will not give them any protection against a deadly virus which has altered our reality for two years now. What explains this reluctance towards being vaccinated? At what point does one think that something that is meant as a token of protection for one's personal health is unnecessary or dangerous?

An insistence on not taking vaccines can have devastating results. The pandemic is a public health issue and there's little scope for uninformed choices that may prove detrimental to an entire population. Vaccinating oneself is not a personal choice but a collective social responsibility as the unvaccinated are more prone to spreading the virus than the vaccinated one. A number of unvaccinated people can take up

healthcare resources that may direly be needed by other patients. This was reflected recently in a New York Times essay by an emergency room physician, Rob Davidson, at a hospital in Michigan, US, where the hospital had been at near full capacity with the majority of patients being COVID-19 infected and 98% of those needing acute critical care were unvaccinated.

Ever since mass vaccination, the rate of deaths from COVID-19 has significantly dropped. According to a research conducted by the WHO and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in Solna, Sweden, 470,000 deaths in people aged 60 and up were prevented across 33 European nations. Another study from epidemiologists at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, estimated that 279,000 lives had been saved by late June by the vaccination drive in the United States.

The mutating nature of the virus is often seen as problematic. However the vaccines so far have been reported to work well against the alpha, beta, gamma and delta variants. As their effectiveness towards the Omicron variant remains to be seen, there are multiple new vaccines on the way, currently being tested clinically.

It may not have touched every body but this pandemic has definitely scarred every soul. Everyone has lost someone to COVID-19, be it a relative, neighbour, a grandparent or a friend. In the wake of this pandemic we did not have that which we have now, the availability of a vaccine.

A fake vaccine certificate or the choice of not getting vaccinated is not only irresponsible towards one's own self but is also severely irresponsible towards our society. Even if we are healthy adults who choose to not get vaccinated, our choice of staying unvaccinated may not only cost others their lives but may also impede the pace of the end of the pandemic.

In Jammu and Kashmir, cases are increasing. However, health care professionals are also of the view that this may be the last worst stretch of the pandemic - the beginning of an end of the pandemic. Therefore, it becomes imperative for us to understand that tackling covid is not for one's personal security only. It is your one chance at saving the world. Perhaps, staying safe for yourself and the world will be that one chance for each one of us to be the heroes that we wanted to be.

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

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Winter Isn't Everyone's Favourite

Nearly half of the population of the country lives below the poverty line and faces numerous daily challenges.

As the mercury drops and the numbing cold shrouds the atmosphere, many families might be enjoying the chilly weather while huddling around the fire, sipping on hot soup and eating dry fruits. It might be a period of celebration, romance, relaxation and recharge for the rich and well-off. It might be a season where they are able to rest and thrive on their savings, or feast on a high caloric diet without doing much. But for the underprivileged and the destitute, winter is a season of torment and agony. For those living below the poverty line, it is a time of anxiety and deprivation. While rich families enjoy the warmth, the music and the happiness, the screams of hungry children shivering in the cold echo from the shabby mud houses of the hapless. Nearly half of the population of the country lives below the poverty line and faces numerous daily challenges. The winter season multi-

plies their pain and anguish. Already malnourished and handicapped by severe financial constraints, these poor bread-earners cannot even afford warm clothes for their families. Instead they have to make do with covering their shabby huts with curtains and pieces of clothes that they salvage from the streets. Health complications including flu, asthma and other respiratory ailments cost them dear due to the dilapidated healthcare system. In many instances, the rain that accompanies the Siberian cold breeze destroys their only source of shelter as muddy roofs fail to stop the rain water from seeping inside their huts. Resultantly, they have no option but to spend the night in the rain. More worrying however is their source of livelihood, which is based on daily earnings and physical labour. It is a commonly observed practice that when it rains or when the weather becomes extremely cold, many workplaces do not operate at full capacity. This deprives manual labourers from their work who are therefore left with no option but to re-

turn home empty handed only to see in desperation the hunger-stricken, pale faces of their children.

Recently, while I was on my way from the marketplace in the evening at Doda City, I noticed a 14-year-old boy dressed in thin old clothes. He was shivering in the cold while walking on the sidewalk. I couldn't help but stop my bike and enquire where he was going and why he wasn't wearing any warm clothes. On hearing my voice, he hesitantly replied that since his father is a daily wageer and he himself works in a hotel as a waiter, it is rather difficult for them to afford food let alone shoes and clothes. His helplessness depicts the hardheartedness and pitiful nature of our society. Our social mindset is essentially anti-poor. This anti-poor ideology is hard-wired in our subconscious minds to such an extent that the poor become poorer and the rich even richer over time. This is because the poor don't have enough socio-economic and educational platforms to grow and thrive on. All their

life they remain entangled in a hectic struggle of trying to put food on the table. Their children follow suit and their underprivileged plight continues for generations. The rich, on the other hand, have enough educational and vocational sources to invest and multiply and thrive on. Their materialistic wants are satisfied at the cost of poor lives. The reality is that ceaseless greed and unflinching gluttony drives our society.

The shivering child I witnessed doesn't just signify the distressing plight of the poor; it also puts to dust all the pro-poor claims and falsified rhetoric that the successive governments have made over time. It is time that we as a society realise that these types of suffering are man-made and avoidable. We need to own up to the vulnerable and the destitute, and assist them in whatever capacity we can without harming their self-esteem and dignity.

Mool Raj
moolraj52@gmail.com

Lindsay Crouse

What's worse than an anti-vaxxer in a pandemic? An anti-vaccine star athlete. That paragon of physical health, cloaked in a cape of defiance, declares to the world by example that you don't have to follow public health policy after all — as long as you win.

Which brings us to the top-ranked male tennis player in the world, Novak Djokovic. The sport's most visible vaccine skeptic, at the start of the pandemic Djokovic said he "wouldn't want to be forced by someone to take a vaccine," and expressed curiosity about "how we can empower our metabolism to be in the best shape to defend against impostors like Covid-19." This week Djokovic obtained a medical exemption from tournament organizers for a visa to compete in the Australian Open without being vaccinated. He flew to Melbourne via Dubai.

Meanwhile, Australia is dealing with a serious Omicron surge. Victoria state, where the Open is held, recorded almost 22,000 new cases on Wednesday, when Djokovic arrived. It was the largest daily jump in cases of the pandemic.

After a 10-hour standoff at the airport, Australian border authorities denied Djokovic's visa. (His lawyers said he tested positive for the coronavirus in mid-December, meeting Australia's conditions for exemption.)

What's unfolding in Australia is a dramatic example of disputes we're seeing play out around the world, in sports and beyond, as institutions weigh public health guidelines against their own needs. Even as the coronavirus surges again, and so does public exhaustion with lockdowns and school closings, sports bodies are compelled to accommodate problematic athlete behavior. They need their biggest talents — and the ticket sales, broadcast viewership, advertising deals and attention that celebrities bring.

Athletes have more independent agency than ever, and via social media they have their own huge platforms to express their views directly to fans. This has enabled some athletes to become powerful advocates for social justice, and others to use their fame to advance more questionable positions. Lately, several have used their platforms to amplify anti-science beliefs

to an already mistrustful public.

The Djokovic saga is exposing a uncomfortable truth for sports institutions: They are only as good as their stars. And the stars are calling the shots.

It's an issue that has arisen in sports many times lately. Notably, Naomi Osaka defied the organizers of the French Open, declining to do post-match news conferences to protect her mental health. She paid for her choice, first in the requisite fines and ultimately by withdrawing altogether from the tournament, but many praised her for her stance. For Osaka, the power of her personal brand allowed her to safeguard her health. For anti-vaccine athletes, however, stardom can give them leeway to flout sensible public health precautions, and act as a champion for others who do the same.

"Confronted with this latest virus surge, both the N.B.A. and the N.F.L. have essentially waved the white flag," wrote Jemele Hill in The Atlantic last week, before the latest unvaccinated player controversy, explaining how leagues are giving in to fans' desires and letting unvaccinated players compete. She continued: "Now the leagues are choosing instead to cede to the forces of capitalism."

She's right. In the N.B.A., the Brooklyn Nets have capitulated and allowed Kyrie Irving, a seven-time All-Star, to play part time in away

games, the only ones he is legally permitted to play because of his decision to remain unvaccinated. (Players in indoor arenas in New York City must be vaccinated.) In the N.F.L., the Green Bay

“WORKPLACES AROUND THE WORLD ARE FILLED WITH DJOKOVICS, difficult but valued or essential employees who expect special accommodations in order to come to work — even when the accommodations they seek are grounded in anti-science views that might put their colleagues at risk.”

Packers starting quarterback Aaron Rodgers, who is also the league's current Most Valuable Player, is vocally anti-vaccine and allowed to play regardless. After he tested positive for the virus in November, Rodgers went on the Pat McAfee Show to explain his views to its audience of 1.6 million.

"I believe strongly in bodily autonomy and the ability to make choices for your body," Rodgers said, "not to have to acquiesce to some sort of

ited science. Many of these athletes' fans have rallied to express their support for the stars they identify with.

The conversation is as much about fairness as it is about public health. Why should a player get a free pass when other players, and the fans keeping them in business, have to be vaccinated and abide by travel restrictions? Workplaces around the world are filled with Djokovics, difficult but valued or essential employees who expect special accommodations in order to come to work — even when the accommodations they seek are grounded in anti-science views that might put their colleagues at risk.

When it comes to athletes, what they do in public health situations matters even more. Beyond the social influence that comes with their platforms, star athletes are symbols of good health, success and leadership — that's why they're sought after as the public face of performance apparel and shoe companies, breakfast cereals and countless other brands.

And that's why it's disappointing to see sports bodies fail to exert the one lever of control that they retain: whether or not athletes are allowed to compete.

The Australian Open has had reason to want to salvage this year's tournament, amid the grimness of another Covid surge. It has already lost Roger Federer, who is recovering from knee surgery. Naomi Osaka is planning to play, but neither Serena nor Venus Williams will attend, for the first time since 1997.

The Australian Border Force did what sports bodies are failing to do: say no. If athletes don't like restrictions imposed on the unvaccinated, they could just get a shot like millions of other people — a privilege that millions more are still waiting for.

Now Djokovic has appealed, and is being held in a hotel over the weekend in Australia. In this way he's no different than the rest of us: stuck in place, awaiting his fate.

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

Lindsay Crouse is a writer and producer in Opinion who writes on gender, ambition and power. The article was originally published by The New York Times

Great At Tennis, Bad At Science

OMICRON VARIANT

Why This Less Severe Covid-19 Variant Is Still Very Dangerous

FE Online

Just when global vaccination drives had begun giving people an edge over the deadly coronavirus pandemic, the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 has led to another global surge in COVID-19 cases. New waves of the pandemic have started to impact countries across the world, including the US, Australia, and many European countries, and India is no exception to this. In fact, experts have stated that the rise in the number of coronavirus cases is already pointing at the beginning of a third wave in the country, which is worrisome especially due to the situation India witnessed in 2021 during the Delta wave. What adds more to the worry is the fact that not much is known about the variant, even as early studies point towards it being much milder than its predecessor Delta.

The variant has caused a significant rise in

HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT TO MEAN THAT THE VARIANT is not of concern at all. The high transmissibility means that a large number of people are likely to be infected and while the infection is less severe, it could lead to hospitals being overburdened by patients who are either not immunised now, or are vulnerable due to comorbidities or suppressed immune systems



cases globally, with the US having reported a whopping 5.85 lakh cases on January 5 (7-day rolling average). Globally, the corresponding figure was at 18.95 lakh COVID cases, and both these figures were at record highs, according to a report in IE. Even India has been reporting over 1 lakh new cases daily for the past four days. However, unlike the Delta wave, the rise in number of cases has not led to a corresponding increase in hospitalisations and deaths.

Omicron was first detected in South Africa at the end of November, and since of its 32 spike protein mutations, many cause higher transmission and even evasion of the immune system, it quickly became a variant of concern. The fact that it spread across more than 100 countries in less than a month also

did not help.

In South Africa itself, though, while the number of cases increased and the country prepared to deal with the possible burden it would cause on its healthcare system, hospitalisations dropped.

A South African study in JAMA Network found that during the Delta wave of coronavirus, about 68% to 69% of the COVID patients visiting hospitals for an emergency needed to be admitted. This number, however, was at a significantly lower 41.3% in the Omicron wave, the report cited. Moreover, while in the Delta wave, 74% people needed oxygen therapy, this was at 17.6% for Omicron.

Apart from this, a study that analysed a large data set from the UK Health Security Agency was published in the BMJ. This study found

that COVID patients infected with Omicron have a 50% to 70% less chance of needing hospitalisation vis-a-vis those infected by Delta.

The data from South Africa and the UK has suggested that Omicron leads to an infection that is 66% to 80% less severe, the report cited lung disease expert and New Delhi-based CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology director Dr Anurag Agrawal as saying. The doctor added that the experience of South Africa has also assured experts that India, which has in the past already seen a high number of infections and also has a very high vaccine coverage, could fare better when it comes to Omicron. He further said, though, that this did not mean that Omicron was entirely harmless since it was still causing people to be admitted in ICUs.

Though India is witnessing a rapid increase in cases, doctors are saying that people are largely witnessing only mild symptoms like sore throat, fatigue, headache, bodyache and moderate fever. Moreover, according to Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain, 81% of the sequenced Omicron samples were at AIIMS Delhi, and here, no patient was found to have developed pneumonia as a result of COVID-19. In fact, no patient here needed oxygen therapy or ventilator support solely as a result of the SARS-CoV-2 infection, the report added. This is a sharp contrast to what the country witnessed in the Delta wave, and it also corroborates with multiple global studies released recently that stated that the Omicron variant did not, at least in early studies, seem to impact the lungs and primarily affects only the nose, throat and windpipe.

However, this is not to mean that the variant is not of concern at all. The high transmissibility means that a large number of people are likely to be infected and while the infection is less severe, it could lead to hospitals being overburdened by patients who are either not immunised now, or are vulnerable due to comorbidities or suppressed immune systems. Delta wave had caused numbers to spike much faster than the first wave and Omicron has been found to be 1.5 times to 2 times more transmissible than the Delta variant, at the least. Not only that but the variant is also more capable of causing breakthrough infections (infecting those who are fully vaccinated) and reinfections.

This means that the country is once again at a place where all COVID precautionary measures are to be adhered to in a more stringent manner and lockdowns, which are increasingly being imposed in many states, are likely to be more commonplace in the coming weeks.

No Complete Ban On Cannabis, Medical Use Allowed: Centre To Delhi HC

AGENCEIS

NEW DELHI: The use of cannabis is not completely banned in the country as its medical and scientific use is allowed under the law, the Centre has told the Delhi High Court which, on Monday refused to advance the date of hearing of the plea seeking to legalise its use on various grounds including medicinal purposes.

The bench headed by Justice Rajiv Shakher refused to allow the early hearing application by the petitioner Great Legalisation Movement India Trust which contended that there were reports to suggest that cannabinoids helped in countering the impact of COVID-19.

Looking at the board position, the application can't be entertained at this juncton. We are trying to do whatever is possible, the bench, also comprising Justice Talwant Singh told counsel for the petitioner, advocate Abhishek Avadhani.

The petition, which is listed for further hearing in March, has challenged provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act which prohibit the use of cannabis and has contended that the drug has

medicinal and industrial benefits.

The petitioner has sought directions to the central government to frame rules permitting and regulating use of cannabis, especially for medicinal purposes.

In its affidavit filed last year, the Centre urged the court to dismiss the petition with costs and claimed that it has adopted a balanced approach on cannabis by empowering the State governments to permit, control and regulate the cultivation of any cannabis plant, production, manufacture, possession, transport, import inter-state, export inter-state, sale, purchase, consumption or use of cannabis (excluding charas) for medical, scientific and industrial purposes .

The central government stated that the present legal framework regulating the usage of cannabis did not violate Articles 14 (right to equality), 19(1)(g) [freedom of trade], 21 (right to life or other fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

"There is no complete ban on cannabis under NDPS Act but can be used for medical, scientific, industrial, horticultural purposes by taking

requisite permissions from respective State Governments, the affidavit filed by Director, Narcotics Control, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance said.

The State governments are empowered to license the cultivation of cannabis for industrial and scientific purpose. On the similar lines, it may be inferred that the cultivation for industrial/ horticultural purposes, as provided in Section 14 of NDPS Act, can be considered by the State Government, it added.

While exercising this power, the State of Uttarakhand has allowed cultivation of hemp for industrial purposes and the hemp-based products are available in the market and also available online, the affidavit informed.

The Centre also submitted that cannabinoids are not a first-line treatment and cautioned against the huge risk of diversion of cannabis for non-medical use.

It highlighted that as per a survey by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, cannabis and opioids are the next commonly used substances in India, after alcohol and at the

national level, one in eleven cannabis users suffered from cannabis dependence.

In its response, the Centre further clarified that under the NDPS Act, there was a clear distinction between the various parts of cannabis plant, namely the fiber, flower and the seed and does not treat all of them and their derivative equally .

The seeds and leave when not accompanied by the tops have not been included in the definition of cannabis. The Bhang which is an edible preparation of cannabis is also not controlled under the NDPS Act, it said.

The petitioner has sought to declare as unconstitutional the provisions in the NDPS Act and Rules which prohibit and criminalise the use of cannabis and prescribe unreasonable restrictions with respect to activities related to it.

The petitioner trust, registered in Karnataka and in the forefront of the movement to decriminalise the use of cannabis, has claimed there is not a single document which shows that it was lethal to humans and emphasises the use of cannabis was legal in several other countries.

Hate Speech: Fresh Plea in SC Seeking to Ban 'Dharam Sansad'

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: A fresh petition was filed by the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind in the Supreme Court on Monday to ban anti-Muslim speeches and programmes like the 'Dharma Sansad' in Haridwar in Uttarakhand and in the national capital.

The petition demanded stern legal action against those who allegedly threatened to massacre Muslims and said it was not just a matter of religion but of the Constitution, law, unity and integrity of the country.

"Hate speeches and statements against Muslims have suddenly intensified in the country in recent times," it said.

"Even the recent programmes held, under government's nose, in Haridwar and Delhi have not only caused open provocations, but have also deliberately conspired to provoke the majority to massacre Muslims for the establishment of 'Hindu Rashtra', but unfortunately, no legal action has been taken in these two cases so far," the petition said.

Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind president Maulana Arshad Madani said that the State and central law enforcement agencies have not fulfilled their duties, "which has created a very depressing situation in the whole country".

"The silence of the central and state governments on the controversial speeches in the



Dharma Sansad and elsewhere has added to the gravity of the situation," he said in the petition.

The apex court, meanwhile, on Monday agreed to hear another PIL seeking a direction to ensure investigation and action against those who made hate speeches during two separate events held recently at the 'Dharam Sansad' in Haridwar in Uttarakhand and in the national capital.

A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli took note of the submissions of senior advocate Kapil Sibal that no action has been taken against those who made the hate speeches despite registration of FIR by the Uttarakhand Police.

The petition, filed by

journalist Qurban Ali and former Patna High Court Judge and senior advocate Anjana Prakash, has sought a direction for "an independent, credible and impartial investigation" by an special investigation team (SIT) into the incidents of hate speeches against the Muslim community.

The plea, which specifically referred to the "hate" speeches delivered between "the 17th and 19th of December 2021 at Haridwar and Delhi", has also sought compliance of apex court's guidelines to deal with such speeches.

The event in Haridwar was organised by Yati Narsinghanand and that in Delhi by the 'Hindu Yuva Vahini', and these allegedly called "for genocide of members" of a community.

The Uttarakhand Police had filed an FIR on December 23, 2021, under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code against some persons including Wasim Rizvi, Sant Dharamdas Maharaj, Sadhvi Annapoorna alias Pooja Shakun Pandey, Yati Narsinghanand and Sagar Sindhu Maharaj.

A similar complaint has been filed with the Delhi Police for the event organised in the national capital.

The plea said no effective steps have been taken by Uttarakhand and Delhi police.

Till date no FIR has been lodged by the Delhi Police despite calls for ethnic cleansing at the event organised here, it said.

Four IITs, including Delhi and Madras, get new directors

Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) at Delhi, Madras, Mandi and Indore got new directors on Monday, according to officials.

While IIT-Bombay professor Rangan Banerjee has been appointed as the next director of IIT-Delhi, IIT-Madras professor V Kamakoti has been appointed as the director of the institute, they said.

Kamakoti designed India's first indigenously-developed microprocessor 'SHAKTI'.

Laxmidhar Behera, electrical

engineering professor at IIT-Kanpur, has been appointed the director of IIT-Mandi and Suhas Joshi, mechanical engineering professor and the dean of alumni and corporate relations at IIT-Bombay, has been appointed the next director of IIT-Indore, the officials said.

Ranjan Banerjee, a Forbes Marshall Chair Professor in IIT Bombay, is a B.Tech (Mechanical) from the same institute. Later, he obtained a PhD (Mechanical Engineering), also from IIT Bombay.

Incumbent IIT Delhi Director V Ramgopal Rao congratulated

Banerjee.

"I am happy to inform you that Prof. Rangan Banerjee from the Department of Energy Sciences & Engineering, IIT Bombay has been appointed as the next Director of IIT Delhi. Hearty congratulations and best wishes to Prof Banerjee," he tweeted.

An Alumnus of IIT Madras, V Kamakoti, is currently the Associate Dean for Industrial Consultancy and Sponsored Research (ICSR), IIT Madras. He is also a member of the National Security Advisory Board, Government of India.

BJP demands CBI probe into stoning, burning of man in Jharkhand's Simdega

Agenceis

Ranchi: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday demanded a CBI probe into the stoning and burning of a 32-year-old man in Jharkhand's Simdega district.

A delegation of the saffron party, led by former chief ministers Babul Marandi and Raghubar Das called upon Jharkhand Governor Ramesh Bais and demanded a CBI inquiry into the incident, punishment for the culprits, a compensation of Rs 10 lakh to the victim's family besides a government job for the next of kin.

A BJP worker, Sanju Pradhan,

was stoned to death and his body set on fire by a mob barely 100 metre from his home near Besrajara Bazar on January 4 on the charges of illegally felling trees, which is against local tribal traditions.

Expressing concern over the incident, the BJP delegation said that it had visited the spot and found that the incident happened after local Kolebira MLA had instigated people at a meeting on December 28 last.

Members of the delegation claimed that Pradhan used to oppose the open sale of beef and meat which culminated in the

incident on January 4.

A case has been registered against 13 identified and 25 unknown people for murder, rioting with deadly weapons, and unlawful assembly.

Village headman Subun Bud, the prime accused in the case, was nabbed on Sunday following a massive manhunt, taking the total number of arrests in the case to eight. The search for five other accused named in the FIR is underway.

As per the deceased's family, the village headman had convened a meeting prior to Pradhan's killing and called him

out of his house, and started beating him, which sparked the mob fury.

The BJP had staged demonstrations across the district, and members of the Bhokta community had blocked roads in Kolebira against the incident.

The deceased's wife alleged that police officers present on the spot did nothing to save Pradhan, while the law enforcers claimed that a 1,000-strong mob involved in the incident stopped them from reaching the spot and they managed to retrieve the burnt body after facing stiff resistance from locals.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

706 More People

reported the highest 172 new cases of virus, Baramulla 64, Budgam 45, Kulgam 19, Kupwara 18, Anantnag and Pulwama 14 each, Bandipora 11 and Ganderbal 4. Shopian was the only district in the Valley where no fresh cases were detected on Monday.

In the winter capital, officials said, Jammu registered a maximum of 233 new cases of virus, Reasi 26, Udhampur and Kathua 18 each, Poonch 16, Kishtwar 12, Samba 8, Rajouri and Doda 4 each and Ramban 1.

"Moreover, 209 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and been discharged from various hospitals including 91from Jammu Division and118 from Kashmir Division," the officials said.

Also, they said, that four more people succumbed to the deadly infection, three in Jammu and one in Kashmir during the last 24 hours. With these deaths, the fatality count in pandemic reached 4544 in J&K—2209 in Jammu and 2335.

LG Launches Booster

The LG, he said, appealed to all the eligible people to get their precautionary vaccine shot at the earliest.

"The UT Government is making several interventions to strengthen public health response to COVID-19. Advanced life support ambulances will be a step in the fight against the global pandemic," Sinha said.

According to the official spokesperson, the LG was informed by the senior health officials that as per the directions, all necessary arrangements have been made for administering the precautionary dose to eligible population through walk-in and pre-registration mode.

On the occasion, he said, the LG also flagged off 34 Advanced Life Support Ambulances of 108 services for Jammu Division, procured under World Bank funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project.

Pertinently, on December 25, 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced a precautionary dose of vaccination for healthcare and frontline workers as well as those above the age of 60 years who have comorbidities.

The vaccination drive for the 15-18 year age group which was launched on January 03 this year is going on

smoothly across the UT.

2 Local Militants

was involved in attacking and injuring a policeman Mushtaq Ahmad Wagay of Pulwama on December 19, last year.

The second killed militant Thoker, he said, was involved in attacking and injuring a civilian at Chitragam. He said Thoker was working as a militant associate before joining the militant ranks.

"Incriminating materials, arms & ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation," the police spokesperson said.

He said that a case under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Bijbehara, Anantnag and investigation has been initiated.

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

Pertinently, at least 13 militants have been killed in seven encounters across the Valley over the last ten days.

GMC Srinagar Cancels

Principal/Dean Prof (Dr) Samia Rashid.

The associated hospitals of GMC Srinagar include GB pant Hospitals, SMHS hospital, Bone and Joint, CD Hospital, Psychiatry Disease Hospital, Kashmir Nursing Home, Super Speciality Hospital, LD hospital, DRDO hospital, and Block Hazratbal, Department of SPM.

Director SKIMS

Heads of SKIMS Soura and SKIMS Medical College, Bemina to ensure the implementation of the guidelines issued by Ministry Of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

It is pertinent to mention that the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, has initiated the campaign for vaccinating Health Workers with a "Precautionary Dose" of COVID-19 vaccine from today.

Moreover in a video message, Koul appealed masses to follow preventive measures in view of surge in COVID cases.

Little Girl Turns

and shouted "sab gandha ho gaya hai (the neighbourhood has become dirty)". The enthusiastic little reporter also asks viewers to "like, share and subscribe" and promises to meet them in the next video.

The video has been shared by many Twitter users and has been viewed over one lakh times. This is not the first time that a child from the valley has appealed to authorities through video messages.

Last year, a 71-second video addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi by six-year-old Mahiru Irfan, seeking a cap on duration of online classes, had propelled the girl from Kashmir to overnight media stardom as camera crews made a beeline at her residence for a soundbyte.

The video had caught the attention of Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, who directed the School Education Department to come out with a policy in 48 hours to ease the burden of homework on the school students.

KPC Calls For

Shahgund village in north Kashmir on Wednesday, with the police in its statement on January 8 admitting that he is in their custody, the Club said.

Police in its statement alleged that Gul had posted an "objectionable" video on his social media handle, it added.

Expressing concern over continuous harassment and threats of legal action against journalists in Kashmir by the police authorities, the Club said the threats, summons and arrests of the media persons have effectively restrained independent and investigative reporting from the Valley.

Demanding the immediate release and dropping of charges against Gul, it urged the authorities to create a conducive environment for journalists operating in Kashmir, free from threats, summons and arrests.

Kashmir Valley

The minimum temperature in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at a low of minus 0.6 degrees Celsius.

Kashmir valley is currently under the grip of the 40-day harshest winter period known as 'Chilla-i-Kalan' which began on December 21.

"Chilleh Kalan" is a period when a cold wave grips the region and the

temperature drops considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies including the famous Dal Lake here as well as the water supply lines in several parts of the valley.

The chances of snowfall are the most frequent and maximum during this period and most areas, especially in the higher reaches, receive heavy to very heavy snowfall.

Banihal Highway

allowed after the arterial road was cleared of fresh landslides at Panthiyal and Marooq by road clearance agencies.

The clearance of debris at certain places was still going on to ensure smooth movement of traffic, the officer said.

The highway, the only all weather road linking Kashmir with rest of the country, was closed for traffic on Friday afternoon, shortly after it was opened after two-day closure following heavy snowfall and multiple landslides between Chanderkote and Ramsu.

Over 50 passenger vehicles were left stranded at different places by the closure of the highway. They were allowed to move towards their destinations late Sunday evening after authorities speeded up the road clearance operation with improvement in weather conditions.

The officials said the traffic was allowed from Jammu to Srinagar early Monday morning, while the movement of traffic from Srinagar to Jammu was allowed only after 11 am.

The traffic was briefly halted at Nagrota in Jammu and Jakhani in Udhampur in the wake of the fresh landslides which were swiftly cleared by road clearance agencies, paving way for resumption of traffic, the officials said.

They said the movement of traffic at landslide-hit areas is very slow as the road is narrow and only worthy of one-way traffic.

The clearance operation is on and is likely to be completed within the next few hours, the officials said. (PTI)

Rs2000 Cr Loan

including state/ nationalized banks for completion of these unfunded/ languishing projects.

As per mechanism approved by the SAC, a high-powered committee (HPC) comprising administrative secretaries

of Finance, Planning, PWD and PHE besides administrative secretary of the concerned department were empowered to approve funding of projects under the scheme—(KNO)

Why Fruit from

Some reports say Iranian apple are more delicious than Kashmir apple, is it true?

No, you won't find the quality of Kashmiri apple anywhere in the world. Yes, the customers prefer to buy them since they're cheaper.

If a product is low-priced, it's natural for people to opt for that and that is happening in this case.

Do the cold-stored Kashmiri apple crop remain unsold, or they're running now?

Apple worth crores of rupees are lying unsold in different cold stores across Kashmir and in different Mandis of India due to low demand.

Currently, there're around 1.75 crore unsold boxes at apple markets in Kashmir. In running, there must be around 1-1.5 crore and some 2.5 crore boxes in outside apple stores.

If the fruit remains unsold, it will rot. Plus, in Kashmir, we've to pay more if the product remains in cold stores.

How long an apple can remain in cold storage without affecting its quality?

In Kashmir, we can store apples for 4-6 months, while in New Delhi or other states, it can be stored for 3-4 months only without affecting its quality.

Did you raise the issue with the government?

It's up to the central government. We've no influence over them. We've written many letters to the Horticulture Ministry but there's no response. We've also sought a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor, but he's out of station right now.

Our only grouse is that the Iranian apple is imported tax-free via Afghanistan. The product is being sold in the name of Afghanistan. Since Iran has been sanctioned by the US, it can't export its produce to European markets, except for few. So, they export

more products to Asian Countries. Due to some trade treaty, it's taken in India.

If it's taxed, it would enter India in limited quantities. The import has affected the business of apple growers from Himachal Pradesh as well.

If this 'free flow' continues, what does the future hold for Kashmiri apple crop?

This is our apprehension. And that's why we're protesting. You can understand that if Iranian apple is imported without levying any import duty, our apple industry is gone.

On the other hand we've bank loans. We're unable to re-pay them. If the current trend continues in the future, our apple industry will take a big hit.

- Syed Burhan contributed to this story.

Missing Youth

turn up.

According to the reports, a police team reached the spot after receiving information from the locals.

Later, the body was taken away by police for medical and legal formalities. It was not immediately clear whether it was a suicide or murder

Electric Shock

electric shock and sustained burn injuries, reports said. A resident of Badasgam village, Mir was removed to the sub-district hospital (SDH) Kokernag for treatment.

His condition is said to be stable.

Fire Damages Jamia

The raging flames, reports said, prompted the locals to come out of their houses. Fire tenders also reached the spot and tried to contain the fire from spreading further. However, by the time the fire was put off, the second floor of the Masjid had suffered extensive damage, reports said.

The officials said that the cause of the fire was being ascertained.

Ladakh Logs 89

the pandemic last year, they said.

No death was reported in Ladakh on Sunday, the officials said.

Thirty patients have recovered from the disease, taking the number of those cured to 22,000, they said.

There are 349 actives cases in Ladakh -- 316 in Leh and 24 in Kargil.

LG Interacts With DDC Chairpersons, VCs



“It Is Our Firm Resolve To Remove Developmental Imbalances”

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday interacted with the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of District Development Councils of Jammu Division at Civil Secretariat.

During the interaction, the Lt Governor took first-hand appraisal of the district-specific developmental needs of the people, and received feedback from the DDCs on implementation of developmental works and progress made under District Capex in their respective constituencies.

The Lt Governor reiterated the commitment of J&K Administration for delivering good governance to the villages by strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions.

“It is our firm resolve to remove developmental imbalances. Sustained economic growth, efforts to meet the basic needs of the people and better quality of life constitute priorities of district administration and PRIs”, said the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor acknowledged the crucial role played by the DDCs & other PRIs in ensuring benefits of rapid economic growth flows to the lowest rung of the society.

Emphasizing the need to maintain transparency and accountability in the development process, the Lt Governor said that the efficient technological tools like BEAMS-EMPOWERMENT are helping in monitoring of projects & expenditure for smooth coordination so that

projects are not held up due to inordinate delays.

DDCs are now regularly monitoring ongoing projects in districts and evaluating for timely implementation of all important programmes. The Government services are also being connected with a feedback system to bring fundamental changes in the public service delivery mechanism, added the Lt Governor.

During the interactive meeting, the DDC Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons welcomed the Lt Governor's initiative to interact with the DDCs and listen to their issues and concerns.

They apprised the Lt Governor about District-specific issues pertaining to tourism development; employment generation; augmenting power and water supply; saturation of public welfare schemes; upgradation of health & education infrastructure; strengthening road connectivity; creating more banking facilities in rural and far-flung areas; capacity building & exposure visits of DDC members, besides putting special focus on snowbound and far-flung areas.

DDC Chairpersons also submitted a 10-point memorandum to the Lt Governor regarding various administrative and other concerning issues.

The Lt Governor assured due consideration of the issues projected by the DDC Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for their redressal at the earliest.

Addressing the issue of promoting the tourism sector of Jammu Division, the Lt Governor said that the UT Government is giving dedicated focus on improving infrastructure and enhancing connectivity to tap immense tourism potential of the region.

1697 Border Bunkers Completed In Rajouri

Observer News Service

RAJOURI: The Union Territory administration has completed as many as 1697 bunkers out of 1867 in this border district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said Monday.

These details were shared by the officials in a meeting chaired by the District Development Commissioner Rajouri, Vikas Kundal to review the progress on the border bunkers being constructed by the PWD and RDD in the district, an official spokesperson said Monday.

Officers who attended the meeting included ADDC, Pawan Kumar; ACD, Sushil Khajuria; CPO, Mohammad Khurshid; SE PWD, ExEn PWD Rajouri, Maqbool Hussain and Block Development Officers.

While discussing the progress on bunkers being constructed by the RDD, it was informed that out of 1867 bunkers, the work on 1697 bunkers has been completed.

While taking stock of the progress on the bunkers being

constructed by the PWD, the meeting was apprised that out of 1274 bunkers, the work on 1217 is complete and the rest are under different stages of execution.

The DDC asked the concerned officers to complete the work on all the slab level bunkers in one week and all the other bunkers under execution by two weeks.

Reviewing the progress on Geo-tagging, the DDC asked the concerned officers to get all the bunkers geo-tagged by January 15, 2022.

The DDC instructed the concerned officers to put in all possible efforts to ensure that the set targets are achieved well in time. He also asked them to maintain the quality while executing the works on the bunkers.

He directed the concerned officers to ensure that the bunkers are provided to all the border inhabitants so that their lives are saved from the cross border shelling and work in double shifts to complete the work on the rest of the bunkers in a time-bound manner.

Prof. Naseer Iqbal Is Executive Committee Member Of IIPA JK

Observer News Service

AWANTIPORA: Registrar, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) Prof. Naseer Iqbal has been appointed as an executive committee member of the Indian Institute of Public Administration's (IIPA) J&K regional branch.

According to an official statement, the executive committee members have been nominated for the period 2022-24 in its 43rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on January 8, 2022.

Prof. Naseer is a life member of Astronomical Society of India, Indian Physics Association and is also member of Board of Studies in various Universities of the country.

IIPA JK is one of the 23 Regional Branches of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi, an autonomous academic institution of national eminence



for training, research and information dissemination in streams related to the ethos of public administration and is known for a premier centre for training and research in public administration and management.

IIPA was established throughout the country to promote and provide for the study and imparting of training related to public administration and the machinery of government.

Govt Asks PDD To Stick To Power Curtailment Schedule

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday directed the power development department (PDD) to adhere to the schedule already announced ensuring no unscheduled power cuts take place.

These directions were passed by the Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Farooq Khan while taking stock of the restoration of basic services in Kashmir division, an official spokesperson said Monday. Khan, he said, visited various places to get first hand appraisal of the same.

He took stock of the restoration of the power supply, stock and supply of fuel, snow clearance, dewatering and other essential services.

During his visit to the Grid station Bemina, he enquired about the position of restoration of power supply in Kashmir division.

He was informed at Bemina by the Chief Engineer that most of the power supply has been restored and only few feeders are under transit fault but that will be restored very soon.

While complimenting the PDD for restoring the power in almost all areas in record time, he directed them to restore supply in areas like Karnah which have witnessed heavy snowfall.

Advisor issued instructions to officers of the Power Development Department for effective regulation of power supply and further streamlining the system.

During his visit, he also directed the officers to strictly adhere to the schedule already announced ensuring no unscheduled power cuts take place.

He stressed on making the functioning of Customers Grievance redressal cells more effective and prompt. He directed them to maintain proper and handy details regarding customer care services including number of complaints received, nature of complaint and their disposal along with time duration.

Stressing on making PDD more customer friendly, Advisor said that the credibility of the department will be further enhanced if we respond to the complaints raised by the consumers quickly.

He also instructed for maintaining proper records with regard to the number of consumers/households and areas catered to by the restorative



Director. He asked for maintaining a diary of the consumer complaints on a daily basis, detailed charts of resource inventory.

During his visit to the Golf Course Dewatering Station, Advisor directed the officers to remain vigilant and address complaints promptly. He directed them to keep men and machinery on alert so that people do not face any inconveniences.

Advisor Farooq Khan also visited the Gas filling station Pampore to review stock and supply position of fuel, available with the Oil companies operating in the Valley including Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL). He directed officials of Oil companies to keep building up the stock of LPG and petroleum products on regular basis across the Valley so that public does not face any problems.

He also instructed them to take up matter of the trucks stuck on National Highway at

various locations with the respective Deputy Commissioners for early clearance of their fuel trucks. He also stressed on better coordination among various agencies so that people do not feel any inconvenience regarding LPG availability. He further directed them for extra dumping of cylinders in those areas that witness heavy snowfall like Gurez and Karnah and be sensitive to the problems faced by the people.

Regarding the daily stock position, Advisor was informed that the stock availability with HPCL is 4315 MT and considering the current average sales the stock will last for 28 days. It was also given that the stock in transit in terms of the number of cylinders is 88380 cylinders.

Later, Advisor also addressed the media persons and gave details about the restoration of various services. He said that there is sufficient stock of rice, gas, essential drugs and other stock is available in adequate quantity.

Regarding the snow clearance, it was given out that Mechanical and Engineering division has cleared 99 percent of roads under phase 1 and 96 percent of roads under phase 2. Roads and Building (R&B) department has cleared 88.7 percent of roads while as Urban Local Bodies has cleared 98.26 percent of its roads.

It was also given out that all roads leading to District Hospitals, Sub-district hospitals and Public Health Centres are cleared of snow.

Regarding the snow clearance by SMC, it was given out that it has cleared 1143 lanes mechanically and has also cleared the 5661 number of lanes that needed to be cleared manually thus ensuring 100 percent snow clearance.

Regarding the restoration of water supply schemes by Public Health Engineering, it was given out that out of 2429 schemes, 2362 schemes are functional and restoration process is going on the schemes affected.

CCAK Aghast As Govt Again Bans Coaching Centres

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Coaching Centres Association of Kashmir (CCAK) on Monday expressed its disappointment over the government decision to close the coaching centres in the wake of increase in Covid cases.

In a statement issued here, the Association said that whenever there is even a slight increase in covid cases, education sector becomes the first casualty.

“We fail to understand why government seems to be keen to close down education sectors in the wake of even a slight increase in covid cases. After closing down schools and education institutes for years, the government has now closed down the only functional classes which were working hard to compensate for the loss of academics to these students,” said a spokesperson of CCAK.

The Association said that students are paying heavy price for the current situation as their studies have been heavily affected.

“As of now all the activities of life like festivals, business establishments, overcrowded public transport, rallies etc go on normally, but only the academic classes are being targeted. Even WHO has said that we have to get used to living with Covid by adopting Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB),” said the spokesperson.

The Association said that the coaching centres are adopting all preventive measures. “We are conducting vaccination of all students and ensuring adoption of CAB. Most of our students and entire staff is vaccinated. If on one hand when government is promoting vac-



FILE PHOTO

Many Coaching Centres Sealed In Bandipora

SRINAGAR: Authorities on Monday sealed several coaching centres in Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir for allegedly flouting COVID-19 norms, officials said.

A joint team of officers led by tehsildar Bandipora Sheikh Tariq inspected several coaching centres in the town to review the implementation of Covid appropriate behaviour, an official spokesman said.

He said the team comprising officers of education and health departments sealed several coaching centres that were operating in violation

of the government orders. Sheikh said in-person teaching has been banned till further orders to safeguard the lives by preventing the further spread of COVID-19.

Bandipora Deputy Commissioner Owais Ahmad has urged people to follow Covid protocol in letter and spirit. He said as the graph of the virus is going up in the country, people need to be extra cautious to avoid the third wave.

The deputy commissioner said the administration will not tolerate any violation of Covid protocol and action shall be taken against the violators.

cination of students, then why government has suddenly come up with an order to close down coaching centres,” the spokesperson said.

“There is a contradiction in government working too.”

The Association said that instead of closing the coaching centres, the government should implement strict CAB and that is the best way to de-

feat Covid.

“Multiple studies have shown that complete lockdown doesn't help in prevention and instead it increases the suffering of people especially students,” he said.

The Association urged the government to reconsider the decision to ban the coaching centres for the benefit of student community.

DISTRICT DAIRY

Vaishya Inspects Snow Clearance Process In Shopian

SRINAGAR: The District Magistrate (DM), Shopian, Sachin Kumar Vaishya on Monday conducted an extensive inspection of the snow affected areas of the district to take stock of snow clearance, restoration of power and water supply besides other essential services in the district.

The DM visited Peerpora, Magalpora, Keegam and other adjoining areas of the district to have an on spot review of Snow clearance operation, an official spokesperson said.

During the inspection, he said, the DM stated that all concerned authorities have been instructed to remain proactively and rigorously engaged in Snow clearance operation. He instructed line departments to remain alert, deploy sufficient men and

machinery, work in coordination and ensure that Snow clearance work is completed at an earliest.

While expressing his satisfaction over restoration of power supply in the district a day ago, the DM said that power supply shall be restored at an earliest in the affected areas. He said that the teams tour their designated areas to personally monitor the snow clearance operations and restoration of essential services.

He also emphasised on cleanliness and regular supply of essential medicines to the needy patients.

The DM directed SDM, Tehsildars, Ex. Engineers of R&B, PHE and MED to remain available for public grievance redressal and not to leave their headquarters in view of inclement weather.

DC Kupwara Reviews Progress Under KCC

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Imam Din on Monday convened a meeting of District Level Technical Committee (DLTC) to review the progress of Kissan Credit Card (KCC) loan facility in the district.

The meeting held threadbare discussion to determine and fix the Scale of Finance for providing short term loan to the farmers in the shape of Working Capital for maintenance, fodder, fertilizer, pesticides, labour and manure etc for growing the crops in their field.

Addressing the meeting, the

DC stressed upon the officers of line departments and bankers to ensure utmost accuracy in formulation of scale of finance component wise so that the farmers are facilitated properly.

On the occasion, economic potential of different varieties/products related to agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and floriculture were discussed for boosting the income of unemployed youth and farmers.

Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Kupwara, CHO, LDM, DAO and other officers from line departments, besides, various bankers attended the meeting.

Covid Awareness Campaign Started In Anantnag

SRINAGAR: A massive COVID-19 awareness campaign was kick-started on Monday in the form of announcements at markets, here regarding enforcement of Covid Appropriate Behavior (CAB) and usage of masks besides ensuring social distancing. A joint enforcement drive was conducted by ARTO Anantnag and Tehsildar Anantnag and fines were imposed on several shopkeepers and cabs for violating Covid-19 protocol.

Similar drives were also held in all towns of the district.

Meanwhile, Booster doses for senior citizens to enhance protection against Covid-19 were also started in Anantnag today.

The CMO Anantnag appealed to the eligible senior citizens to come forward and get their COVID jabs. He said that the district has already started vaccinating the eligible population in the 15-17 age group and is committed to achieve cent percent coverage within the next few days.

It is in place to mention that more than 35000 youth in the 15-17 age group have already received the vaccine.

A separate meeting was also held by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Ghulam Hassan Sheikh with the representa-

tives of Traders and Transport Associations.

ADC while addressing the meeting highlighted the need of complete synergy in combating the impending threat of the Omicron variant, which he said is highly transmissible. He said CAB enforcement is the only solution to combat the aggressive transmission of the omicron variant.

The ADC cautioned against lenient behavior of people in observing covid protocol, saying the district administration will act very tough against the violators even as he appealed all the stakeholders to extend co-operation to administration in the enforcement of CAB.

ADC observed that health is the priority of every individual and it was imperative to work in complete coordination to defeat the 3rd covid wave and protect the public health by all means.

He asked the traders and transporters to disallow unmasked people in their business establishments and public vehicles, adding the concerned trader and driver will be personally held responsible for such lapses.

He also asked shopkeepers to display posters in their shops reading, “No entry for unmasked customers”.

Booster Dose Vaccination Kick-Starts At Kulgam

SRINAGAR: The Booster dose vaccination for front line workers, and senior citizens with co-morbidities on Monday commenced here at Kulgam.

The drive was kick-started by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Kulgam, Riyaz Ahmad Sofi from District Hospital Kulgam.

The ADC said that all requisite arrangements have been put in place to carry out the process of Booster dose of vaccination smoothly across the district.

CMO informed that front line workers and senior citizens with co-morbidities from today can get this booster dose at vaccination centres as a third and precautionary dose.

Meanwhile, special drives were carried out in the district to sensitize the public to adopt COVID Appropriate Behavior to avoid the spread of Covid-19 infection and to say no to 3rd wave of Covid-19 infection.

Present on the occasion were CMO, Medical Superintendent, DH Kulgam and other officers.

Kumar Briefs Media On Covid-19 Situation In Baramulla

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Bhupinder Kumar on Monday said that by virtue of the extraordinary efforts of Health staff besides quality health infrastructure and with the cooperation of general public, district Baramulla is fully prepared to combat the situation that may arise due to Covid-19 here.

The DC said this while briefing media on the Covid-19 situ-

ation in the district and added that the situation is strictly monitored at the district level.

He said that 180 new cases were found last week while about 40 cases are being reported daily in the district since the last three days. He added that may be the positivity rate can increase in the coming days, so all the necessary arrangements have been made to tackle the situation.

I Am Fit, Says Kohli Ahead of 3rd Test Against South Africa

Rules out Mohammed Siraj from participation

Press Trust of India

CAPE TOWN: India captain Virat Kohli on Monday said he will return to the team for the series-deciding third Test against South Africa here as he is "absolutely fit" but ruled out the participation of pacer Mohammed Siraj.

Kohli, who missed the second Test because of an upper back spasm, had nets with the rest of the team at Newlands on Sunday. He batted without any visible discomfort, lunging forward to play the drives.

"I am absolutely fit," Kohli said at the pre-match press conference.

However, he added that Siraj will not feature in the game after he suffered a hamstring injury in Johannesburg, where India lost by seven wickets.

"Siraj is obviously recovering from the (hamstring) niggle he had in the last game and at present, I don't think he is match-ready to take the field in the third Test.

"You cannot obviously risk a guy who is not at 110 per cent as a fast bowler and we know how important that is as the little niggle he had can extend into an injury," the skipper said.

"Siraj is not up to the mark," he added.

However, the skipper did not say whether Ishant Sharma will get the nod ahead of Umesh Yadav.

"As I said, we are yet to sit down, myself, the head coach and vice-captain to decide what



we want to do about replacement," he said.

"And I say that because of our bench strength and it's difficult for us to figure out as everyone is bowling well, batting well, these things become a point of contention and we need to have a healthy discussion on a decision on that and just that everyone feels balanced (okay) about it," he explained.

"But I am happy being in this position sitting here trying to decide who is going to play rather than having other options."

Team India will look to bounce back in the third and final Test of the series, which is scheduled to begin here Tuesday.

India kicked off the South Africa tour on a perfect note, crushing the hosts by 113 runs in the series-opener at Centurion.

However, the Proteas won the second game to leave the three-match series level at 1-1.

BCCI Postpones Cooch Behar Trophy After Massive COVID-19 Outbreak



Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: The BCCI on Monday postponed the knockout games of U-19 Cooch Behar Trophy following a massive COVID-19 outbreak among the participating teams.

As as many as 38 cases (32 players, 6 support staff) across eight teams were detected ahead of the knockout stage beginning in Pune on Tuesday, PTI has learnt.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Monday announced the postponement of the knockout stage matches of the Cooch Behar Trophy following some positive COVID-19 cases within the team environment.

"Keeping everyone's health and safety in mind, the knockout matches to be held in Pune have

been put on hold until further notice. The BCCI had conducted 93 matches across 20 venues in the league stage.

"The Board will continue to monitor the situation and identify a new window once the situation improves," said the BCCI in a statement.

Last week, the BCCI was forced to postpone all domestic events including the premier Ranji Trophy due to a surge in COVID-19 cases across the country.

"The decision was taken after 38 positive cases were found, the report came last night and a decision to postpone the tournament was taken this morning," said a BCCI source.

The tournament was to be played across four venues in Pune. A total of 1,79,723 new cases were reported in India on Monday.

SAI To Shut Down Training Centres Amid Rise In COVID-19 Cases

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Monday said it has decided to close its 67 training centres across the country due to rising COVID-19 cases but national camps for elite athletes will continue in bio-bubbles.

The decision will not impact the National Centres of Excellence (NCOE) like the ones in Patiala and Bengaluru where camps for elite athletes are in progress across multiple disciplines.

"In view of rising cases of COVID-19, the Sports Authority of India has decided to close the 67 SAI Training centres across the country," the SAI said in a statement.

"The decision also comes in the wake of directives issued by various states to suspend sporting activities for the safety of athletes," it added.

The centres would be re-

opened after a review of the situation in due course of time.

"There is no change in training schedule of elite athletes training for Asian and Commonwealth Games later this year. They are training in bio-bubbles at the NCOEs and following all precautions," a SAI spokesperson told PTI.

India reported a rise of 1,79,723 COVID-19 cases on Monday.

The number of active cases has increased to 7,23,619, the highest in around 204 days, while the death toll has climbed to 4,83,936 with 146 fatalities reported this morning by the health ministry.

With several COVID-19 cases reported in the country's top training facilities, the SAI had last week ordered implementation of stricter protocols, including weekly testing of all athletes and support staff at its campuses across the nation.



DANISH FAROOQ BHAT VEERS away in celebration after scoring for Bengaluru FC on Monday. Srinagar-born Danish smashed the ball low and into the bottom corner to score the first goal for his team in the 8th minute of their ISL match against Mumbai City FC. Bengaluru went on to win the match 3-0, and Danish played the full 90 minutes.

Photo by ISL

4 JKFA Refs Pass 1st Stage of AIFF CAT-2 Exam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The J&K Football Association (JKFA) on Monday announced that 4 out of its 7 recommended refereeing candidates had passed the first stage of AIFF CAT-2 exams. The first stage of the examination is a Fitness Test.

The JKFA had recommended the names of seven eligible CAT-3 Referees for upgradation to CAT-2 category. The candidates who appeared in the examination are: Sarfaraz Nabi (Referee) from Rafiab, Tanveer Ahmad (Assistant Referee) from Srinagar, Tariq Ahmad (AR) from Hajin, Zahid Zubair (AR) from Hajin, Ghulam Mohammad (AR) from Sopore, Shabir Ahmad (AR) also from Sopore, and Abid Najar (AR) from Budgam.

Unfortunately, Sarfaraz Nabi, Zahid Zubair and Shabir Ahmad could not qualify the Fitness Test.

However, Tanveer Ahmad, Tariq Ahmad, Ghulam Mohammad and Abid Najar all qualified the Fitness Test and will now have to appear in theory, practical examination and viva.

The J&K Football Association congratulated the selected candidates who cleared the Fitness



Test and is hopeful that they will emerge successful in theory and practical Exam.

"We wish them best of luck in their future endeavours. Those of the candidates who could not clear the fitness test should not be discouraged and will appear in the examination next year," the FA said.

"Prior to their departure to Gwalior, special classes were conducted for these CAT-3 Referees by N.A Bhat (HOR) J&K. The JKFA has worked hard for

the development of the Referees Department over the years and the results are obviously fruitful," they added.

The Association has said that it is hopeful that new batches of Referees will also qualify the said examinations when conducted by AIFF, and will bring a good name to J&K. The JKFA also reiterated that it will not stop this chain and will produce Referees of "national standard" thereby strengthening the Referees department of JKFA.

Australian Judge Says Djokovic Can Stay But Saga Not Over

Agencies

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic returned to the tennis court Monday for training, having won a legal battle to stay in Australia and play in the Australian Open after his exemption from strict coronavirus rules was questioned. But the government is still threatening to cancel his visa and deport him.

Federal Circuit Court Judge Anthony Kelly reinstated the Djokovic's visa, which was pulled after his arrival last week because officials said he didn't qualify for an exemption to a rule that all non-citizens be fully vaccinated. Djokovic's lawyers say that since he recently recovered from COVID-19, he didn't need to be inoculated.

The judge ruled the No. 1 player had not been given enough time to speak to his lawyers before the decision was made and ordered the government to release him from a Melbourne quarantine hotel where he has spent the last four nights.

But government lawyer Christopher Tran told the judge that the immigration minister "will consider whether to exercise a personal power of cancellation."

That would mean that the nine-time Australian Open winner and defending champion could again face deportation and could miss the tournament, which starts on Jan. 17. It could also bar him from the country for three years.

Late Monday night,



Djokovic tweeted out a photo that showed him and his team standing on one of the main show courts of the tournament.

"I'm pleased and grateful that the Judge overturned my visa cancellation. Despite all that has happened, I want to stay and try to compete @ AustralianOpen," he said in the post.

At Monday's court hearing, Djokovic's lawyers argued their client did not need proof of vaccination because he had evidence that he had been infected with the coronavirus last month.

Australian medical authorities have ruled that people who have been infected with COVID-19 within six months can receive a temporary exemption to the vaccination rule.

Judge Kelly noted that Djokovic had provided officials at Melbourne's airport with a medical exemption given him by Tennis Australia and two medical panels.

"The point I'm somewhat

agitated about is what more could this man have done?" Kelly asked Djokovic's lawyer, Nick Wood.

At a news conference in Belgrade, Serbia, Djokovic's family declared victory.

"This is his greatest victory, greater than all the Grand Slams that he has won," his mother, Dijana Djokovic, said.

The virtual hearing crashed several times because of an overwhelming number of people from around the world trying to watch the proceedings.

At one point, an expired court link was apparently hacked and broadcast pornography, The New Daily News website reported.

Djokovic has 20 Grand Slam singles titles, a men's record he shares with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

The Australian government is still considering the matter and a statement from Minister Andrews department can be expected soon. (AP)

New Zealand Spinner Ajaz Patel Wins ICC POTM Award



ICC PLAYER OF THE MONTH

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: India-born New Zealand cricketer Ajaz Patel on Monday won the ICC Player of the Month award for December following his stupendous 10-wicket haul against Virat Kohli and Co. in the second Test in Mumbai.

The left-arm spinner was nominated for the award alongside India opener Mayank Agarwal and Australian pacer Mitchell Starc but beat them to it on the back of his incredibly rare feat.

Ajaz picked up 14 wickets in the Mumbai Test match in early December against India, including all 10 in the first innings, to become only the third player in Test history, after Jim Laker and Anil Kumble, to achieve the remarkable milestone.

The Mumbai-born Ajaz made a fairy tale comeback to his city of birth in his first-ever tour of India with the Test team.

Ajaz ended the first day of the Test with all four Indian wickets to fall under his name and made an impact on the first session the following day with wickets off back-to-back deliveries.

While he was denied a hat-trick, Ajaz went on to take all 10 wickets in the innings, prompting applause from even the opposition camp.

"Personally I think one of the greatest cricketing days in my life. And it will probably always be," Ajaz had said at the conclusion of the Test match.

JP Duminy, a Member of ICC Voting Academy for December, hailed the achievement.

"What a historic achievement! Taking 10 wickets in an innings is a feat that needs to be celebrated. There's no doubt that Ajaz's performance is a milestone that will be remembered for years to come," the South African cricketer said.

U-19 WC: Afghanistan Yet To Arrive Due To Visa Related Problems



Press Trust of India

The Afghanistan cricket team's participation in the ICC Under-19 World Cup in the West Indies is in a jeopardy as the players from the Taliban-run nation are yet to procure visas for the global event.

With the team yet to reach the Caribbean shores, the ICC had to cancel the team's two scheduled warm-up games against England (Warner Park) on Monday and the UAE on January 12. Afghanistan's first game in tournament proper is on January 16 against Zimbabwe.

"The Afghanistan squad is yet to arrive in the West Indies due to delays in obtaining the necessary visas, whilst discussions attempting to resolve the issue are ongoing," the ICC said in a statement.

While the ICC is yet to confirm the issue that has led to visa problems, it's head of Events Chris Tetley said that they are trying to resolve the crisis.

"The Afghanistan squad is yet to arrive in the West Indies due

to delays in obtaining the necessary visas, whilst discussions attempting to resolve the issue are ongoing," Tetley was quoted as saying.

"We have been working together with the Afghanistan Cricket Board and relevant stakeholders to try and find a resolution to the problem and allow the team to travel," he added.

Tetley didn't mention categorically who the "stakeholders" are and what exactly is the issue.

To travel to the West Indies, most people need US transit visas and since the hostile takeover of the nation by the Taliban, international travel from that region hasn't exactly been a cakewalk.

"In the meantime, we have rescheduled the warm-up fixtures to ensure the teams in the region are able to continue their preparation ahead of the start of the tournament on 14 January," Tetley further added.

England will now play UAE at Conaree Cricket Centre on January 11.

Liverpool, Tottenham Come From Behind To Avoid FA Cup Upsets



Agencies

LONDON: Liverpool came from a goal down to win 4-1 against third-tier Shrewsbury Town in the third round of the FA Cup on Sunday, while Tottenham Hotspur beat Morecambe 3-1 after a fighting display in the second half.

Liverpool midfielder Fabinho scored twice, including a first-half penalty, while Kaide Gordon and Roberto Firmino also got on the score sheet for the Merseyside club.

Shrewsbury's Daniel Udoh put the visitors ahead in the 27th minute after he slid in Nathanael Ogbeta's cross to score from close range, but Liverpool winger Gordon found the equaliser seven minutes later with a calm finish.

Brazil international Fabinho scored a penalty before half-time, sending Shrewsbury keeper Marko Marosi the wrong way, before Firmino added the third in the 78th minute with a brilliant back-heel effort from close range.