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P5 STATE

3 DEAD AS TRUCK PLUNGES INTO GORGE IN RAJOURI

Three people were killed and another critically injured Monday when a truck skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir,

P7

FATHER OF THE MOBILITY MOVEMENT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Ralph Braun was born on Jan 18, 1940 in Winamac, Indiana, United States. When he was six years old, doctors diagnosed him with muscular dystrophy, condition that limited his ability to use his limbs and move



P11 SPORTS

DJOKOVIC LANDS IN SERBIA AFTER AUSTRALIA DEPORTATION

Novak Djokovic could be barred from the French Open later this year because he's not vaccinated against COVID-19, a possibility that raised the stakes



Widom Quote!

What's on the other side of fear? Nothing.

- Jamie Foxx

NEWS DIGEST

Soldier Dies In Handwara

SRINAGAR: A soldier died barely an hour after he was hospitalized for vomiting in Handwara area of Kupwara district. 26-year-old Lance Naik Sachin was found unconscious at his unit location of 21 RR in Yamrad Rajwar in Handwara on Monday afternoon, officials said. He was **More on P10**

CBI Nabs Patwari For Accepting Bribe

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday arrested a patwari from Jammu for allegedly demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 35,000. The CBI official said that the accused patwari was identified as Ashok Kumar. "He is a patwari of Jassore, Tehsil R.S. Pura, District Jammu (J&K). We got a complaint against **More on P10**

2 JeM 'Associates' Held In Awantipora

SRINAGAR: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested two militant associates of Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and recovered explosive materials from their possession in south Kashmir's Awantipora. Zahid Ahmad Lone and Shakeel Ahmad Malik alias Abu Dujana were arrested by a joint **More on P10**

Ladakh Logs 175 New Covid Cases

LEH: Ladakh reported 175 more corona cases, taking the overall caseload in the Union Territory to 23,384, out of which 22,342 people have recuperated while active cases stands at 820, officials said on Monday. Of the new cases, 156 positive samples were received from Leh district and 19 in **More on P10**

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....CORONA CRISIS

J&K Reports 5 More Deaths, 2827 New Cases



Health workers pass through a snow covered road in a village in south Kashmir to conduct a house-to-house vaccination drive. KO File Photo/ Abid Bhat

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: After crossing 3000-mark for two consecutive days, Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a slight decline on Monday as 2827 more people on Monday tested positive for the virus while five more people succumbed to the deadly infection in the

Union Territory during the last 24 hours.

According to the officials, Kashmir Valley registered 1734 fresh cases of novel Coronavirus while 1093 were reported from various districts of Jammu division on Monday, taking the total number of people infected since the outbreak of pandemic in J&K to 362200.

In the Valley, the officials said, Srinagar reported the highest 618 new cases of virus, Baramulla 315, Budgam 295, Anantnag 168, Kupwara 139, Kulgam 57, Pulwama 56, Bandipora 52, Ganderbal 22 and Shopian 12.

In the winter capital, officials said, Jammu registered a maximum of 711 new cases of Coronavirus, **More on P10**

KU, SKIMS Defers All Examinations

The University of Kashmir and Sher-i Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura, deferred all examinations scheduled to be held on Monday and Tuesday, respectively. In a statement issued here, Controller of Examinations, KU, Prof Irshad A Nawchoo announced to defer all ongoing and scheduled examinations with effect from Tuesday until further notice in view of the prevailing situation caused by Covid-19. He further said that the revised dates for the deferred examinations shall be notified separately in due course of time. Meanwhile, SKIMS, a **More on P10**

5 Employees Test Positive At RTO Kashmir

With five officials already having tested positive for Covid and awaiting the outcome of many others, the Regional Transport Office Kashmir Monday has written to Divisional Commissioner's office to guide it with regard to continuance of public dealings. "Five officials of this office have been tested COVID positive and many others are having symptoms like fever, cough and sore throat. RT-PCR reports of many officials are still awaited. Besides this, there is huge public rush in view of which it is difficult to follow COVID SOPs", reads **More on P10**

Militants Lob Grenade At PCR Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a second attack in the last 24 hours, unidentified militants on Monday attacked the Police Control Room (PCR) with a grenade in the high security Batmaloo area of this capital city.

According to reports, unknown militants lobbed a grenade at the 6th India Reserve Battalion at the PCR in Batmaloo area of the city on Monday evening that exploded with a bang.

Though no one was reported injured in the grenade attack, the government forces immediately cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to nab the attackers.

Pertinently, this is the second such attack in the city in the last 24 hours.

On Sunday, militants lobbed a grenade at a joint team of police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel at **More on P10**

'Coup', Closure And Cancellation

Govt Takes Over Press Club, Cancels Land Allotment



Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Press Club has ceased to exist, the Jammu and Kashmir administration said on Monday as it took back the premises allotted to the largest journalists' body in the Valley following dissensions between two factions, one of which had tacit support from the government.

The administration -- which has been facing flak on the issue with the Editors Guild of India terming the events a "coup" and a continuing trend to smother press freedom -- cited "unpleasant developments and dissensions between various groups of journalists" as the reason for the takeover of the premises in Srinagar's high **More on P10**

'Ultimate Goal Was To Shut Down Club'

The ousted managing body of the Kashmir Press Club on Monday alleged that the installation of a group of journalists as an interim body was done with the ultimate goal of shutting down the club. It reiterated that journalists in the Valley will confront these challenges. "It seems the ultimate goal was to shut down the Kashmir Press Club and for this purpose, they tried to install a group of journalists. By this action, they wanted to stifle the voice of journalists that resonated through the forum called Kashmir Press Club, the only democratic and independent journalist body in the Valley," Ishfaq Tantray, general secretary of the ousted body, said in a statement.

"But it is our firm belief that our journalists are capable and professional enough **More on P10**

Committed To Fulfil Public Aspirations: LG



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said on Monday that his administration is working on several fronts for the holistic and equitable development of all sections and regions of the Union Territory.

Sinha made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation of PRI representatives from Ganderbal led by DDC Chairperson Nuzhat Ishfaq at Raj Bhavan Jammu on Monday, an official spokesperson said. Mandeep Kaur, Commissioner/Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj was present on the occasion.

During the meeting, he said, the members of the delegation discussed with

the LG various area-specific issues pertaining to development of the district and welfare of people.

The delegation, the official spokesperson said, submitted memorandums containing demands and issues regarding improvement of road connectivity, health, Power and drinking water facilities; sanctioning of Fire & Emergency Sub-Station for Chattergul, Ganiwan, Sonamarg; upgradation of schools; exploring the tourism potential and strengthening of health sector, besides expediting other developmental projects in Ganderbal district.

"The Lt Governor while interacting with the members of the delegation said that the UT Government is committed to **More on P10**

4 More Teachers Sacked For Unauthorised Absence

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Continuing its crackdown against the employees for dereliction in duties, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday terminated four more teachers over unauthorised absence.

According to an order issued by the Directorate of School Education Kashmir, services of Ashfaq Parvez Mir

of Kupwara, Mohammad Saleem Dar of district Budgam, Shazia Shafeeq Teacher, HS Gundishath, Kupwara and Fatima Jameel, HS Padshahibagh, Srinagar have been terminated.

According to the order government has invoked Article 113 of J-K Civil Service Rules (Volume I) of 1956 and Rule 30(VII) of J-KCCA rules 1956 for their **More on P10**

Engineer Working In Saudi Fired

The Jammu and Kashmir Public Works (R&B) Department has terminated the service of a Junior Engineer, who remained absent from duties for over five years after taking up a job in Saudi Arabia. According to the termination order, Junior Engineer, Shabir Ahmad Bhat of Waniyar, Srinagar attended his duties up to March 31, 2008 **More on P10**

6 DESPITE PROVIDING OF ENOUGH opportunities to resume his duties by the Drawing & Disbursing officer concerned neither he responded the notices nor resumed his duties."

Rs 300 Crore And Counting

J&K's Private Education Sector Faces Wrath Of Pandemic

Agencies

SRINAGAR: In the past two years, the private education sector of Kashmir has recorded a loss of more than Rs 300 crores following the outbreak of COVID-19.

"Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 that led to the closure of educational establishments, the private schools in Kashmir valley have suffered a loss of over Rs 300 Crores," sources said Monday.

They said that among the tangible dips, major losses were witnessed among those schools that were availing the bus services or were developing the infrastructure and the regular



maintenance.

Quoting the Survey, National Independent School Alliance (NISA), a teacher said that there was a loss of 84 percent in learning outcomes of teachers and

students that include the teaching training, academic loss, growth of children in terms of rubrics

Stating the figures of private coaching institutes, sources said that more than **More on P10**

Cloud Cover Raises Night Temperature

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The upper reaches of Kashmir received light snowfall on Monday while the rains lashed plains as the night temperature further increased in the Union Territory due to overnight cloud cover.

According to reports, the higher reaches of Kashmir received light snowfall dipping the day temperature sharply. The plains also witnessed light rainfall on Monday, after an overnight cloud cover that rose mercury by a few notches.

A meteorological department official said that Srinagar recorded a low of 1.0°C against

last night's minus 1.2°C in the summer capital of J&K.

Kashmir is presently under the grip of 40-day long harshest period of winter, known locally as 'Chillai Kalan, which started from December 21. It is followed by a 20-day long 'Chillai Khurd' and a 10-day-long 'Chilla Bachha'.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 4.6°C against minus 7.0°C on the previous night, he said. The temperature was 3.1°C above normal for this time of the year in the famous resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Pahalgam, the famous resort in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus **More on P10**

Govt Probes Land Allotment At Lassipora Industrial Estate

MD SIDCO Appointed Enquiry Officer, Report To Be Submitted Within 45 Days

Observer New Service

SRINAGAR: The authorities on Monday ordered a high-level probe into the allegations of unfair allotment of land at the Industrial Estate Lassipora in Pulwama district, sources said here.

Notably, several complaints were made before the concerned authorities that there has been unfair allotment of land at the Industrial Estate Lassipora.

Sources said that a notification regarding the matter has been issued by the government in order to investigate the matter and to have a fair allotment of land at the Industrial estate.

They said that managing director SIDCO, Samita Sethi has been nominated as the enquiry officer to probe the matter.

"The enquiry has been ordered. I will go through the facts and figures and find out who has been allotted land and how. As of now, I can't say more on it since I have just received the papers. Whatever allegations have been made, will be probed," **More on P10**



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Study Explores How Effects Of Childhood Abuse Extend Into Middle Age

Agencies

Childhood sexual abuse can lead to depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease and other health problems later in life. However, not all abused children experience these problems, and researchers are working to understand whose health is affected and why. In a new article, published in the journal Psychoneuroendocrinology, a team of researchers led by faculty in Penn State's College of Health and Human Development examined how the production of the stress hormone cortisol differs from childhood to middle age for some women who experienced childhood sexual abuse. "Previous research has shown that childhood sexual abuse is related to a lot of health issues that are sustained into adulthood," said John Felt, postdoctoral fellow in the Center for Healthy Aging. "But we still need to understand how early-life adversity does or does not become embedded in people's lives. When we understand this, we will be able to do more to pro-

mote health among people who have experienced abuse." Cortisol is a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar, metabolism, and humans' "fight or flight" response to stressful situations. Problems with cortisol levels can lead to heart disease, elevated blood pressure, anxiety, digestive issues, and dysregulated immune system response. The researchers analyzed data from the Female Growth and Development Study, an ongoing, decades-long study of women who were sexually abused as children. The women participate in periodic data collection that includes measurement of their cortisol levels. Prior research has shown that cortisol levels in people's bodies change across the course of their lives. Typically, cortisol is low in children, increases until early adulthood, and then gradually decreases into old age. Trauma like abuse, however, can impact people's cortisol trajectories throughout their lifespan.



This research demonstrated that some women who experience abuse developed different cortisol trajectories. For these women, cortisol levels peaked at an earlier age than other women and their peak cortisol levels were lower. These profiles, which the researchers refer to as 'blunted,' are associated with many of the health problems mentioned

above. Embedding trauma and epigenetic age acceleration. The researchers found that women who experienced childhood sexual abuse developed blunted cortisol profiles when they also experienced epigenetic age acceleration. Epigenetic age acceleration is a measurement of how healthy a

person's cells are. Epigenetic age acceleration is derived from variation in DNA methylation across the genome and is a measure of biological aging that is not due to chronological aging. Disrupted cortisol profiles were observed in women who experienced childhood sexual abuse and had accelerated epigenetic aging but were not seen in women who only experienced one of those factors. Resilience to trauma The researchers said they believe this line of inquiry eventually will contribute to understanding why some people are resilient to abuse while others experience negative health outcomes. "Early life trauma can accelerate aging," said Felt. "This is not universal, however. Many people who suffer abuse show amazing resilience mentally and physically. In the future, we hope to unlock the secrets of resilience so that we can develop interventions that put people on the track to good health after they suffer trauma or abuse."

Research Finds Biomarkers For Depression, Antidepressant Response

Agencies

A new study has found biomarkers for depression in platelets that track the extent of the disorder. The study has been published in the 'Molecular Psychiatry Journal'. Published in a new proof of concept study, researchers led by Mark Rasenick, University of Illinois Chicago distinguished professor of physiology and biophysics and psychiatry, have identified a biomarker in human platelets that tracks the extent of depression. The research builds off of previous studies by several investigators that have shown in humans and animal models that depression is consistent with decreased adenylyl cyclase -- a small molecule inside the cell that is made in response to neurotransmitters such as serotonin and epinephrine. "When you are depressed, adenylyl cyclase is low. The reason adenylyl cyclase is attenuated is that the intermediary protein that allows the neurotransmitter to make the adenylyl cyclase, Gs alpha, is stuck in a cholesterol-rich matrix of the membrane -- a lipid raft -- where they don't work very well," Rasenick said. The new study has identified the cellular biomarker for translocation of Gs alpha from lipid rafts. The biomarker can be identified through a blood test.

"What we have developed is a test that can not only indicate the presence of depression but it can also indicate therapeutic response with a single biomarker, and that is something that has not existed to date," said Rasenick, who is also a research career scientist at Jesse Brown VA Medical Centre. The researchers hypothesized that they will be able to use this blood test to determine if antidepressant therapies are working, perhaps as soon as one week after beginning treatment. Previous research has shown that when patients showed improvement in their depression symptoms, the Gs alpha was out of the lipid raft. However, in patients who

took antidepressants but showed no improvement in their symptoms, the Gs alpha was still stuck in the raft -- meaning simply having antidepressants in the bloodstream was not good enough to improve symptoms. A blood test may be able to show whether or not the Gs alpha was out of the lipid raft after one week. "Because platelets turn over in one week, you would see a change in people who were going to get better. You'd be able to see the biomarker that should presage successful treatment," Rasenick said. Currently, patients and their physicians have to wait several weeks, sometimes months, to determine if antidepressants are working, and when it is determined they aren't working, different therapies are tried. "About 30 per cent of people don't get better



-- their depression doesn't resolve. Perhaps, failure begets failure and both doctors and patients make the assumption that nothing is going to work," Rasenick said. "Most depression is diagnosed in primary care doctor's offices where they don't have sophisticated screening. With this test, a doctor could say, 'Gee, they look like they are depressed, but their blood doesn't tell us they are. So, maybe we need to re-examine this,' he added. Working with his company, Pax Neuroscience, Rasenick aims to develop the screening test after further research.



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- Difficulty Talking
- Rapid & Shallow Breathing
- Racing Heart
- Irregular Heartbeats
- Lips Turning Blue

**HEART ATTACK
SYMPTOMS**

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Feeling weak, light headed, or faint
- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, or back
- Pain or discomfort in arms or shoulders
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath

STROKE SYMPTOMS

- Balance loss/Dizziness
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- Sudden slurring (confusion)
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از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار کلترہ

درخواست منجانب بشیر احمد شاہ ولد حبیب الہ شاہ ساکنہ کلون تحصیل کیری برادرسول RBA سرٹیفیکٹ بکن پیران طاہر بشیر شاہ و تعیم احمد شاہ تحت سی آر 144,294,375 آ

اشہار برادر آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں درخواست سائل دفتر بڈا میں زیر کاروائی ہے اس نسبت پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ بشمول مطلوبہ نقوالا ت ریکارڈ طلب کے گئے جس سے عباں ہوتا ہے کہ سائل ساکنہ کلون تحصیل میں رہائش پذیر ہے۔ بذیل افراد پر مشتمل ہے

1. بشیر احمد شاہ	سربرہ	52	زمینداری
2. سلیمہ بیگم	زویہ	50	گھریلو کام
3. تعیم احمد شاہ	پسر	22	زیر تعلیم
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اسکے علاوہ کوئی بھی افراد کہہ نہیں بتلایا گیا ہے سرٹیفیکٹ زیر بحث اجر کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

نائب تحصیلدار fko

از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار کلترہ

درخواست منجانب غلام محمد صوفی ولد عبد غنی صوفی ساکنہ شجیورہ تحصیل کیری برادرسول RBA سرٹیفیکٹ بکن پیر بشیر احمد صوفی

اشہار برادر آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

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محمد اشرف	پسر	28	ملازم
رفیقہ بانو	دختر	26	زیر تعلیم
بشیر احمد	پسر	22	زیر تعلیم
روینہ جان	دختر	18	زیر تعلیم

اسکے علاوہ کوئی بھی افراد کہہ نہیں بتلایا گیا ہے سرٹیفیکٹ زیر بحث اجر کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ یوم کے اندر پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

نائب تحصیلدار fko

از نیابت کلترہ

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نائب تحصیلدار کلترہ az k

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Contact:- 9149965005/ 9682370979

Public Notice

I have applied for the issuance of pesticides and fertilizer license. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Plant Protection Officer Lal Mandi Sriangar or Chef Agriculture Officer Anantnag within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Gousia Hassan
D/o Ghulam Hassan
R/O Marhama Bijnahara

rna

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost the Driving Licenses of my Vehicle Bearing Regd No:- Jk03-20090009596. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the ARTO ANANTNAG. Within a period of seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Name :- Aljaz Ahmad Ganie
S/o :- Ab Rehman Ganie
R/O :- Furrah Mir Bazar Anantnag

rna

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost the Driving Licenses of my Vehicle Bearing Regd No:- JK03-20100013355 from Dak Bunglow to Khanabal Bridge. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the ARTO ANANTNAG. Within a period of seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Name :- Shabir Ahmad Bhat
S/o :- Manzoor Ahmad Bhat
R/O:- Sarnal Payeen

rna

Public Notice

I have applied for the issuance of DEE Class Contract card from R/B Office. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Super Intending Engineer R/B Circle Anantnag /Kulgam Khanabal within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Name: Shabir Ahmad Kooli
S/o :- Jameel Ahmad Kooli
R/o :- Qazi Mohalla Ahlan Payeen, Gadool Ahlan

rna

Public Notice

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

Riyaz Ah Khan
S/O Gulam Ahmad Khan
R/O Jhangirpora Sarakwara

fko



30-yr-old man 'commits suicide'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A 30-year-old man allegedly committed suicide in Mallabagh area of Srinagar on Monday afternoon.

Official sources said that a man allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself to death in Mallabagh area in Srinagar outskirts.

They said that he was brought to SKIMS Soura, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Meanwhile, local police have taken cognizance of the incident and started investigations in this regard—(KNO)

Who will refund our fee, ask journos after Govt takes KPC back

Agencies

Srinagar: As the government handed over the control of premises of Kashmir Press Club (KPC) premises including building and land back to the estates department, the journalists, who have paid amount for the registration as fees, here have expressed resentment against the move, asking that who is going to repay their fees after such a decision.

Talking to the news agency a number of journalists termed the decision as unfortunate, saying that it was the only place where they would sit to discuss their stories and do other needful work for performing their duties.

"As the press club has been handed over to the estates department again by the government, we need to answer who is going to repay their fees they have submitted since the time the platform was provided to the journalists," they said.

They appealed to the government to look into the matter and come up with any favorable decision so that the journalists are not forced to face hardships or else make it clear who is going to repay their fees.

Pertinently, the government handed over the control of premises of Kashmir Press Club premises including building and land back to the estates department—(KNO)



Hundreds of Journalists on Monday were seen waiting outside Kashmir Press Club (KPC) after it was locked by the authorities following a "coup" by a group of Journalists. Pic Mohammed Raafi

Suspension Of OPD at JVC:Patients, Residents Stage Protest

KO NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar:--The residents and shopkeepers from Bemina area of Srinagar on Monday staged a protest at Press Enclave here, demanding resumption of Put-patient Department (OPD) services at JVC hospital in the locality.

The protesters said "Despite having 90% vacancy of beds available at 500 bed Khonmoh hospital, the authorities stopped OPD services at JVC hospital, causing problems to the patients especially the pregnant women."

"We demand the resumption of OPD services at JVC hospital as per the or-

ders issued by the Director Health Services, Kashmir," they said.

"We appeal to the Lieutenant Governor led administration, Director Health and other concerned authorities to ensure the resumption of OPD services at JVC hospital, they said.

Meanwhile, outside the a chaos-like situation emerged as OPD services were shut for the patients. The main gate of the JVC Hospital here in Bemina area of Srinagar city was closed and patients and attendants were denied entry into the hospital.

Patients were seen waiting near the closed gate, however, the employees of the hospital informed them that they

won't be allowed inside the hospital as OPD counters have been closed.

Pertinently, administration yesterday had announced that all the OPDs will remain open, however, authorities at JVC Hospital closed the OPD counters much discomfiture to the attendants and patients.

A doctor said that the hospital has been designated as Covid-19 hospital and this is the reason OPD has been shut down for the patients.

The patients and attendants who had arrived in the hospital from far off places were seen waiting outside the hospital amid chill and rains.

'Presence Of Omicron, Robust Testing Main Reasons For Positivity In Sgr'

Agencies

Srinagar: As the Covid cases continue to rise in Srinagar elsewhere in Jammu and Kashmir, the health experts here believe that the outbreak of new variant, Omicron and increase in testing capacity are among the reasons behind the surge in cases.

According to the news agency, the toll of active positive cases in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir has mounted to 3877 today.

In the past eight days, Srinagar recorded 3484 cases of Covid.

Asked about the reasons, the health experts said that there are two reasons behind the spike in Covid cases in Srinagar, which include the presence of a new variant and the increase in test-

ing capacity.

"If we talk about Omicron, it is although mild, but very infectious at the same time," one of the health experts said, adding that everyone would catch this variant of virus as it is more infectious than others.

However, he said that it is expected that the virus is in its final stage and thus this more infectious, but mild variant is infecting most of the population.

"The cases might be higher in other districts of Jammu and Kashmir, but due to the disparity in tests, less cases are being detected across the Union Territory," he said.

The health experts said that in wake of the mild variant, the government should shift its focus from the number of cases to ensuring better treatment to the

severely ill patients. "We cannot stop this variant from spreading, but all we need is to take precautions properly," they said.

Moreover, the district administration told KNO that it has taken measures to ensure that the cases are prevented from spreading and in this regard, it has been taking action against those found violating the Standard Operating Procedures.

"One has to take proper precautions. Stop unnecessary movement outside in public places and avoid visiting hospitals to cooperate in dealing with the prevalent situation," an official in the district administration said.

He also said that self protection is must and there is a need to follow all the set guidelines and directions issued by the health department—(KNO)

2 Cows, Calf Charred To Death In Nishat Blaze



Srinagar: Two cows and a calf were charred to death in a blaze that broke out in Nishat area of Srinagar.

Official sources said that fire broke out in a cowshed, belonging to Farooq Ahmad Rather, son of Ghulam Muhammad of Dood Mohalla Nishat in the intervening night of

Sunday-Monday.

They said that two cows and a calf were charred to death in the incident, adding that the fire engulfed another house, which belongs to Shams-ud-din Dar, son of Abdul Salam, damaging the rooftop of the house.

The fire tenders rushed to the spot and doused the flames, they said

Paramedics And The Nursing Staff Of SKIMS Demand Extension

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Paramedics and the Nursing staff of SKIMS Soura here in Srinagar who are working on the academic arrangement basis for the last six months today staged a protest demanding the extension of their services.

Paramedics and the Nursing staff assembled at Srinagar's Press Enclave and appealed to government to extend their academic arrangement period. They said authorities had issued an order when they were engaged that clearly stated

that they can continue till they are not regularized.

The protestors said that they have been raising the issue, but no action has been taken so far.

They said that they have been continuously working during turmoil and are still working during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

"We have approached every corner but justice has been denied by the administration.

The protesting Paramedics and the Nursing staff appealed to the LG, Manoj Sinha to consider their issue regarding their extension and regularization.



Paramedics and the Nursing staff assembled at Srinagar's Press Enclave and appealed to government to extend their academic arrangement period

Extension submitted to govt under consideration: SKIMS

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The authorities at Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences Soura on Monday said that the contractual nursing staff were not attending duties and instead creating unnecessary confusion by using social media platforms.

In a statement, SKIMS PRO said that SKIMS has submitted the file pertaining to extension of contractual nursing staff to the government and is under active consideration.

The statement reads that meanwhile, the contractual nursing staff have not been attending to duties for the last 3 to 4 days, putting patients at inconvenience.

"The contractual appointees were time and again informed by the concerned authorities that file is being processed and orders will be issued after pending approval. They are not attending duties but using social media platforms to create unnecessary confusion," it reads.

DIAL-EMMA



- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS

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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
14 Jumada al-Sani
1443

PRAYERS

FAJR	6: 08
ZUHR	12:38
ASR	4:08
Magrib	5:51
ISHA	7: 15

This Day In History

- 1884 - General Charles Gordon departs London for Khartoum
- 1896 - British troops occupy Kumasi, West Africa
- 1913 - Turkish-Greek sea battle near Troy
- 1919 - The Paris peace conference (aka the Versailles peace conference) opens to draw up the treaties formally ending the Great War (WWI)
- 1941 - World War II: A counter-offensive is launched by the British against the Italians in East Africa
- 1943 - Soviets announce they have broken the long siege of Leningrad by Nazi Germany
- 1943 - US rations bread & metal - banning presliced bread reduce bakery demand for metal parts
- 1943 - The first Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
- 1945 - Soviet troops capture Krakow, Poland.
- 1945 - Soviet Armed Forces enter Krakow and push Germans out only to eventually occupy entire country.
- 1947 - Small river steamer sank on Yangtze River, kills 400
- 1959 Ruth Jessen wins LPGA Tampa Golf Open
- 1960 - US & Japan sign joint defense treaty
- 1960 - Capital Airlines Flight 20 crashes in Virginia, killing all 50 people on-board
- 1968 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalatinsk USSR
- 1969 - Expanded 4 party Vietnam peace talks began in Paris
- 1969 - United Airlines Flight 266 crashes into Santa Monica Bay, killing all 38 people on-board
- 1974 - Israel & Egypt sign weapons accord
- 1977 - Imran Khan takes 12 wickets in match for Pakistan win at the SCG
- 1977 - Scientists identify a previously unknown bacterium as the cause of the mysterious Legionnaires' disease.
- 1977 - Australia's worst rail disaster occurs in Sydney, killing 83 people
- 1978 - Geoff Boycott captains England for the 1st time, v Pakistan at Karachi
- 1978 - Thiokol conducts 2nd test firing of space shuttle's SRB
- 1981 - Iran accepts US offer of \$7.9 billion in frozen assets
- 1983 - IOC restores Jim Thorpe's Olympic medals 70 years after they were taken from him for being paid \$25 in semi-pro baseball
- 1988 - Airliner crashes in SW China, killing all 108 on board
- 1989 - Astronomers discover pulsar in remnants of Supernova 1987A (LMC)
- 1989 - IBM announces earnings up 10.4% in 1988
- 1990 - South Africa says it is reconsidering ban on African National Congress
- 1991 - Iraq launches SCUD missiles against Israel
- 1991 - US acknowledges CIA and US Army paid Manuel Noriega \$320,000 over his career
- 1991 - Eastern Air Lines goes out of business after 62 years, citing financial problems.
- 1993 - Martin Luther King Jr. holiday observed in all 50 states of the USA for 1st time
- 1994 - The Cando event, a possible bolide impact in Cando, Spain. Witnesses claim to have seen a fireball in the sky lasting for almost one minute.
- 1996 - Baseball owners unanimously approve interleague play in 1997
- 2005 - The world's largest commercial jet, the Airbus A380, is unveiled in France
- 2008 - The United Nations announce George Clooney as a UN messenger of peace

From KO Archives

Child back after 12 years

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA -A child who had cross over to the other side of the line of control (LoC) at the age of five has returned to his home at Keranin the border district of Kupwara after turning 17. Identified as Babu Bhat s/o Taj Din Bhat, he crossed the LoC Thursday to the pleasant surprise of his grieving family.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 18 January, 2001)

Wealth Of India's 10 Richest Can Fund Education Of Every Child: Study



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI/DAVOS: Indian billionaires saw their combined fortunes more than double during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their count shot up by 39 per cent to 142, while the wealth of the ten richest is enough to fund school and higher education of children in the country for 25 years, a new study showed today.

In its annual inequality survey released on the first day of the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda summit, Oxfam India further said that an additional one per cent tax on the richest 10 per cent can provide the country with nearly 17.7 lakh extra oxygen cylinders, while a similar wealth tax on the 98 richest billionaire families would finance Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme, for more than seven years.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a huge rush for oxygen cylinders and insurance claims during the second wave last year.

On wealth inequality, Oxfam report further said that 142 Indian billionaires collectively own wealth of \$719 billion (over 53 lakh crore), while the richest 98 of them now have the same wealth as the poorest 55.5 crore people in the bottom 40 per cent (\$657 billion or nearly 49 lakh crore).

If each of the 10 richest Indian billionaires were to spend \$1 mil-

lion daily, it would take them 84 years to exhaust their current wealth, while an annual wealth tax applied to multi-millionaires and billionaires would raise \$78.3 billion a year that would be enough to increase government health budget by 271 per cent or eliminate households' out-of-pocket health budget and leave some \$30.5 billion.

Noting that COVID-19 may have begun as a health crisis but has become an economic one now, Oxfam said the wealthiest 10 per cent have amassed 45 per cent of the national wealth while the share of the bottom 50 per cent of the population is a mere 6 per cent.

It further said that the inadequate governmental expenditure on health, education and social security has gone hand-in-hand with a rise in the privatisation of health and education, thus making a full and secure COVID-19 recovery out of reach for the common citizen.

The study urged the government to revisit its primary sources of revenue generation, adopting more progressive methods of taxation and assessing its structural issues that permit such wealth accumulation by the rich.

Additionally, the government should also redirect revenue towards health, education and social security, treating them as universal rights and as a means of reducing inequality, thereby avoiding the privatisation model for these sectors, Oxfam said



Assembly Polls 2022: Plea In SC To Deregister Parties Not Divulging Criminal Cases Of Candidates

NEW DELHI: The plea filed before the Supreme Court by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay contended that the cause of action for filing the plea arose after Samajwadi Party, fielded notorious gangster Nahid Hasan from Kairana but neither published his criminal records in electronic, print and social media nor the reason of his selection within 48 hours.

On February 13, last year, Shamli Police imposed the Gangster Act on Nahid Hasan, who is a two-time MLA from Kairana. "He (Hasan) has multiple criminal cases and is the mastermind behind the Hindu exodus from Kairana. There are many criminal cases including fraud and extortion and was declared a fugitive by Special MLA-MP Court", said the plea.

The plea argued that the consequences of permitting

THERE ARE PRECEDENTS for this Court to give directions to the ECI to preserve purity of elections and protect fundamental rights.

criminals to contest become legislators are extremely serious for democracy and secularism.

The plea sought a direction to the Election Commission of India to take steps to ensure that every political party publishes the details regarding criminal cases of each candidate along with the reason for such selection on the homepage of its official website in bold letters within 48 hours in the spirit of top court orders passed on September 25, 2018, and February 2, 2020.

"Lawmaking is a serious

business and no amount of personal wealth creation, entertainment and/or championship and medal tally can be compared with the importance of the solemn act of a lawmaker in Parliament, which certainly affects every aspect relating to the idea of a nation", added the plea. The plea contended that criminalisation of politics in India has only grown.

The plea further added, "There are precedents for this Court to give directions to the ECI to preserve purity of elections and protect fundamental rights. In ADR Case, the Court directed ECI to call for information on affidavit from each candidate, inter alia, listing offences with which he is charged, assets of himself and his family by issuing necessary orders in exercise of power under Article 324". **JANS**

Cannot Force A Person To Get Vaccinated: Centre To Supreme Court



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: The Centre has told the Supreme Court that COVID-19 inoculation guidelines issued by the Union health ministry do not envisage forcible vaccination without obtaining the consent of an individual.

On the issue of exempting persons with disabilities from producing vaccination certificates, the Centre told the top court that it has not issued any SOP that makes it mandatory to carry the vaccination certificate for any purpose.

The Centre said this in its affidavit filed in response to a plea by NGO Evara Foundation seeking door-to-door, priority COVID-19 vaccination for persons with disabilities.

"It is submitted that the direc-

tion and guidelines released by Government of India and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare do not envisage any forcible vaccination without obtaining consent of the concerned individual.

"It is submitted that vaccination for COVID-19 is of larger public interest in view of the ongoing pandemic situation," the affidavit filed by the Union health ministry said.

The ministry said that "it is duly advised, advertised and communicated through various print and social media platforms that all citizens should get vaccinated and systems and processes have been designed to facilitate the same."

"However, no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes," it said.

Vaccination For 12-14-Year-Olds Likely From March, Says Covid Panel Chief



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: India will likely begin inoculating children in the 12-14 age groups against Covid from March as the 15-18 population will mostly be fully vaccinated by then, Dr NK Arora, Chairman of the COVID-19 working group NTAGI, said today.

Of the estimated 7.4 crore children in the 15-18 age bracket, over 3.45 crore have already received the first dose of Covax in so far and their second dose is due in 28 days, he said.

"Adolescents in this age group have been actively participating in the inoculation process, and going by this pace of vaccination, the rest of the beneficiaries in the 15-18 age group are likely to be covered with the first dose by January-end and subsequently their second dose is expected to be done by February-end," said the Chairman of the Covid working group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI).

Once everyone in the 15-18 age group is covered, the government is likely to take a policy decision for initiating the vaccination drive for the 12-14 age group in March, he said.

According to him, there is an estimated 7.5 crore population in the 12-14 age group.

Provisional vaccination reports till 7 am today showed that over 39 lakh doses were administered in 24 hours, taking the cumulative number to over 157.2 crore doses.

According to the government data, over 3.45 crore first doses have been given to children in the 15-18 years age group so far.

The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) started on February 2, 2021.

The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination began on March 1 last year for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified comorbid conditions.

The country launched vaccination for all aged over 45 years from April 1, 2021, and allowed everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1.

India has begun administering the "precaution dose" - the third jab of COVID-19 vaccine - to healthcare, frontline workers including personnel deployed for election duty and those aged 60 and above with comorbidities from January 10 as the country witnessed a spike in Covid infections, driven by the highly-transmissible Omicron variant of the virus.

Ittehad-e-Millat Council, UP's Regional Political Outfit, Extends Support To Congress



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW: Ittehad-e-Millat Council, a regional political party of Uttar Pradesh seen as having considerable influence over Muslims of the Bareilly sect, on Monday extended its support to the Congress in all the five poll-bound states.

The support was extended by the outfit chief Tauqir Ahmed Raza Khan on Monday following which UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu thanked him.

Mr Khan, a religious leader of the Bareilly sect of Sunni Muslims had founded his political party Ittehad-e-Millat Council in 2001.

In the 2012 elections, Mr Khan's party had made Shazil Islam Ansari, a former Bahujan Samaj Party minister, its candidate from Bhojipura constituency in Bareilly. Though he had won the polls, he joined the Samajwadi Party later.

Speaking at a press conference at the UPCC headquarters, Mr Khan said restoring peace and harmony in these five states as well as the

country, protecting the Constitution, backwards, downtrodden, oppressed and minorities, youths and farmers is possible only under the Congress and its leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi.

"I discussed the problems of Muslim society with leaders of all political parties and asked them to reflect on these problems in their manifesto and in the party meetings but apart from the Congress, no political party thought it appropriate to talk openly on these issues," he said.

He added that he also met Priyanka Gandhi and realised that the future of the country and the state, communal harmony and the Constitution can be safe only in the hands of those whose families have sacrificed their lives for the unity and integrity of the country.

Criticising Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, Mr Khan accused him of arrogance and alleged that his dreams of raising party flag by ignoring the Muslim leadership will never come true.

Akhilesh Yadav's Seat Offer To BJP MLA To Fight Against Yogi Adityanath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW: With the BJP deciding to field Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath from his home turf Gorakhpur (Urban) assembly seat in the February polls, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday sought to woo the sitting BJP MLA Radha Mohan Agarwal, offering him his party ticket for the seat.

Asked about BJP's Gorakhpur (Urban) MLA Agarwal, the Samajwadi Party chief told reporters in Lucknow, "If you (reporters) can establish contact with him and speak to him, the ticket will be announced and he will get the ticket." Mr Yadav was speaking to reporters at his party headquarters here on the occasion of 'Ann Sankalp Divas'.

Mr Agarwal has been the MLA from Gorakhpur Urban seat since 2002.

"I remember the oath-taking ceremony of Chief Minister (Yogi Adityanath). I had seen Radha Mohan Agarwal on the occasion. He was not able to find a seat and had to keep standing. He has been insulted the most in the BJP government," Mr Yadav said.

On a question about BJP's disgruntled MLAs, Mr Yadav had earlier asserted, "We can-



not give seats to everyone. The BJP can distribute its tickets. We cannot take anyone (into the SP) now." But, as soon as, Agarwal's name was mentioned, he said he would give him the ticket.

Dismissing speculation about his younger brother's wife Aparna Yadav joining the BJP, Akhilesh Yadav said, "The BJP is more concerned about my family than me. Are you asking the question after being inspired by the BJP?" Aparna Yadav had contested the 2017 UP assembly elections on an SP ticket from Lucknow Cantonment but lost to BJP's Rita Bahuguna Joshi.

On a question on Azad Samaj Party chief Chandrashekhar Ravan, the SP chief said, "I had said the SP had given respect to the people of the alliance and had also sacrificed to cement the alliance. At this point of

time, whatever sacrifices have to be made should be made." "The SP is making sacrifices. As far as Chandrashekhar (Ravan) is concerned, I had given him seats. If he wants to help as a brother, he can do so," Mr Yadav added.

"Chandrashekhar had initially accepted two seats, but he said later that his organisation could not agree on it. In this scenario why should the SP be blamed?" he asked.

"That is why I am saying people are hatching conspiracies. Do not level allegations if someone has said anything. Several conspiracies are being hatched for the UP elections and they will be hatched in future as well," Mr Yadav said.

On January 15, the Azad Samaj Party had said, "We thought this is a new Samajwadi Party and there will be some change in it. We can speak about social justice. We wanted unity of the Bahujan and we were banking on him (Akhilesh Yadav) but yesterday we felt that our hopes have been shattered. I feel that Akhilesh ji does not need us. All the best to him. We will fight our own polls." Uttar Pradesh goes to assembly polls in seven phases between February 10 and March 7.

Zomato Delivery Man Shot Dead In Haryana While Dropping Off Food Order



REWARI: A delivery man for online food delivery platform Zomato was shot dead in Rewari while he was serving an order in Sector 19's Ansal township.

His mobile and wallet were also found missing. The police suspected that he was shot with the intent to rob. An FIR has been registered at the Model Town police station.

The police identified the victim as Mahendra Singh (30), a resident of Hudithal village of district Palwal. At the time, he was living in Durga Colony, Rewari and used to work as a delivery man at Zomato.

On Sunday night, he went to Ansal township with a food order. It was just at the gate of the township when someone shot him and he got injured. A passerby saw Mahendra lying in an injured condition and he informed the police. Police reached the spot and rushed the injured to the hospital. He was shot in the stomach and his purse and mobile were also found missing from the spot. Due to his critical condition, he was referred to Delhi's Safdarjung hospital where he succumbed to injury on Monday morning.

"FIR has been registered and we are conducting raids to nab the suspect," said Rewari's DSP Mohammad Jamal.

The incident comes just over a week after Zomato delivery man Salil Tripathi was killed in Delhi after his bike was hit by a drunk police constable's speeding SUV.-PTI

Punjab Man Arrested With 51 Lakh Foreign Currency At Delhi's IGI Airport

Asian News International



of Punjab, intended to depart to Sharjah by a flight from Terminal 3 of Delhi airport when he was intercepted by the Customs Officers. "The Customs officers recovered foreign currency (USD 69,200) equivalent to INR 50,96,580 from the handbag of the passenger," he said. He added that the recovered foreign currency was seized under Section 110 of the Customs Act. The passenger has been arrested, and further investigation in the case is in progress.

NEW DELHI: Delhi Customs have arrested a passenger carrying a high volume of foreign currency worth approximately 51 lakh at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport.

Shaukat Ali Nurvi, additional commissioner of Customs (IGI Airport) informed on Monday that on January 15, an Indian national, native

Chhattisgarh: Jersey Cow Gives Birth To Calf With Three Eyes; Villagers Call It Avatar Of God



A farmer's jersey cow has given birth to a rare calf with three eyes and four nostril holes in a village in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon.

As the word spread, a large number of people are queuing up at the farmer's house to worship the calf calling it an "incarnation of God". The female calf was born to a cow owned by the

farmer, Hemant Chandel, a resident of Nawagaon Lodhi village, on January 13. The calf has an additional eye in the middle of her forehead and also four holes in the nostril. Its tail looks like a 'jata' (heap of matted hair) and its tongue is also longer than normal calves, Chandel told PTI over the phone. Citing a veterinarian, the farmer said the health condition of the calf is good.

"However, due to its long tongue, the calf is facing difficulties in drinking milk from the cow. We are helping in feeding her, he added.

Chandel said that his cow of HF jersey breed had earlier given birth to three calves but all were born with normal anatomy. "The latest calf born with the rare anatomy has surprised everyone. We believe that the Almighty has taken birth in our house, he added. As the news about this rare calf spread, residents of nearby villages and towns have started visiting Chandel's house to worship it as an avatar of Lord Shiva. People are seen queuing up outside Chandel's house and offering flowers and coconut to the calf...-PTI

DRUG MENACE

Police Plans To Open Part-Time Counselling Centre In Reasi

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Police is planning to open part-time counselling centres for drug addicts in Reasi district, a senior officer said on Monday, warning stern action including booking of narcotics peddlers under the Public Safety Act to counter the menace.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Reasi, Shailender Singh sought cooperation of the parents whose children have become drug addicts and said any one willing to give up the drug abuse would be recommended to drug de-addiction centres for their rehabilitation in to the mainstream.

Police are working on a multi-pronged strategy to deal with the problem of drug abuse among the youth. On the one hand 250 drug peddlers and abusers have been booked in 206 cases registered in the last nine months, on the other hand, police are working on rehabilitation of the addicts so that they successfully shun the path of drug abuse, the officer said.

Singh was chairing an interaction between police officers and parents of addicted youth in the lawns of district police office Reasi. Family members of 30 addicted youth from across the district participated in the meeting and assured full cooperation to police.

Police are planning for the opening of a part time counselling centre for (drug) addicts in Reasi and parents should bring their children to attend counselling sessions, the SSP said.

He said to eradicate the drug menace from the society and to save the future generations the citizens should strengthen the anti-narcotics drive of police and must contribute in the war against drug peddlers.

The drug addicts who are ready to give up shall be recommended to de-addiction centres for their rehabilitation to mainstream, he said adding the drug peddlers involved in the dirty business should refrain from such type of activities otherwise they shall be dealt with more strictly under law and shall be booked under PSA in near future.

Describing drug abuse as a major challenge, the SSP said the addiction is a disease and the family members are the first to know about this problem.

"Without the support of family, police cannot eradicate the menace. So family members should come forward and join hands with police against drug abuse, he said.

A police spokesman said all parents expressed their willingness to join hands with law enforcement agencies and were enthusiastic to help children to come out of addiction.

CUK's Maths Deptt, MTTs Starts Initiation To Mathematics Prog

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: Department of Mathematics, Central University of Kashmir (CUK) in collaboration with Mathematics Training and Talent Search (MTTS) Trust started a 15-days online programme, "Initiation into Mathematics, Jammu and Kashmir.

The programme is being funded by the National Board for Higher Mathematics, Department of Atomic Energy, Gol.

Welcoming the MTTS members and participants, Prof. Wali Mohammad Shah, Dean School of Physical and Chemical Sciences, thanked the MTTS Trust on behalf of CUK for conducting the programme for the undergraduate students of Jammu and Kashmir, and including Ms. Farhat Zargar, a student of this

university as a mentor.

In his address, MTTS Trust, President, Prof. G. Santhanam, said that among the significant features of MTTS camps is its two-week Foundation Course for Mathematics which has made a lot of difference to the confidence, attitude and enthusiasm for Mathematics among the students.

Thanking the CUK for collaboration, programme director, Prof. S Kumaresan, said that it is his observation during various programmes conducted in or outside Kashmir that the students from Jammu and Kashmir are talented and remain very attentive during their class time. He also promised to conduct problem solving programmes in offline mode for the students of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

'Smart Anganwadis' To Be Reality In Jammu: JSCL CEO



Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The humble-looking anganwadis in Jammu are all set to have a complete makeover as the Jammu Smart City Limited (JSCL) is converting their conventional buildings into structures with better amenities, officials said on Monday.

The JSCL is converting 14 buildings in Jammu into 'Smart Anganwadi Centers' under the Smart City Mission programme of the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the officials said.

The 14 Anganwadi centres are Naseeb Nagar A, Naseeb-Nagar-B, Mana-Basti, BC Road, Kabir Colony-A, Rama Lane, Trikuta Nagar -Sec-3, Trikuta Nagar-Extension, Trikuta Nagar (South-Extension), Press Morh B, Qasim Nagar B, Belicharan A, Ruhimorh B and Lower Gadigarh.

JSCL Chief Executive Officer Avny Lavasa visited different anganwadis to review the status of the ongoing project and was informed that several items ranging from furniture to stationary items were procured to convert conventional buildings of anganwadis into structures with better amenities.

Moreover, some of the buildings have also been shortlisted for wall paintings, the officials said.

They said the items procured under the Smart City Mission are chairs and tables for kids as well as visitors, pre-school kits, white boards, stationary items, utensils, storage bins, hygiene kits, almirah, racks and wall clocks.

The upgradation of Anganwadi Centers will provide better early childhood care and make the facility more child-friendly to nurture the mental and physical development of children, Lavasa said.

She said a total of 14 Anganwadi centres under three Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) Jammu, Sattwari and Gandhi Nagar are being developed in the district.

The focus of JSCL is to improve the quality of life of people by enabling local development and harnessing technology to create smart outcomes for citizens, the CEO said.

Several initiatives have already been taken under the aegis of JSCL to improve the urban experience of the population including tourists.

These include installation of wayfinding signages, establishing of WiFi zones, improving the drainage scenario in the city, improvement of 23 junctions, establishment of heritage trail, building a multilevel car parking and smart parking, the officials said.

3 Dead As Truck Plunges Into Gorge In Rajouri

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Three people were killed and another critically injured Monday when a truck skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

The accident took place at Bhella village of Khawas when the driver of the truck lost control of it while negotiating a blind curve around 8.30 pm, the officials said.

They said the rescuers immediately swung into action and retrieved three bodies from the scene.

Another person was shifted to hospital in a critical condition, the officials said.



FILE PHOTO

Mehbooba Fires Fresh Salvo At J&K Govt Says Land Of Poor Being Given To Investors To Build Apartments

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: PDP president and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti on Monday visited the protesting families affected by an anti-encroachment drive here and urged the administration to return their land which was in their possession over the past seven decades.

She alleged that the Lt Governor administration wants to bring in real estate investors from outside after taking away land from the poor to build apartments.

This government has no human face and the fact of the matter is that both the BJP-led central government and the Lt Governor administration in J-K is deaf, dumb and blind, Mehbooba told reporters after interacting with the protesting families in Roop Nagar area on the outskirts of Jammu.

Last week, the Jammu Development Authority (JDA) retrieved prime land worth crores of rupees from alleged encroachers during an anti-encroachment drive with the assistance of police and district administration in the area, rendering many families homeless.

According to the JDA officials, the encroached land in the posh area measuring over five



acres was retrieved during the five-hour-long drive which saw some 17 structures including houses and cowsheds raised to the ground.

The affected families, mostly Gujjars and Bukerwals, are on the streets against the drive, claiming that they were in possession of the land for over eight decades and were rendered homeless by the administration in winter without serving any notice.

Every government is meant to serve the public but this government is anti-poor. They want to bring in real estate investors from outside after taking away land from the poor public to build apartments. We want Lt Governor (Manoj Sinha) to look into the plight of these hapless people and return their land to them, Mehbooba said.

Earlier interacting with the affected families, who are protesting against the demolition of their homes and their eviction, inside a tent near the

site, Mehbooba said she will do whatever possible to ensure that justice is done with them.

She said she was informed that nobody from the administration visited the families to take note of their plight in the aftermath of the demolition drive which has rendered them homeless amid the chilly weather and coronavirus pandemic.

The PDP president said her party will raise the issue forcefully and will tell the administration that it will be responsible if anyone among the affected families, especially the elderly or minors, dies of cold.

She denounced the selective demolition and said big bungalows have come up on the JDA land. But since they are rich people they were left untouched.

Even one of their leaders (former deputy chief minister Nirmal Singh of BJP) was served a demolition notice by the JDA for illegal construction near a defence installation but no action was taken till date, the PDP leader said.

She urged the protesting families to remain steadfast in their struggle like the farmers who agitated for nearly a year against three agri laws, saying her party will remain behind them to ensure their early rehabilitation.

Hospitalizations, Not Case Count Should Determine Lockdown: DAK

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Monday said lockdown should be decided on the basis of number of patients hospitalized with Covid rather than the number of positive cases.

"Hospitalization rates, not case count should determine curbs and restrictions," said DAK President and Influenza expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

Dr Hassan said the number of cases should not be the metric for imposing restrictions.

"Daily case count was used as a barometer early in the pandemic to impose restrictions because that time a rise in cases inevitably led to increase in hospitalizations," he said.

"With omicron those metrics have changed now," said Dr Nisar.

He said while Omicron variant causes lot of infections, most of the infections are mild. Even though the positivity rate is high, most of the cases do not require hospitalization.

The DAK President said we need to recognize that omicron is all around us and it can infect anybody. We no longer need to identify and manage every single case of the variant.

"Case counts have lost relevance; hospitalization numbers are now reliable markers when it comes to assessing the threat from pandemic," he said.

"We should be shifting our focus on Covid-related hospitalizations, bed occupancy and number of patients on ventilators."

"That should be the major metric and not cases in deciding about imposing severe restrictions, like lockdown," he added.

General Secretary DAK Dr

Arshad Ali said the reason why we were tracking cases was because we were hoping we could eliminate the virus.

"But it is not in the nature of the virus to get eliminated," he said adding "we have to live with the virus and it is going to stay with us."

Spokesperson DAK Dr Riyaz Ahmad Daggia said we have reached a point in pandemic where policy should no longer be based around the idea that we cannot resume normal life until case number is below a particular level.

"These levels were set before vaccination. Setting threshold for activities according to case numbers no longer makes sense," he said.

"Countries like Canada, Philippines and Singapore are now implementing an approach that is not focused on case counts," he added.

DISTRICT DAIRY

Observer News Service

DC Budgam Calls For Fool-Proof Security On R-Day

BUDGAM: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Shahbaz Ahmed Mirza on Monday chaired a meeting of district officers and various security agencies for finalising arrangements in connection with upcoming Republic Day-2022 celebrations.

The meeting was informed that the main function of the Day shall be held at Sports Stadium, Budgam while similar functions would be held at sub-division and Tehsil levels also.

It was also given out that the contingents of JKP, CRPF, NCC will participate in the march past parade. Besides various cultural programmes would also be part of the celebrations and an award felicitation ceremony will also be held at the venue.

On the occasion, various committees like the hospitality committee, stage management committee, selection committee were formed for the smooth conduct of the celebrations.

Different departments viz, Education, PHE, R&B, DYSSO, Information, Health, Sports, Traffic, Motor Vehicles, Police, Floriculture, PDD, Municipality and Paramilitary Forces were

identified for looking after their respective assignments.

The decoration of the main venue ground, seating arrangements, uninterrupted power supply, drinking water/tanker service, barricading of venue, medical aid camp, availability of ambulance, deployment of fire tenders, transportation facilities, adequate and separate vehicle parking, refreshment, invitations, PAS system, brochures, cleanliness and sanitation measures were discussed threadbare in the meeting.

The DC stressed upon strict observance of COVID-19 SOPs and CAB by all participants with special emphasis on march past parades and cultural programmes.

The DC further instructed upon smooth transportation, mobile toilets and change room facilities for participants.

Security agencies were instructed to ensure fool-proof security arrangements at all the venues where functions in this regard will be held across the district.

Heads of departments were also instructed to install banners of their departments for showcasing their activities for the general public.

DC Ganderbal Reviews R-Day Preparations

GANDERBAL: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Kritika Jyotsna on Monday chaired a meeting of officers to review the preparations for celebration of forthcoming 73rd Republic Day-2022 here in the district.

At the outset, detailed discussion was held regarding security arrangements, Seating arrangements, Sanitation, drinking water, Electricity, Medical aid and other emergency facilities at Qamaria ground where the main function will be organized.

The DC directed the concerned to ensure arrangements regarding various facilities including transport, parking, seating, availability of drinking water, uninterrupted electricity supply, deployment of health, fire and emergency staff and other related arrangements.

The Health Department was directed to deploy ambulance at the venue with sufficient staff and emergency medicines on the full dress rehearsal to be held on January 24 and on the

main function to be celebrated on January 26. Besides, to make arrangements of first aid, sanitizers and masks at the venue along with thermal screening of the audience on the day of the function.

The Power Development department was asked to ensure uninterrupted power supply at the venue during rehearsal and on the main function day with adequate power backup at the venue. The PHE Department was instructed to place sufficient water Tankers at the venue from January 24.

Municipal Council Ganderbal was asked to take proper sanitation measures to ensure proper cleanliness in and around the venue.

Calling for strict compliance to COVID SOPs while performing different activities related to the National Day celebrations, the DC asked for ensuring that all the COVID related protocols are strictly adhered to by all the participants during rehearsals and on the scheduled day to avoid the risk of infection.

DC Kupwara Reviews Covid-19 Scenario

KUPWARA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Imam Din on Monday convened a meeting of concerned officers to review the Covid-19 scenario in the district.

The meeting was informed that there are currently 483 active positive cases in the district with 1.55 percent positivity rate. Besides, the district has recorded 14904 recovered cases constituting 95.79 percent recovery rate.

Addressing the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner said that the need of the hour is to take maximum precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic as the J&K UT is witnessing a spike in daily positive cases. He appealed to the general public to not lower the guard

against the pandemic and urged them to take vaccines and follow the Covid appropriate behaviour.

He directed the concerned officers to ensure strict vigil on the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, besides, ensure maximum sampling so that people with Covid like symptoms could be isolated earlier.

At Tangdar, SDM Karnah, Dr. Gulzar Ahmad Rather reviewed the scenario of Covid-19 in the sub division in an officers meeting. The meeting held a threadbare discussion on the necessary measures to be put in place for mitigation of Covid-19 crisis including establishment of RTPCR testing point at Baghbella, enforcement of usage of Gloves and masks by vegetable and meat vendors, besides, observing of Covid appropriate behaviour inside passenger vehicles.

Mehta Directs H&ME Dept To Speed Up Vaccination Of Teens

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta on Monday chaired a meeting to review the functioning of the Health & Medical Education Department and progress achieved under the CAPEX Budget during this financial year.

The Additional Chief Secretary, Health & Medical Education Department, Director, SKIMS, concerned HoDs, Principals of all Medical Colleges, and other senior officers of the Department attended the meeting.

It was informed that 422 drugs are provided free of cost across all government

hospitals, especially under maternal and child health care through government drugs stores. The Chief Secretary directed the Health Department to submit a report on procurement, storage, and distribution of free medicines in all government facilities, besides raising awareness on the provision of free medicines through displayed lists at prominent places in the hospital premises.

Further, to streamline prescriptions of drugs by doctors, the Chief Secretary directed a prescription audit and asked the Department to ensure that all doctors produce their seal and signature on the



prescription card, in case the prescribed drugs include non-generic medicines to be procured from the market.

Dr. Mehta emphasized switching over to digital prescriptions by the next financial year through suitable provisions in the

CAPEX budget, which will be a step ahead in the direction of implementing e-Health Services in the Union territory. He maintained that the system is to be further integrated with a patient feedback mechanism on the quality of services available at govern-

ment hospitals through 'Mera Haspatal' initiative by February 2022.

With a view to improve the standards of healthcare at all institutions across Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Secretary impressed upon the Department to introduce the Health Management Information System by March 2022. The Department was also asked to obtain quality certification for all Health Care Facilities within one year, and conduct regular training of the healthcare professionals.

Moreover, the Health and Medical Education Department was asked to notify a quality policy to be followed by the govern-

ment health care institutions to ensure uniformity of treatment throughout the Union territory, while maintaining a high level of hygiene and cleanliness.

Dr. Mehta also directed the concerned to ensure adequate testing, fast-tracked vaccination in the 15-17 age category, and the best possible treatment to the COVID patients.

With regard to the completed works under the UT and District CAPEX and PMDP, the Department was asked to compile a compendium of completed projects with all details and geo-tagged photographs, to be put in the public domain for public view.

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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K O V I E W

China Challenge

In an obvious reference to the ongoing stand-off with China along the Line of Control on the 74th Army Day0, Army Chief General MM Naravane said on Saturday that Army will prevent any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo along the borders. He asserted that the country's patience stems from self-confidence, but it should not be tested by adversaries. General Naravane admitted that the last year was "challenging for the Army" specifically mentioning the northern front. He, however, said that the efforts will continue to find a resolution "on the principle of mutual and equal security". The Army chief, however, acknowledged that on the western front the situation "is better than last year" as the ceasefire violations were largely controlled since the understanding between the DGMOs last February. But he warned that the training camps were still active across the border as 300 to 400 militants were waiting for an opportunity to infiltrate, and the attempts to smuggle weapons using drones were continuing.

Earlier in a statement, General Naravane had said that India "is not averse" to the demilitarisation of the Siachen Glacier, on the condition that Pakistan accepted the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) dividing the two countries' positions. He said the militarisation of Siachen was a result of an attempt by Pakistan to unilaterally change the status quo in late 1984, which forced India to take countermeasures. There has, however, been no response to the statement from Islamabad.

Going forward, it is difficult to predict how 2022 would go. As underlined by the Army chief, the northern border remains a challenge. The two countries failed to arrive at a breakthrough even in their 14th round of Corps Commander-level talks. The two sides were looking at a possible agreement for disengagement from Hot Springs as part of the comprehensive disengagement and de-escalation efforts in eastern Ladakh. The stand-off is now over 20-month-long and the successive efforts to end it have met a modest success. Last year, the two countries had disengaged from the friction point at Pangong Tso lake but ever since they have struggled to replicate at the other friction points: Hot Springs, Demchok and Dapsang. Meanwhile, the People's Liberation Army has enhanced its military profile on the border by deploying thousands of its soldiers and equipment.

As things stand, it doesn't look like things will change much this year. Pakistan, going by the statements of its leadership, has given up on any engagement with New Delhi as the latter wouldn't reverse the withdrawal of Article 370. And China wants to cement the new status quo along the LAC. Here's hoping that the situation turns out contrary to what seems like an eminently predictable course of events.

OTHER OPINON

Unconquered

Support throws up surprises and cricket is not immune to it. The latest twist transpired at Cape Town's Newlands where South Africa registered a seven-wicket victory in the third Test and won the series 2-1 against India. In recent cricketing history, this was a script-altering moment. India was the fancied team even if it missed the injured duo of Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja. Virat Kohli's men had a swagger gained from defeating Australia in its backyard and leading 2-1 over England in an unfinished series at the Old Blighty. The loss to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final was deemed an aberration. This squad had quality batters, fearsome pacers, Rishabh Pant's x-factor and R. Ashwin's guile. In contrast, South Africa was in transition and after the first Test loss at Centurion, Quinton de Kock prematurely retired. Leading 1-0, India was expected to twist the knife in and win the series, an accomplishment that eluded it since the maiden tour of South Africa in 1992-93. South Africa remains India's Final Frontier and when the dust settled at Newlands on Friday with the nearby Table Mountain casting a shadow, the host had the last word, having ambushed India in consecutive Tests. Dean Elgar's men triumphed in the second Test at Johannesburg and extended that winning habit into Newlands while the Indians were sore losers.

The manner in which Kohli and Company reacted after an LBW appeal was negated through the Decision Review System, was obnoxious. Elgar survived against Ashwin and Kohli set a poor example with his antics before the stump microphone, a trait that a few wrongly emulated. South Africa won because Elgar and Keegan Petersen bolstered the top-order while speedsters Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen bowled sharp. Over two seasons India coped with a fragile middle-order. Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane and Kohli have not flourished, though the last-named hinted at having turned a corner with a 79 in the last Test. But time is running out for Pujara and Rahane, especially after the latest series average of 20.67 and 22.67, respectively. Pant's splendid hundred proved inadequate as his acclaimed colleagues flattered to deceive. Defending meagre 200-plus targets can test the finest bowling attacks and Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami had an unenviable task. India has to strengthen its batting and improve its on-field demeanour. Above all, a Test captaincy change has been forced after Kohli stepped down on Saturday. Perhaps the latest result precipitated his decision, marking the end of a leadership era. Having taken charge in 2014, Kohli became India's most successful leader in the longest format with 40 triumphs from 68 matches. Rohit may be the successor, but before that the three ODIs against South Africa beckon.

The Hindu

Reshaping The Geopolitics Of Middle East

Hafeez ullah Khan

The prevailing discourse in the United States is becoming dominated by the belief that the Middle East has lost its central position in the strategic calculations of the superpower. USA's reliance on Middle Eastern oil has significantly reduced since the beginning of an era of uni-polarity; in fact, the US is now one of the biggest oil exporters in the world. Though the Middle East remains an area of secondary concern for the US, as a big chunk of the world's energy supply comes from the Persian Gulf and stability in this region is necessary to sustain the global oil market and ensure consistency in terms of international economic order.

The primary focus of US foreign policy has shifted to the Asia Pacific region and the rise of China as an economic, military, and tech power. As of now, the US maintains the presence of over forty thousand troops on the ground in almost all Middle Eastern countries except Iran. The American disengagement in the region is not an option, leading to a significant reduction in troops; however, the military footprint has begun, particularly the defense infrastructure. According to reports, the Pentagon is scaling back on eleven Patriot and THAAD antimissile batteries from four regional countries, including Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

How is the US surviving in the Middle East despite reduced influence?

Politically and in terms of policy, the American disengagement kick-started with President Obama's Pivot to Asia policy and his initial refusal to intervene in the Syrian Civil War after using chemical weapons and reluctance to contain the threat of the Islamic State (IS). The demise of American power in the region paradoxically had begun with its invasion of Iraq. This event heightened the security dilemma for Iran, which in turn escalated its covert efforts for influence in the Shia-dominated regions of the Middle East, including Iraq. In the era of the Cold War, the US practiced the policy of offshore balancing.

The balance of power had already been established with certain states siding with the US, such as the Gulf states and Jordan, while Syria and Iraq joined the Soviet camp. The rise of uni-polarity brought in unchecked American interventionism. The military and financial costs of the US mission in Iraq combined with reduced US interdependency on oil, the financial recession of 2008, and growing unpopularity of foreign intervention in America's domestic politics brought a shift in the Bush-era adventurism. However, the damage was already



done; as the US was adopting a more gentle approach to the region, the socio-economic pitfall of the Arab countries exploded in the form of the Arab Spring of 2011. The Arab Spring resulted in Civil Wars in Libya, Syria, Yemen, and the Islamic

in the wake of diminishing US ability to craft events in the region. Turkey only became an active actor after the Syrian Civil War, while Saudi Arabia enjoyed full US sponsorship to balance the perceived or real Iranian threat. Tehran, for its part,

DESPITE US PATRONAGE OF SAUDI Arabia, the current balance of power is in Iran's favor. In Syria and the Yemeni conflict, the Iranian-supported regimes and actors enjoy an upper hand. For all their maneuvering, coercion, and diplomacy, the Americans seem unable to shape and control the geopolitical realities in the Middle East any longer

State's rise as a capable expansionist nonstate actor. These Civil Wars, later on, turned into proxy wars between regional and extra-regional rivals. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey favored and sponsored their own factions in these conflicts. The instability brought on by the Civil Wars brought a golden opportunity for these regional actors to test their weight in shaping the events in the region.

The entry of Russia's troops in Syria in 2015 symbolized the weakening US hegemony of the region

Though Moscow has become an important factor in the region, as it also enjoys Iran's support, the regional actors remain the driving force behind the Middle East's geopolitics. The current geopolitical landscape has divided the region into three blocs, one dominated by Iran, the second by Saudi Arabia, and the third somewhat smaller by Turkey.

The current politics of the region is driven primarily by the policies, objectives, and designs of these powers, with US and Russia being more like spectators and intune to the whims of these actors. All three states perceive a role for themselves

was motivated by the urgent sense of insecurity driven by its history after the Islamic Revolution, triggered and exacerbated by the US intervention of Iraq. US actions in Iraq naturally activated the security dilemma in Tehran.

Hence Iranian investments in nonstate actors, proxies, and militias grew exponentially. In the case of Baghdad, these proxies, militias, and power vacuum succeeded in providing Tehran were a massive influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. Saudi Arabia and Turkey, despite enjoying financial and conventional military superiority, cannot sustain against Iran's use of proxies as instruments in conflicts. Despite US patronage of Saudi Arabia, the current balance of power is in Iran's favor. In Syria and the Yemeni conflict, the Iranian-supported regimes and actors enjoy an upper hand. For all their maneuvering, coercion, and diplomacy, the Americans seem unable to shape and control the geopolitical realities in the Middle East any longer.

The post-US- Middle East stage is already set, and Iran is likely to triumph over Saudi Arabia. In case of a significant US disengagement from the region following scenar-

ios can occur, first is a continuation of prolonged proxy wars with both Iran and Saudi Arabia vying for dominance. This outcome seems rather unlikely as, despite both sides desiring hegemony, the continuation of conflicts in Yemen and Syria would fuel further instability. In contrast, conflict might penetrate the borders of these two countries, as already witnessed in the case of Houthi attacks on the Saudi mainland.

Iran and Saudi's newly reformed relations

The second is some sort of engagement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to at least disengage from active conflicts in the Middle East to avoid escalation. The third scenario could be an alliance between Israel, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the Gulf states to counter Tehran's influence. Despite that an understanding against Iran already exists among Israel and the Arab Gulf, the Gulf monarchies, including UAE, are unlikely to be keen on this scenario as it puts them directly under the wrath of Iranian militias and proxies, a prospect even more glaring under the absence of US as a benefactor.

For the US, the admission that heightened perception of Iran as a threat and the aggressive rhetoric and interventionist policies actually contributed to the Middle East's quagmire today is critical to determine the course of action prior to complete disengagement. The US has already realized the limits of its ability to shape geopolitical events. The only option is to prevent the regional Cold War from escalating by encouraging Saudi Arabia to engage Iran with clear strategic objectives. The US must convince Riyadh to end the conflict in Yemen and find a political settlement with the Houthis.

Iran should also be re-engaged by reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action using economic and diplomatic incentives while encouraging the country to change its aggressive tone regarding Riyadh. It seems that sooner or later, the US will significantly disengage from the region to focus entirely on geopolitical conflict with China and Russia. Cooperation between the Saudi Arabia-led bloc and Iran-led bloc of regional countries is the only way to maintain the stability of the Middle East.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Global Village Space.

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Robust Use Of Technical Education

THE use of technical education has given a new encouragement to the education of children in India during the epidemic. The education system of the country has now become as online as possible. Educational institutions across the country have been closed for the last one and half years. The epidemic has profoundly affected the economy and lives of school administrators, coaching center operators, temporary private school teachers and staff. On the other hand, the future of millions of students is still hanging in the balance. Anxiety about the future makes them feel depressed and stressed. The multifaceted development of the educational institutions that have shaped the future of the students has been affected due to their long tenure! However, in the difficult times of the epidemic, it has established itself as a useful and effective education system as an alternative to online education.

It has proved to be a unique medium of teaching and learning by staying in one place and protecting oneself from the epidemic while maintaining the continuity of education. This has not only reduced the stress on teachers and students and parents, but also saved everyone's life and time. While many private and public educational institutions have rapidly embraced the virtual education medium, adapting to this form has been challenging for many institutions struggling with lack of resources and support. The

epidemic has disrupted schooling around the world. More than one hundred and ninety countries around the world had to close their schools to escape the corona. According to UNESCO, the education of 137 billion students in six countries has been suspended since the launch of COVID-19. The prevalence of online education as an alternative to the disruption of schooling has grown exponentially, but it is a matter of concern that this type of education has not reached everyone.

A report by the Economist Intelligence Unit states that the closure of schools has disrupted the education of only 100 million of the world's 16 billion schoolchildren, meaning that such children continue to study at home despite the closure. Due to lack of technology at home, their education is continuous. For these children, technology has bridged the gap between home and school. Through technology, children are also solving their own problems by participating in daily classes. But on the other hand, the future of millions of rural children far from access to online education is in jeopardy. The problem of smartphones, poor power supply, inability to buy electronic gadgets and slow internet has taken over the future of those children! In an epidemic, children are witnessing their own future being destroyed right in front of their eyes! Due to Covid-19, even in the full and current education session of 2020-21, classes are being conducted with different methods of technology.

Through smartphones, computers and laptops, WhatsApp, Zoom, Email, etc., some children have been able to overcome the lack of schooling, but the worry is that homes in the country that do not have access to these technologies. The children there are deprived of the essential syllabus of the class. But the real situation of power and power supply in the country is not hidden from anyone. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2017-18 shows that 16 per cent households in the state get less than one to eight hours a day, 33 per cent households get 12 hours of electricity and only 45 per cent households get more than 12 hours of electricity. The reality is that the state of technical education and online education in government schools is worse.

Most of the children attending these schools belong to low-income families. They have neither the facility of a smartphone nor the status to buy an internet pack. Poverty, awareness and lack of technical knowledge in such families do not give much importance to the need for technology based education. Millions of children in the country are not taking advantage of online education even if they want to. In fact, the problem of electricity and internet is the main obstacle in the way of universal access to online education and its success. The internet has become a basic need of almost every conscious person today. The Internet has played a significant role in making life easier. It has also be-

come a means of radical change in society. But on the other hand, it is surprising that a large portion of the country's population is far from accessing information on the Internet. It is also difficult for a large section of the population to afford two meals a day, so it is very wrong for them to think of getting electricity and internet connection.

According to the first round of the Annual Education Status Report 2020 , 39 out of every 100 students are deprived of online education because they do not have a smartphone. Only 67 per cent of the country's urban population has access to the internet, compared to just 31 per cent in rural India. According to Internet and Mobile SC Bun of India, the number of Internet subscribers in the country by 2020 was 622 million.

Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka are the only three states in terms of internet subscribers, while Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are the three most backward states. It is estimated that the number of Internet subscribers in India could increase by 45% by 2025. However, the importance of the Internet in the country as well as its speed is also in question. It is customary for housewives to have cheaper mobile phones than men and to give their sons ahead of time and more expensive smartphones than their daughters expect. It also needs to change

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Ralph Braun

Father Of The Mobility Movement For Disabled People

M Ahmad

Ralph Braun was born on Jan 18, 1940 in Winamac, Indiana, United States. When he was six years old, doctors diagnosed him with muscular dystrophy, condition that limited his ability to use his limbs and move around like every other child of his age. He started using a wheelchair at the age of 14 for mobility. After dropping out of college just a year after entry due to mobility difficulty, he kept things going and wasn't deterred by his physical challenges. Being physically challenged may be an issue but not to Braun. The life and business journey of Ralph Braun inspire and challenges every able and challenged person, that when there is a will there's a way. It's a story that started with sadness but ended with joy. It all began with a physical challenge but ended with a lot of abilities and successes. Determined to maintain his independence, he engineered the world's first motorized scooter and followed by first wheelchair accessible vehicles and wheelchair lifts for PWDs.

The business life of Ralph Braun started out of the desire to solve a problem. The aim was to get a solution that will help him make moving around easier. If whatever he arrives can help him, then, it can help a lot more people with similar conditions like his. Ralph Braun has built a \$200 million company but he started small in his father's garage. It all began with an idea to make living easier for him. He got that right and shared the same practical solution to help others as well. He was neck-deep into all activities and outcomes because he had to use it first for himself.

Save-A-Step was Braun's first manufacturing company where he built the first motorized scooter in 1963. Braun's ingenuity continued and by 1966, he created a wheelchair platform lift for the physically challenged to drive



their cars. He helped people convert their vehicles to be wheelchair accessible. By 1970, Ralph Braun had developed a technology able to add wheelchair lifts to a full-sized van. Save-A-Step was later incorporated under a new name, The Braun Corporation.

The company grew substantially over the next decades, and today, the Braun Corporation is the worldwide leader of wheel-

chair accessible vehicles and wheelchair lifts in the mobility industry. What started as a part-time business operated from his parents' garage has grown into an international corporation with over 800 employees. In 2006, the Braun Corporation adopted the name Braunability as a brand name. When he was in his 50s, he was holding the position of CEO at Braun Corporation. Ralph Braun

was honored as a Champion of Change in 2012 by the former US president, Barack Obama for leading education and employment efforts in science, technology, engineering and math for Americans with disabilities. He was inducted into the NMEDA Hall of Fame in 2012 and was recognized as Employer of the Year by the Commission for the Handicapped and the Indiana State Board of Health. He

RALPH BRAUN proved that disability is not a curse but it's a challenge that drives us to be a person of distinct character giving the world a new thing that the rest of the world has never imagined before

was also honored with the Support of the Guard and Reserves Patriot Award for his support of his employees who serve in the military. "Rise Above", an autobiography of Ralph W. Braun, written by himself inspires everyone where he had stated about the challenges and roadblock and a strong desire to stand among the odds.

With dedication and commitment, he lived out his dream and changed the world around him for the better. Passion was the drive and he kept it alive all through his life's journey. He died on 8th Feb, 2013 at the age of 72 years.

Ralph Braun proved that disability is not a curse but it's a challenge that drives us to be a person of distinct character giving the world a new thing that the rest of the world has never imagined before.

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Here's Where (And How) You Are Most Likely To Catch Covid – New Study

Trish Greenhalgh

Two years into the pandemic, most of us are fed up. COVID case rates are higher than they've ever been and hospitalisation rates are once again rising rapidly in many countries.

Against this bleak picture, we yearn to get back to normal. We'd like to meet friends in a pub or have them over for dinner. We'd like our struggling business to thrive like it did before the pandemic. We'd like our children to return to their once-familiar routine of in-person schooling and after-school activities. We'd like to ride on a bus, sing in a choir, get back to the gym, or dance in a nightclub without fear of catching COVID.

Which of these activities is safe? And how safe exactly? These were the questions we sought to answer in our latest research.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID, spreads mainly by airborne transmission. So the key to preventing transmission is to understand how airborne particles behave, which requires knowledge from physics and chemistry.

Air is a fluid made up of invisible, rapidly and randomly moving molecules, so airborne particles disperse over time indoors, such as in a room or on a bus. An infected person may exhale particles containing the virus, and the closer you are to them, the more likely you are to inhale some virus-containing particles. But the longer the period you both spend in the room, the more spread out the virus will become. If you are outdoors, the space is almost infinite, so the virus doesn't build up in the same way. However, someone can still transmit the virus if you're close to them.

Viral particles can be emitted every time an infected person breathes, but



IN OUR STUDY, WE HAVE QUANTIFIED HOW THE DIFFERENT influences on transmission change your risk of getting sick: viral factors (transmissibility/prevalence), people factors (masked/unmasked, exercising/sitting, vocalising/quiet) and air-quality factors (indoors/outdoors, big room/small room, crowded/uncrowded, ventilated/unventilated)

especially if their breathing is deep (such as when exercising) or involves vocalisation (such as speaking or singing). While wearing a well-fitting mask reduces transmission because the mask blocks the release of virus, the unmasked infected person who sits quietly in a corner is much less likely to infect you than one who approaches you and starts a heated argument.

All variants of SARS-CoV-2 are equally airborne, but the chance of catching COVID depends on the transmissibility (or contagiousness) of the variant (delta was more contagious than previous variants, but omicron is more

contagious still) and on how many people are currently infected (the prevalence of the disease). At the time of writing, more than 97% of COVID infections in the UK are omicron and one person in 15 is currently infected (prevalence 6.7%). While omicron appears more transmissible, it also seems to produce less severe illness, especially in vaccinated people.

Likelihood of becoming infected

In our study, we have quantified how the different influences on transmission change your risk of getting sick: viral

factors (transmissibility/prevalence), people factors (masked/unmasked, exercising/sitting, vocalising/quiet) and air-quality factors (indoors/outdoors, big room/small room, crowded/uncrowded, ventilated/unventilated).

We did this by carefully studying empirical data on how many people became infected in superspreader events where key parameters, such as the room size, room occupancy and ventilation levels, were well-documented and by representing how transmission happens with a mathematical model.

The new chart, adapted from our pa-

per and shown below, gives a percentage likelihood of becoming infected in different situations (you can make it bigger by clicking on it).

A surefire way to catch COVID is to do a combination of things that get you into the dark red cells in the table. For example:

- Gather together with lots of people in an enclosed space with poor air quality, such as an under-ventilated gym, nightclub or school classroom
- Do something strenuous or rowdy such as exercising, singing or shouting
- Leave off your masks
- Stay there for a long time.

To avoid catching COVID, try keeping in the green or amber spaces in the table. For example:

- If you must meet other people, do so outdoors or in a space that's well-ventilated or meet in a space where the ventilation is good and air quality is known
- Keep the number of people to a minimum
- Spend the minimum possible amount of time together
- Don't shout, sing or do heavy exercise
- Wear high-quality, well-fitting masks from the time you enter the building to the time you leave.

While the chart gives an estimated figure for each situation, the actual risk will depend on the specific parameters, such as exactly how many people are in a room of what size. If you fancy putting in your own data for a particular setting and activity, you can try our COVID-19 Aerosol Transmission Estimator.

By arrangements with The Conversation

COVID

Why T Cell
Vaccines Could
Be The Key To
Long-Term
Immunity



AGENCIES

With Omicron having rapidly driven up Covid infections, attention is once again focusing on antibodies, and reasonably so.

They play a critical role in fighting off viruses and are important for preventing the coronavirus infecting our cells. This is why some countries have mounted booster campaigns in response to recent Covid surges—to top antibody levels up.

But there's a problem. Covid antibodies don't persist that well—hence the desire for boosters. Indeed, while these extra jabs maintain good protection against severe Covid, it's estimated that people receiving a third dose of the Pfizer vaccine will see their protection against developing Covid symptoms (of any degree) drop from 75 per cent to 45 per cent over the ten weeks following their booster.

Scientists have questioned whether topping up antibodies, only to see them soon fade away, is sustainable.

If we want to develop lasting immunity to Covid, it's perhaps time to look again at our wider immune response. Antibodies are just one part of our intricate and intertwined immune system. Specifically, it's maybe time we focused on T cells.

How different immune cells work

When the body is infected, say with a virus, it responds by producing white blood cells called lymphocytes. The main types are B cells, which make antibodies, and T cells, which either support B cell antibody production or act as killer cells to destroy the virus.

Some T cells and B cells also become long-lasting memory cells that know what to do if they meet the same infection again.

B cells and T cells “see” the virus in different ways. Generally speaking, B cells recognise shapes on the outside of the virus, creating antibodies that will lock on to those (a bit like two jigsaw pieces that match).

T cells instead recognise bits of the amino acids that build the virus, including bits that might normally be found inside it.

Every virus has lots of unique features, both inside and out. A person's

immune response can end up making a variety of T cells and B cells that between them target a whole range of these features. This is sometimes called “breadth of response”.

A good breadth of response has lots of different lymphocytes that see different parts of the virus, making it very tricky for the virus to completely hide from them.

Omicron worried many researchers because a key part of its external structure that's targeted by antibodies—the spike protein (in red in the picture above)—is heavily mutated, lessening the ability of antibodies to bind to the virus and neutralise it.

However, because T cells focus on other parts of the virus, such mutations might not stop them from identifying it.

Indeed, early data, which is still awaiting review, suggests this is the case. This is reassuring, because the virus's spike protein has changed a lot during the pandemic, suggesting that it could always be mutating away from the reach of antibodies.

T cells, though, should be less susceptible to viral mutation. T cells designed to fight Covid also appear to be much longer lasting in the human body than antibodies.

But do T cells have a strong effect?

We already know a lot about the critical role of T cells in other viral infections. This knowledge suggests that, against Covid, a good T cell response is not only needed to help B cells produce antibodies but should also create killer T cells that can broadly recognise the coronavirus, protecting against multiple variants.

Evidence directly on Covid and T cells is still being gathered. However, it's gradually becoming clearer that T cells do seem to play a big role in Covid.

Research has shown that generating broadly reactive T cells that recognise a range of viral features is associated with a strong response against the disease. Generating good amounts of broadly reactive killer T cells in particular seems to make Covid less severe.

Conversely, a poor T cell response is associated with worse outcomes for patients.

Indeed, some people who have had severe Covid have been found to have persistent defects in their T cell response.

A common feature of many of the studies demonstrating the effectiveness of T cells in Covid is the need for a wide breadth of response—having T cells (and B cells) that recognise multiple features of the virus. It's thought that this could be the key to experiencing milder disease.

This breadth might even extend beyond this coronavirus specifically. The Covid virus is a betacoronavirus, and there are several betacoronaviruses that already infect us, including ones that cause the common cold.

Shared features between these cold-causing viruses and Covid may mean that T cells we already had against the cold are protecting us against Covid now. Evidence for this in both adults and children is being uncovered.

What does this mean for vaccines?

Many of the vaccines designed to date—including Moderna's, Pfizer's and AstraZeneca's—have focused on just one major target on the coronavirus: its spike protein. These vaccines have been tremendously effective at generating antibodies. They also stimulate a T cell response to the spike.

But now that we understand more about the role of T cells, the importance of having a broad T cell response, and the issue of antibodies waning, perhaps we should consider refocusing our vaccine strategies on generating T cells and on targeting more than just one protein.

Work is moving in this direction. Early trials of vaccines that can trigger much more broadly reactive helper and killer T cell responses have been completed, and several other T cell vaccines are also entering trials.

These T cell vaccines may be the key to boosting existing immunity and generating long-lived protection against severe disease from a whole range of Covid variants. If so, they would be a huge part of the world living more safely with Covid.

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The Conversation



Omicron worried many researchers because a key part of its external structure that's targeted by antibodies—the spike protein (in red in the picture above)—is heavily mutated, lessening the ability of antibodies to bind to the virus and neutralise it.



'Banking, Financial Institutions Struggling To Deal With Increasing Fraud Incidents Amid Covid'

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: In the wake of Covid-19 and new digital operations, banking and financial institutions have been struggling to deal with an increasing number of fraud incidents and the trend is expected to continue, a Deloitte India survey said on Monday.

Key reasons identified for the increase in fraud incidents over the next two years include large-scale remote working models, increase in customers using non-branch banking channels and the limited/ineffective use of forensic analytics tools to identify potential red flags, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP (DTTL) said in a release.

About the survey, Deloitte said it gathered the views of 70 key C-suite stakeholders/ senior management responsible for compliance and fraud risk management, audit/ finance, asset recovery from varied financial institutions based in India.

Banks and financial institutions which participated in the survey included private, public, foreign, co-operative and regional rural banks in India.

"In the wake of COVID-19 and new digital operations, banking and financial institutions have been struggling to deal with an increasing number of fraud incidents," the Deloitte India Bank-



ing Fraud Survey said, adding "this trend is expected to continue, with 78 per cent respondents stating that frauds could increase over the next two years".

As per the survey findings, retail banking was identified as a major contributor to fraud incidents, with 53 per cent of respondents indicating that they had experienced more than 100 fraud incidents (over the last two years) - a 29 per cent rise since the previous edition. Similarly, the non-retail segment saw an average of 20 fraud incidents, highlighted by 56 per cent of survey respondents - again, a 22 per cent rise.

"Additionally, data theft, cybercrime, third-party-induced fraud, bribery and corruption, and fraudulent documentation have been identified as the top five concerns with over 42 per cent of respondents (cumulative) reporting to be victims of these," the release said.

Pick Us, Say 4 States To Elon Musk After He Spoke Of India Problems



Agencies

NEW DELHI: Politicians from at least four states took to Twitter to invite Tesla Inc. to set up shop in their provinces, just days after billionaire founder Elon Musk said the U.S. electric-vehicle pioneer was still facing a lot of challenges with the government.

The pitches, tweeted over the weekend, touted everything from infrastructure, sustainability and a streamlined approval process. They were made from different parts of India -- Telangana in the south, Maharashtra in the west, Punjab in the north, and West Bengal.

Musk and the government have been in talks for years, but disagreements over a local factory and import duties have led to an impasse, meaning Tesla still doesn't sell cars in India, three years after showing definite intent. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration wants Tesla to set up a factory to sell locally and export, Musk has in-

sisted on slashing import duties of as much as 100% so that Tesla can first establish a market.

All the states that invited Tesla to start operations are ruled by parties opposed to BJP, which runs the government.

Setting up car factories in India could be difficult even for local companies without any government support, as red tape, land acquisition and labor rights remain a constant challenge. In 2008, Tata Motors Ltd., run by India's biggest conglomerate, was forced to abandon a near-complete facility in West Bengal after violent protests by farmers against land acquisition, thwarting its attempt to build the Nano, the world's cheapest car, in the state.

"Drop here, we in West Bengal have best infra & our leader @MamataOfficial has got the vision. Bengal means Business," Ghulam Rabbani, West Bengal's minister for minority affairs and Madrasah education tweeted to Musk on Saturday.

India Added 40 Billionaires Last Year But Number of Poor Doubled: Oxfam

Archana Chaudhary, Bloomberg

NEW DELHI: India's richest have more than doubled their fortunes during the Covid-19 crisis that's ravaged the country and worsened poverty, and the government should revisit its policies to redistribute wealth, according to the global Oxfam Davos report of 2022.

The nation added 40 billionaires to 142 last year, when a second wave of infections overwhelmed its health infrastructure and pushed crematoriums and burial grounds to breaking point. They have almost \$720 billion in combined fortune, more than the poorest 40% of the population, the group said in a report on rising inequality published Monday.

Wealth has surged globally during the pandemic as the value of everything from stock prices to crypto and commodities has jumped. The world's 500 richest people added more than \$1 trillion to their net worths last year, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. India, where urban unemployment climbed as high as 15% last May and food insecurity worsened, now counts more billionaires than France, Sweden and Switzerland combined, Oxfam said.

State policies including the abolition of a wealth tax in 2016, steep cuts in corporate levies and an increase in indirect taxation are among the factors that helped make the rich richer, while the national minimum wage has remained



at 178 rupees (\$2.4) a day since 2020, the India supplement of the global report said. Reduced federal funding to local administrations amid growing privatizations in the health and education sectors have further boosted inequalities. The nation is home to a quarter of the world's undernourished people, Oxfam said, citing the World Food Programme.

"Unfortunately, not only has the taxation policy of the Indian government been pro-rich, it has also deprived India's States of important fiscal resources -- both particularly damaging in the context of the Covid-19 crisis," the report said.

Oxfam is recommending the government imposes a 1% surcharge on the richest 10% of the population to invest in health and education. It notes that the fortune of India's 10 wealthiest billionaires would be enough to fund the school and higher education of the nation's children for more than 25 years.

With 84% of the households suffering a decline in income at

the start of the pandemic, India is in line with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for the highest increase in poverty. In 2020, the number of poor in the south Asian nation doubled to 134 million, more than a Pew research had estimated, Oxfam said. Daily wage workers, the self-employed and the unemployed committed the most suicides, it added, citing official crime data.

The report also highlighted that the leaked Pandora Papers -- a collection of 11.9 million documents detailing 29,000 offshore companies and private trusts globally created for tax evasion -- found that more than 380 Indians had 200 billion rupees worth of undeclared foreign and domestic assets.

Gautam Adani had India's largest wealth surge last year and the fifth biggest in the world, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. He added \$42.7 billion to his fortune, which now stands at almost \$90 billion. Mukesh Ambani's net worth climbed by \$13.3 billion in 2021, and he's now valued at \$97 billion.

World's Top Ten Richest Men Saw Wealth Double To \$1.5 Trillion During Pandemic

Agencies

NEW DELHI: The 10 richest men in the world have seen their global wealth double to \$1.5 trillion since the start of the global pandemic following a surge in share and property prices that has widened the gap between rich and poor, according to a report from Oxfam, The Guardian reported.

Urging governments to impose a one-off 99 per cent wealth tax on Covid-19 windfall gains, the charity said World Bank figures showed 163 million more people had been driven below the poverty line while the super rich were benefiting from the stimulus provided by governments around the world to mitigate the impact of the virus, the report said.

Oxfam projects that by 2030, 3.3 billion people will be living

on less than \$5.50 per day. The charity said the incomes of 99 per cent of the world's population had reduced from March 2020 to October 2021, when Elon Musk, the founder of the electric car company Tesla, and the other nine richest billionaires had been collectively growing wealthier by \$1.3 billion a day.

Musk, according to figures taken from Forbes magazine's billionaires list, saw his wealth increase 10-fold to \$294 billion in the first 20 months of the pandemic, catapulting him above Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, to be the world's richest person, the report said.

During a period when technology stocks were soaring on Wall Street, Bezos's net wealth rose 67 per cent to \$203 billion, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg's wealth doubled to \$118 billion, while the wealth of the founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates, increased by 31 per cent to \$137 billion.

While people on more modest incomes have also seen their assets rise in value during the pandemic, Oxfam said the 10 richest men own six times as much wealth as the bottom 40 per cent (3.1 billion people). It would take the 10 billionaires 414 years to spend their combined wealth at a rate of a million dollars each per day, the charity added, the report said.



J&K Tourism Organises Outreach Meet At Dubai



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: On the sidelines of Expo2020 at Dubai, J&K Tourism organised an outreach meet with the stakeholders of the Middle East and adjoining areas.

The event was part of a series by J&K Tourism to promote tourism potential and varied tourism products of the Union Territory.

The aim has been to attract tourists from the Middle East to explore the natural beauty, cuisine, art, culture and other products offered by J&K.

During the event, Additional Secretary Tourism, Waseem Raja briefed the gathering about the steps being taken by the UT administration and Tourism Department to promote J&K's tourism. He made a detailed presen-

tation to showcase the beautiful destinations of J&K which mesmerized the audience.

He also replied to various queries raised by the participants and invited the participants to travel to J&K to explore on their own the potential of the paradise on earth.

The travel fraternity of Dubai complimented the Tourism Department of J&K for organising the event and assured the department of their support in promoting J&K Tourism in Dubai and other Middle East markets.

The event was attended by prominent travel operators, media persons, and officials from the Ministry of Tourism.

The event also saw the presence of prominent representatives from J&K's diaspora in Dubai.

Maruti Suzuki Drives In Celerio S-CNG Trim At Rs 6.58 Lakh



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Monday said it has launched the CNG variant of Celerio in the country at a price of Rs 6.58 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi).

Powered by the next-generation K-Series 1.0L engine, the all-new Celerio with S-CNG technology delivers a mileage of 35.60 km/kg and has a CNG tank capacity of 60 litres.

The Celerio S-CNG is factory-fitted and offers optimum performance while ensuring enhanced safety. The introduction of the Celerio with S-CNG technology is aligned with the company's commitment to further strengthen its growing green vehicles portfolio in the country, MSI said in a statement. "The launch of the all-new Celerio S-CNG will take us a step closer to our ambition of spearheading the mass adoption of green vehicles in India," MSI Senior Executive Director (Marketing & Sales) Shashank Srivastava said in a statement.

Interestingly, the S-CNG variant in the previous generation Celerio contributed over 30 per cent of total sales, he added.

"We are confident that custom-

ers will appreciate the All-New Celerio S-CNG's stellar fuel efficiency," Srivastava stated.

He noted that MSI has been a pioneer in the country to offer factory-fitted CNG cars.

"We have the largest portfolio of 8 green models on the road and have sold around 9,50,000 S-CNG vehicles. Owning a factory-fitted S-CNG vehicle comes with standard warranty benefits and convenience of Maruti Suzuki's service network spread across India, that our customers find very comforting," Srivastava said.

With green mobility in focus, the automaker has witnessed a 22 per cent CAGR increase in its CNG sales in the past five years, he added. The new version of Celerio was launched in November last year in petrol avatar and has received close to 25,000 bookings in just two months of its launch, MSI said.

The automaker noted that its S-CNG vehicles are equipped with dual interdependent ECUs (Electronic Control Units) and an intelligent injection system. Vehicles are specially tuned and calibrated to deliver optimum performance and enhanced drivability across all kinds of terrains, it said.

NEWS MAKERS

Navin For Timely Settlement Of All Crop Insurance Claims

JAMMU: Principal Secretary Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Department (AP&FWD), Navin Kumar Choudhary Monday chaired a meeting to review the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Director Finance AP&FWD; Director Planning AP&FWD, Director Agriculture Kashmir, who is also Mission Director PMFBY in J&K and Director Agriculture Jammu, who is also Deputy Mission Director PMFBY in J&K attended the meeting in person and through virtual mode.

The meeting discussed the issues regarding the release of UT share under PMFBY during the year 2020-21 under the scheme.

Principal Secretary AP&FWD directed the officers to release the UT share immediately to ensure timely settlement of all crop insurance claims.

While highlighting the importance of the scheme, Navin Choudhary said that the scheme is meant for ensuring economic security to the farmers by insuring their crop so that they could coop up with the situations arising out of losses either as a result of crop failures or damage to their crops due to natural calamities.

He impressed upon the officers to follow all operational guidelines and procedures so that maximum farmers will get benefitted from this flagship scheme.

Gold Rallies Rs 176 On Global Cues

NEW DELHI: Gold prices rose by Rs 176 to Rs 47,881 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with gains in the precious metal in the global markets and a weaker rupee, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at Rs 47,705 per 10 grams.

Silver prices, however, declined by Rs 505 to Rs 61,005 per kg from Rs 61,510 per kg in the previous trade.

The rupee dipped by 9 paise to close at 74.24 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday. In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,822 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 23.03 per ounce.

"Gold prices traded firm with spot gold prices at COMEX trading 0.30 per cent up at USD 1,822 per ounce on Monday," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. (PTI)

Sensex, Nifty Advance On Gains In Auto, Energy Stocks

NEW DELHI: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty edged higher on Monday following gains in IT, energy and auto stocks amid a firm trend in European markets.

In a largely range-bound session, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 85.88 points or 0.14 per cent higher at 61,308.91. As many as 19 of Sensex stocks advanced while 11 declined.

The broader NSE Nifty rose by 52.35 points or 0.29 per cent to 18,308.10 points as 34 of its components advanced. Nifty opened flat, fell in the early trade and kept bouncing up from intraday falls before closing in the green.

Ultratech Cement was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging by nearly 3 per cent. The cement major announced nearly 8 per cent growth in its third-quarter net profit at Rs 1,710.14 crore. It also announced a capex plan of Rs 965 crore for its modernisation and to almost double the production capacity of its white cement brand Birla White.

Mahindra & Mahindra rose by 2.19 per cent, Maruti Suzuki by 2.08 per cent, Tata Steel by 1.35 per cent, TCS by 1.26 per cent, L&T by 1.2 per cent, SBI by 1.14 per cent and HUL by 1.04 per cent.

Gains in Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel also helped the index close in the green. On the other hand, HCL Tech, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid, and Sun Pharma were among the laggards, falling up to 5.89 per cent.

"In a week guided by the release of various corporate earnings, domestic indices edged higher on a flat note led by consumer durables, energy and auto stocks," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

"Asian markets were largely mixed post the release of China's 4th quarter GDP data reporting an expansion of 4 per cent YoY as covid restrictions and property woes hit demand. Rising Covid cases globally continue to colour investor sentiments," Nair added. (PTI)

Rupee Falls By 10 Paise To 74.25 On High Dollar Demand

MUMBAI: The rupee declined by 10 paise to close at 74.25 against the US currency on Monday, declining for the second straight day due to high dollar demand and forex outflows.

Dollar buying by banks on behalf of importers and weak economic data weighed on the local unit, analysts said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 74.18 against the American currency and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.16 and a low of 74.36 during the session.

The rupee finally settled at 74.25, down 10 paise over its previous close of 74.15 against the greenback.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent down at 95.11. (PTI)

SEBI Tightens Rules Governing Utilisation Of IPO Proceeds

NEW DELHI: Tightening rules for initial public offering (IPO), SEBI has put a cap on the usage of the issue proceeds for unidentified future acquisitions and restricted the number of shares that can be offered by significant shareholders.

Also, the regulator has extended anchor investors' lock-in period to 90 days and now, funds reserved for general corporate purposes will be monitored by credit rating agencies, according to a notification issued on January 14.

Further, SEBI has revised the allocation methodology for non-institutional investors (NIs). To give effect to these, SEBI has amended various aspects of the regulatory framework under the ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations.

This comes amid a slew of new-age technology companies filing draft papers with SEBI to raise funds through initial public offerings (IPOs).

The regulator said that if a company in its offer documents sets out an object for future inorganic growth but has not identified any acquisition or investment target, the amount for such objects and amount for the general corporate purpose (GCP) will not exceed 35 percent of the total amount being raised.

It is seen that lately, in some of the draft offer documents, new-age technology companies are proposing to raise fresh funds for objects where the object is termed as 'funding of inorganic growth initiatives' without giving details. (PTI)

2 Indians, 1 Pakistani Killed In Suspected Drone Attack In Abu Dhabi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DUBAI: Two Indians and a Pakistani national were killed and six others injured on Monday in a suspected Houthi drone attack near the Abu Dhabi airport that sparked multiple explosions in the United Arab Emirates' capital.

The explosions were caused by "small flying objects", possibly drones, that hit three petroleum tankers in Abu Dhabi, police said.

Another minor fire broke out in the new construction area of the Abu Dhabi International Airport, according to the state-run Emirates News Agency (WAM).

It said that the fire that broke out in the Musaffah industrial area near the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) resulted in the explosion of three petroleum tankers.

"Preliminary investigations suggest that the cause of the fires are small flying objects, possibly belonging to drones, that fell in the two areas, it said, adding that the fire has been brought under control.

Abu Dhabi police identified the dead as two Indian nationals and one Pakistani.



Another six persons sustained mild and moderate injuries, police said, without disclosing their identity.

The Indian Embassy in UAE said that the mission is in close touch with concerned UAE authorities for further details.

"UAE authorities have informed that the explosion at Musaffah, near ADNOC's storage tanks, has led to 3 casualties, which includes 2 Indian nationals. The Mission @ IndembaAbuDhabi is in close touch with concerned UAE authorities for further details, the Indian Embassy in UAE tweeted.

Authorities have launched an extensive investigation into the cause of the fire and the circumstances surrounding it, police said.

"However, there are no significant damages resulting from the

two accidents," WAM reported.

The fire that broke out in the construction area of the Abu Dhabi Airport on Monday "resulted in a short disruption for a small number of flights".

An Etihad Airways spokesperson told the Khaleej Times newspaper that normal airport operations were quickly resumed. The disruption was the result of "precautionary measures".

"The safety and comfort of our guests and crew is our number one priority, the spokesperson added.

The UAE blamed the attack on Yemen's Houthi rebels, saying this sinful targeting will not go unpunished.

The UAE "reserves its right to retaliate to these terrorist attacks and this sinful criminal escalation", Gulf News reported, citing a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The ministry called on the international community to condemn and totally reject these "terrorist acts targeting civilians and civil installations."

Senior Emirati diplomat Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Advisor to the UAE President, said the Gulf country is dealing with the Houthi attack on some civilian facilities in Abu Dhabi

"transparently and responsibly."

The terror groups cannot tamper with the safety and security of the region, he said in a Twitter post.

Meanwhile, Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have claimed that they targeted the United Arab Emirates, without giving details.

The Houthi rebels said they would soon make a statement about "a special military operation that was carried out in the heart of the UAE," the Houthi-owned Al Masirah TV channel said on Monday.

The group has taken responsibility for several attacks on Saudi Arabian oil facilities in the past. The UAE is part of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen fighting Houthi rebels.

Saudi Arabia has condemned the attack in a statement.

"We condemn in the strongest of words the cowardly terror attack that targeted Abu Dhabi International Airport in the UAE," the kingdom's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

"The kingdom also points out that this terror attack which the Houthi militia is behind reconfirms the danger that this terror group poses and its threat to the security, peace and stability in the region and the world.

UK Prime Minister's Wife Carrie Apologises Amid Partygate' Scandal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson's wife, Carrie, was on Monday forced to apologise for "momentary lapse" over COVID-19 lockdown rules during a friend's party in 2020, even as the so-called partygate scandal continues to pile pressure on her husband's leadership prospects.

The 33-year-old mother of Johnson's one-year-old son Wilfred and one-month-old daughter Romy was pictured hugging her friend during an engagement party at a private members' club in London in September 2020.

The social distancing rules in force at the time called for staying two metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or one metre if meeting outdoors.

Mrs Johnson was one of a group of six seated outside, celebrating a friend's engagement, a spokesperson for Carrie Johnson said, with reference to the photograph that emerged in The Sunday Telegraph.

Mrs Johnson regrets the momentary lapse in judgment in briefly hugging her friend for a photograph, the spokesperson said. It is the latest in a string of

revelations in the past few weeks that exposed gatherings at Downing Street in apparent breach of lockdown rules.

Some of these were attended by Johnson, who issued a formal apology in the House of Commons last week for things we simply did not get right.

It has triggered calls from the Opposition and a growing number of members within his own Conservative Party for him to step down as leader.

Johnson's supporters have dismissed such demands and called for patience until a senior civil servant concludes an internal investigation into such gatherings held in Downing Street and across other government departments during lockdown.

UK Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi defended his boss to say "he's human and we make mistakes" as he insisted that Johnson's position as Prime Minister is not under threat.

"He came to the despatch box and apologised and said he will absolutely submit himself to Parliament, because that's our parliamentary democracy," Zahawi told the BBC.

Meanwhile, The Daily Mirror reports on yet another party that Johnson allegedly attended a farewell before Christmas

2020 to mark the departure of a defence adviser.

Downing Street is yet to comment on this gathering, where the Prime Minister is said to have given a speech.

Meanwhile, UK media reports claim that those around Johnson have triggered "Operation Save Big Dog", which could include an overhaul of his top team following criticisms of a boozy culture within Downing Street.

There are also reports of a so-called "Operation Red Meat", which will involve a series of populist meaty announcements as an appeasement of the Conservative Party base and backbench MPs angered by the partygate allegations.

A hit on the BBC's funding formula through taxpayer-backed licence fee and using Royal Navy vessels to enforce migration rules in the English Channel are among the measures expected within this operation.

"None of these issues are things that we have not been seeking to address for some time. [The government is] continuing to deliver on those policy priorities," Johnson's spokesperson said, dismissing reports of operations in process to save his premiership.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

J&K Reports

Udhampur 122, Samba 52, Rajouri and Ramban 42 each, Reasi 35, Poonch 32, Doda 20 and Kathua 30 each and Kishtwar 7.

"Moreover, 777 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and been discharged from various hospitals including 492 from Jammu Division and 285 from Kashmir Division," the officials said.

Also, they said that five more people died of Covid-19 complications in Jammu division on Monday, raising the death toll in the pandemic to 4572 in J&K –2226 in Jammu and 2346 in Kashmir.

The officials also said that no new cases of Mucormycosis were reported Monday, thus the total number of confirmed cases remains 51 across J&K.

KU, SKIMS Defers

Deemed Medical University also deferred all examinations scheduled from Monday in view of rising covid-19 cases.

As per the notification issued by Dean of Medical Faculty SKIMS Soura, the decision has been taken in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases and revised schedule for the examination shall be notified separately.

"This is notified for the information of concerned that all the Examinations of SKIMS Deemed Medical University scheduled from 17th January, 2022 have been deferred till further orders," reads the notification.

"The decision has been taken in view of the surge of COVID-19 cases. Revised schedule for the said examination shall be notified separately. Students are advised to remain in touch with SKIMS official website for further details," the notification added.

5 Employees Test

a communiqué made by RTO Kashmir to Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir.

"In view of such a situation this office may kindly be guided as to whether to continue with the public dealings or close it till negative reports are received most likely by the weekend", the communiqué reads.

Copy of the communiqué has also been forwarded to Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar and Transport Commissioner, J&K, Jammu.

Committed To

fulfilling the aspirations and developmental needs of the people. He observed that the UT administration is working on several fronts for the holistic and equitable development of all sections and regions of the UT," he said.

The LG, he said, assured them that all their genuine demands would be taken up with the concerned departments for their early redressal. According to the official spokesperson, Sinha directed Commissioner/Secretary, RDD to extend all possible assistance to the DDC Chairperson and the PRI representatives for discharging their roles and responsibilities smoothly and efficiently.

Militants Lob

Saraf Kadal area of the Old City leaving a cop and a civilian injured.

Selection Grade Constable Mehraj Ahmad suffered splinter injuries in chest while Sartaj Ahmad Bhat suffered injuries in both legs in the grenade blast.

Govt Takes Over

street Polo Ground area.

"...it has been decided that the allotment of the premises at Polo View to the now-deregistered Kashmir Press Club be canceled and the control of land and buildings situated at Polo View, Srinagar which belong to the Estates Department be reverted to the said department," an official spokesperson announced in a statement.

The administration said it was concerned over the situation that had arisen due to the "unpleasant turn" of events involving two warring groups using the banner of the Kashmir Press Club.

Things came to a boil on Saturday (January 15) when a group of journalists accompanied by policemen armed with assault rifle reached the club claiming to be its "new interim management". This was a day after the administration had put KPC's registration "in abeyance".

The journalists released a statement stating that "some journalist forums" had chosen them to be new office-bearers, a claim contested by nine journalist associations from the Valley.

"The factual position is that KPC as a registered body has ceased to exist and its managing body too has come to a legal closure on 14 July 2021, the date on which its tenure came to an end," the administration said on Monday.

However, it sidestepped the fact that the KPC had been issued a re-registration certificate on December 29, 2021. This was subsequently placed under abeyance citing police verification on January 14.

After re-registering the KPC, the Registrar of Societies, Jammu and Kashmir, had said on January 14 said the office of the Senior Superintendent of Police, CID, has put on hold the non-involvement and verification of character and antecedent certificates of the members of the managing body of the KPC.

"The re-registration granted (to the KPC) on December 29, 2021 is hereby kept in abeyance till the receipt of final report from additional district magistrate, Srinagar," the order read.

On Monday, however, the government said, "in its failure to register itself under the central Societies of Registration Act, further compounded by its failure to hold elections to constitute a new managing body, some individuals of the erstwhile club have been committing illegalities on several counts, least of which are false portrayal of being owner-managers of an entity which is no longer in legal vogue."

It said some other members have created an interim body using the same banner suggesting a "takeover".

"However, since the original KPC itself has ceased to exist as a registered body, the question of any interim body is rendered infructuous. In these circumstances, issuing of notices and communication by any group using the rubric of erstwhile Kashmir Press Club is illegal," it added.

The administration also said rival groups had also been leveling allegations against each other.

"In view of this aspect of the dispute and in view of the reports in social media and other sources indicating a potential law and order situation including a threat of breach of peace and the safety of bonafide journalists, an intervention has become necessary," it said.

The administration said it is committed to a free and fair press and

believes that journalists are entitled to all facilities, including a place for professional, educational, social, cultural, recreational and welfare activities.

The government "also hopes that a duly registered bona fide society of all journalists shall be constituted as soon as possible and the same shall be able to approach the government for reallocation of the premises".

The Jammu and Kashmir administration had come under severe criticism after pictures showing armed policemen inside the KPC were circulated in the social media and posted on Twitter by former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti.

In its statement, the Editors Guild of India termed the events a "coup" and a continuing trend to smother press freedom in the union territory with the help of police who have been "brazenly complicit" in it.

Janhastakshpe, a Delhi-based social organisation, also issued a statement saying that journalists in Kashmir have vociferously condemned this takeover and demanded restoration of status quo ante.

The organisation in its statement requested other media guilds and associations to come together to struggle against the ongoing repression in Kashmir being implemented under the aegis of the Central Government and the increasing attacks on independent minded pro people journalists across the country.

'Ultimate Goal Was

to keep the flame glowing and confront these challenges ahead. I want to reiterate that journalism thrived in Kashmir and it will survive all crests and troughs in the future as well," he added.

It justified the move saying while the last elected body ceased to exist after July 2019 as no elections were held, the other group of journalists had taken over the club without following due process.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday announced taking back the land and building housing the Kashmir Press Club.

4 More Teachers

removal from government services.

As per the order, Ashaq Parvez Mir, Teacher, UPS Kachree, Kupwara remained un-authorisedly absent from duties from 06 May 2012 and "despite providing of enough opportunities to resume his duties by the Drawing & Disbursing officer concerned neither he responded the notices nor resumed his duties."

According to order, the teacher was again provided opportunities on 06 July 2021 (through a joint show cause notice) and was asked to present himself before the Directorate along with statement of defense within 07 days failing which action as warranted under rules shall be initiated against him without serving any further notice.

The issue was placed before the Designated Committee in its meeting held on 11/12/2021 and after examining the case, the committee took the decision to process for termination under Article-113 J&K CSR of 1956.

"Now, therefore, pursuant to the decision of the committee, Mr. Ashaq Parvez Mir, Teacher, UPS Kachree, Kupwara is hereby removed from the Government service in terms of Article 113 of J&K Civil Services Rules (Volume I) of 1956 and Rule 30(V11) of J&KCCA rules 1956", stated the order.

The termination order issued to Mohammad Saleem Dar, Teacher,

GMS Aripanthan, Budgam states that he applied for six month leave along with station leave permission for completion of his Ph.D programme but in anticipation of sanction of leave/station leave permission he left the station and as such remained absent from his legitimate duties from 27 March 2015. The incumbent was provided opportunities by the DO concerned to resume his duties which he failed to avail, the order reads.

Likewise, Shazia Shafeeq, Teacher, HS Gundishath, Kupwara has been removed from the Government service in terms of Article 113 of J&K Civil Services Rules (Volume I) of 1956 and Rule 30(VII) of J&KCCA rules 1956.

In a similar order government also ordered the removal of Mtr. Fatima Jameel, HS Padshahibagh, Srinagar from the government services after she was found un-authorisedly absent from her legitimate duties from 1 March 2016.

As per the order she was provided enough opportunities to resume her duties by the Drawing & Disbursing officer concerned neither she responded the notices nor resumed her duties.

The issue was placed before the Designated Committee in its meeting held on 11/12/2021 and after examining the case the committee took the decision to process for termination under Article-113 J&K CSR of 1956.

"Now, therefore, pursuant to the decision of the committee, Mtr. Fatima Jameel, HS Padshahibagh, Srinagar is hereby removed from the Government service in terms of Article 113 of J&K Civil Services Rules (Volume I) of 1956 and Rule 30(VH) of J&KCCA rules 1956", stated the order.

Engineer Working

and thereafter he remained on un-authorized absence from duty w.e.f April 1, 2008 till date, despite being repeatedly asked by the concerned authorities from time to time to resume his duties.

It further says that Bhat was provided another opportunity to join his was duties immediately within a period of seven days by Director/ Chief Engineer Stores Procurement Department vide communication No. DSP/4414-15 dated 04.10.2010, as no leave was due to him.

"Whereas, instead of resuming duties, Shabir Ahmad Bhat expressed his inability to join his duty back on health grounds vide his letter nil date nil received in the office of Director/ Chief Engineer Stores Procurement Department on 03.01.2011; and Whereas, show cause notice was also issued by the Directorate of Stores Procurement Department vide No. DSP/9072-74 dated 26.02.2011 to Shabir Ahmad for resuming his duties," reads the order

It further adds that Bhat chose not to respond to any of the notices and filed a suit before the Principal District Session Judge at Srinagar and the same was dismissed by the Court on June 1, 2011.

The order says that Bhat's case was examined in the department following which the Director Stores Procurement Department issued final show cause notice asking him to explain why his services are not to be terminated for being un-authorisedly absent from duty. The notice, as per the order, was also published in the two leading newspapers on April 12, 2021.

The order also quotes a police report saying that Bhat is working as

Financial Advisor in a Saudi Arabian Company namely ARAMCO situated at Damman and has been working there since 2006 till date.

"Now, therefore, in terms of Article 113 and 128 of J&K CSR vol-I read with rule 30 of 1&K CCA Rules 1956, it is hereby ordered that the services of Shri Shabir Ahmad Bhat S/O Abdul Gaffar Bhat R/O Waniyar Safakadal Srinagar are terminated w.e.f. 01.04.2008 i.e. the date of his unauthorized absence from duty has been found," the termination order reads.

J&K's Private Education

seventy thousand students are getting private coaching and in Srinagar alone 30-40,000 students were receiving private tuitions or coaching for the entrance and competitive exams.

"In this season, more than Rs 150 crores fee have been charged by the private coaching centers that includes Rs 100 crores advance," he said.

He said, "How government allow private coaching centers to collect fees even after knowing that the Covid-19 lockdown was in the pipeline due to the surge in positive cases."

"On an average, the private coaching centers charge Rs 5,000 to 25,000 to complete the syllabi of 9th and 10th standard and as far as the coaching for 11th and 12th standard is concerned the private coaching centers are charging Rs 30,000 to 15 0000," he said. For entrance coaching of NEET and JEE, the coaching centers charge Rs 30,000 to 70, 000," he said—KNO

Cloud Cover

3.6°C against minus 5.4°C last night, he said.

Qazigund recorded a low of minus 1.0°C against minus 3.4°C on the previous night, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 2.0°C against minus 4.5°C on the previous night, the official said.

Kupwara town in north Kashmir recorded a minimum of 0.5°C against minus 2.1°C on the previous night, the official said.

Jammu recorded a low of 9.0°C against previous night's 8.4°C which is 1.9°C above normal for the J&K's winter capital during this time of the year, he said.

Banihal recorded a low of 3.4°C, Katra 7.2°C and Bhaderwah saw a minimum of 1.5°C, the official said.

Ladakh's Leh recorded a low of minus 13.1°C against last night's minus 15.2°C while mercury at automatic station in Kargil settled at minus 16.0°C. Drass, the second coldest place in the world after Siberia, recorded a low of minus 16.2°C against last night's minus 17.4°C, official said.

Weatherman has said that there was no forecast of any major rain or snow till the end of January in J&K.

"Under the influence of feeble Western Disturbance, weather most likely to remain generally cloudy with possibility of very light to light rain/snow in plains of J&K during 16-19th and light to moderate snowfall over higher reaches," the Met official said. "As of today, there's no forecast of any major rain/snow till the end of January (accuracy 60-70%)."

Govt Probes

Samita told Kashmir Observer.

Source said that the enquiry officer has been asked to submit the report within 45 days to the commissioner secretary Industries and Commerce department. (With KNS inputs)

Soldier Dies

moved to Military Hospital and after around 45 minutes he was subsequently declared dead, they said.

The deceased, they said, belonged to Alipur Gurugram in Haryana.

CBI Nabs Patwari

him that he was pressuring a man to give him a bribe of Rs 50,000. After lodging a case he was held," said the CBI official.

The federal probe agency said that a case against him was registered on the allegations of demanding bribe of Rs 50,000 from a man. The accused demanded the bribe for issuing some documents in respect of land owned by his father.

The victim said that he was unable to pay Rs 50,000 and the bribe was negotiated to Rs 35,000. Finally they made the deal. In the meantime, the victim approached the federal probe agency and lodged an FIR. The CBI formed a team of elite officials to look into the matter and to arrest the accused red handed.

"The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red-handed while demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 35,000 from the complainant," said the officer.

The team of CBI also conducted searches at the premises of the accused. The team has collected a few incriminating documents from his house. The cell phone of the accused was seized by the CBI. It will be sent to forensic lab for the recovering digital evidences.

The CBI later produced the accused before the Court of Special Judge, CBI Cases, Jammu. The prosecution told the judge that the accused wasn't required for further interrogation and urged the judge to remand him to 14 days judicial custody. The court after hearing both the sides remanded the accused to judicial custody.

The CBI had recorded his statements, which will be used as an evidence, during the trial of the case. (Agencies)

2 JeM 'Associates'

team of police, army's 42 RR and the personnel of CRPF on the basis of specific input that the duo were working as militant associates and involved in providing shelter, logistic support and transportation of arms/ammunition to the active militants in Tral and Awantipora areas, a police spokesperson said Monday.

He said that incriminating materials including explosive materials have been recovered from their possession.

"Moreover, both the arrested associates were in touch with Pakistan-based self styled terror commanders on different social media platforms and were planning to join terrorist ranks," the police spokesperson said.

Police have registered a case and investigation has been initiated.

Ladakh Logs

Kargil district, the officials said. According to the officials, the COVID-19 death toll remained unchanged at 222 with 164 fatalities in Leh and 58 in Kargil.

The officials said 89 patients were discharged from hospitals in Leh and seven in Kargil after undergoing successful treatment for COVID-19, taking the number of recovered cases in Ladakh to 22,342.

Of the active cases, 702 are under treatment in Leh and 118 in Kargil, the officials said, adding that the total positivity rate in Ladakh stands at 3.8 per cent. (PTI)

Bumrah Says Ready To Become India Captain

Gives update on Siraj's ODI availability



Press Trust of India

PAARL: India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Monday said he is not averse to leading the national team if an opportunity comes knocking at his door in the near future.

With Virat Kohli's captaincy tenure in all formats coming to an end following his resignation from Test leadership on Saturday, there are questions about who could be his long-term successor considering that Rohit Sharma will be 35 next year.

"If given an opportunity, it will be an honour, and I don't see any player would say no, and I am no different. Be it any leadership group, I always look to contribute however I can, to the best of my abilities," Bumrah replied to a query from PTI in a press conference ahead of the ODI series against South Africa starting Wednesday.

Bumrah will be the vice-captain during the series.

"I look at this situation in the same manner... taking responsibility and talking to players and helping them out has always been my approach and it will always be my approach going further keeping any situation in mind."

"I have to do my job and I will be helping KL Rahul as much as

I can whenever he needs assistance. Even when I am not the vice-captain, I try to help the younger guys and I have a lot of discussions with them regarding having a particular field," added Bumrah who will be the vice-captain of India ODI team for the series against South Africa.

Further talking about his role as vice-captain, Bumrah said: "You always want the responsibility. If there is no responsibility or pressure, you would not enjoy the game. I try to manage the responsibility and contribute to the side's cause."

Talking about pacer Mohammed Siraj's fitness, Bumrah said: "I think he is fine. He is practicing with us. I do not see any discomfort, hopefully that stays that way. Nothing I am aware of right now but everyone seems to be okay. Hopefully, that stays that way."

When asked about whether India would look at SA ODIs as preparation for the 2023 World Cup, the pacer said: "There has to be a vision on which direction we want to go in. We will try to give guys an equal opportunity. Every series needs to be given importance and we will keep a vision."

Bumrah also that the team respects Kohli's decision to give up Test captaincy and was duly informed by the star batter.

Root 'Sacrifices' Opportunity To Enter IPL Mega Auction

Press Trust of India

HOBART: England skipper Joe Root has "sacrificed" the opportunity to enter the IPL mega auction to "throw" all his energy into reviving the fortunes of his under-fire Test team.

Considered one of the modern greats of the game, Root is yet to play in the Indian Premier League after going unsold in the 2018 auction.

Last week, Root said he was considering entering the mega auction but added he would look to play in the tournament only if it does not distract him from his Test career.

However, the wait to see the 31-year-old feature in lucrative league increased further as he has decided to prioritise the English Test team, which just succumbed to an embarrassing 0-4 Ashes defeat.

"There's a lot that we need to do for this team, which deserves all of my energy," Root said at the post-match conference after his side's 146-run loss to Australia in the fifth Test on Sunday.

"I'll keep sacrificing as much as I can because I care so much about Test cricket in our country and trying to get us to where we want to be," added the star batter, confirming he has turned down the chance to enter the auction.

England's below par perfor-



mance in Test cricket this past year has led to questions on his leadership but Root has expressed his desire to continue as the English red ball captain.

"It's very difficult when you get beaten as heavily as we have done on this tour to convince people I'm the right man."

"But I can tell you one thing for sure – as long as I have the opportunity to captain this team, I will throw everything into it and give everything – for everyone supporting us, for the guys around me, for the players – to try and provide an environment that allows us to be successful," Root said.

The IPL has expanded to 10 teams starting this year and the mega-auction ahead of the upcoming season is scheduled to be held on February 12 and 13 in Bengaluru.

Djokovic Lands In Serbia After Australia Deportation

World No.1 "No-vac" could miss French Open as well

Agencies

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic could be barred from the French Open later this year because he's not vaccinated against COVID-19, a possibility that raised the stakes for the tennis star just hours after he was deported from Australia and prevented from defending his Australian Open title.

A plane carrying the No. 1-ranked player touched down in his native Serbia on Monday, closing at least the first chapter in a dizzying drama that has resonance in the world of elite sports, Australian pandemic politics and the polarized debate over the coronavirus shots.

Djokovic was expected to receive a hero's welcome from his countrymen, many of whom think he was unfairly treated in Australia. But only handful of fans waving the Serbian flag greeted him at the airport in the capital, Belgrade.

At the same time, clouds gathered over what would come next for the player: French officials said a new law requiring vaccination to enter sports venues would have no exceptions. Much could change between now and the start of the French Open, which is the next Grand Slam, in late May. But that raised the possibility the recent saga in Australia would be not just a blip but an ongoing challenge for the unvaccinated athlete, who is increasingly being held up as a hero by the anti-vaccine movement.

Djokovic had argued that he was exempt from strict Australian vaccination rules because he had recently recovered from COVID-19. But once he arrived in the country, Australian authorities said that exemption wasn't valid. They eventually cited the public interest and revoked his visa, saying his presence could stir up anti-vaccine sentiment and that kicking him out was necessary to keep Australians safe.

As he flew home from Australia, a member of the French Parliament added a new twist. Christophe Castaner said a new law that will exclude un-



vaccinated people from sports venues, restaurants and other public places will apply anyone who wants to play in the French Open – a reversal of plans to create a "bubble" around the tournament.

France's sports ministry said Monday once the new law is in place, there will be no exceptions until further notice.

For now, a warm welcome awaits Djokovic, who has overwhelming support in his native Serbia where his closest family lives. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic has accused the Australian government of "harrasing" the top-ranked tennis star and urged him to return home.

"God bless you Novak," read one of the banners held by the fans at the airport as he whisked through the passport control and customs and then driven by his brother Djordje to his apartment in Belgrade.

The legal battle over whether Djokovic held a valid exemption to vaccine rules that would allow him to play in the Australian Open ended Sunday with his deportation.

Vaccination amid the pandemic is a requirement for anyone at the Australian Open, which started Monday in Melbourne. Djokovic has won nine titles there previously. He had hoped this year to win his 21st Grand Slam singles trophy there, breaking the record he shares with rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for the most in the history of men's tennis. Federer is not playing while re-

covering from injury, but Nadal is competing.

More than 95% of all Top 100 men and women in their tours' respective rankings are vaccinated. At least two other men – American Tennis Sandgren and Frenchman Pierre-Hugues Herbert – skipped the first major tournament of the year due to the vaccine requirement.

Djokovic's attempt to get the medical exemption for not being vaccinated sparked anger in Australia, where strict lockdowns in cities and curbs on international travel have been employed to try to control the spread of the coronavirus since the pandemic began.

Djokovic tested positive in Belgrade on Dec. 16, but received the result late Dec. 17, he said, and scrapped all his commitments except a long-standing interview with L'Equipe newspaper the following day. He later described this "an error" of judgment.

Asked if Djokovic would face any penalties for flouting his isolation while being infected when he returns to Serbia, Serbian officials said he would not because the country is not in a state of emergency.

Djokovic has almost an iconic status in Serbia, whose president had called the court hearing in Australia "a farce with a lot of lies."

"Novak, welcome home, you know that we all support you here," said Snezana Jankovic, a Belgrade resident. "They can take away your visa, but they cannot take away your Serbian pride."

'Kohli Should Give Up His Ego,' Says Kapil Dev

'Should play under a younger player'

Agencies

Virat Kohli needs to shed his ego to play under a new leader after giving up the Test captaincy, cricket icon Kapil Dev said as uncertainty swirled about the future of the national team.

Kohli, 33, announced his surprise departure late on Saturday having already quit as T20 captain last year and been sacked as head of the one-day side soon afterwards.

Dev, who led India to glory in the 1983 World Cup, welcomed Kohli's decision, saying he was "going through a rough time" and "appeared to be under a lot of pressure".

But he said that Kohli will now have to knuckle down and bite his tongue if he is to remain in



the team under a new captain.

"Even Sunil Gavaskar played under me. I played under K Srikkanth and (Mohammad) Azharuddin. I had no ego," Dev, 63, was quoted as saying to the Mid-Day newspaper, referring to other greats of the era.

"Virat will have to give up his ego and play under a young cricketer. This will help him

and Indian cricket. Virat should guide the new captain, new players. We cannot lose Virat, the batsman... no way."

The race to succeed Kohli is seen as a contest between Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul and – in distant third place – the younger Rishabh Pant, 24.

TV commentator Harsha Bhogle tweeted on Monday that Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah should also be considered.

Rohit, 34, is already Twenty20 and ODI captain, and has led the Mumbai Indians to five victories in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

With Rohit injured, Rahul, 29, captained India in the recent second Test in South Africa and will lead the one-day side in the upcoming series beginning Wednesday.

Pat Cummins Wins Hearts By Restraining Champagne Shower For Usman Khawaja



Agencies

HOBART: Pat Cummins' leadership qualities were on full display even after his side sealed a 4-0 Ashes series win on Sunday as he ensured Usman Khawaja, the first Muslim cricketer to play for Australia, was not showered by champagne amid the celebrations.

As his euphoric teammates started popping champagne bottles on the stage at Hobart's Bellerive Oval, Khawaja stepped aside to avoid being sprayed with alcohol in keeping with his religious beliefs.

Cummins quickly noticed and asked his teammates to put aside the bottles and gestured for Khawaja to rejoin them on the dais.

Khawaja, who played the last two matches of the five-test series, returned to the stage and kneeled beside Cummins as the victorious side let out a roar posing for the cameras.

"Usman is obviously Muslim, so he doesn't like the champagne being thrown," Cummins, who also finished as the highest wicket-taker in the series victory over England, told reporters.

"I just made sure he got up there and no champagne was thrown." Cummins' "classy" gesture went viral on social media and was praised by fans as well as former England cricketer Isa Guha.

"Good leader always looks after the team as a whole and respects everyone equally and @patcummins30 has shown to be that leader," former Pakistan fast bowler Umar Gul said on Twitter.

One Twitter user said Cummins, in his first series as captain, was a "fantastic role model". "Take a bow, Captain Cummins. Inclusive, respectful, decent and humble leadership," the user wrote.

Playing his first test in 2-1/2 years, Khawaja smashed a hundred in each innings of the fourth match in Sydney batting in the middle order.

Opening the innings in Hobart, the left-hander scored six and 11 but still finished as the fifth highest scorer in the five-match series.

The Islamabad-born player was part of a Cricket Australia working group aimed at increasing diversity in the game.

'Pakistan Next Big Challenge': Cummins On Upcoming Tour



Agencies

HOBART: Pat Cummins began his tenure as Australia's Test captain with an emphatic Ashes series triumph but the 28-year-old knows his team must succeed overseas, particularly in the subcontinent, to be counted among the best.

Australia will face vastly different conditions when they visit Pakistan for a full tour, their first to the South Asian country since 1998, beginning with three Tests in March.

Australia will play three Tests, three one-day internationals (ODIs) and one Twenty-20 international (T20I) match in a month-long series commencing from March 3 in Pakistan.

The Test matches will be played in Karachi, Rawalpindi and Lahore from March 3 to 25, while all four white-ball match-

es will be played in Lahore from March 29 to April 5.

"That's the next big challenge," Cummins told reporters on Monday.

"I think the best teams in the past not only won at home but they were really successful overseas as well."

"Pakistan next on the radar for us, it's going to be huge."

"Lots of our young players have not played a lot overseas. Even in the last couple of years, I don't think we played a Test overseas. "(We are) excited to go and try our ways in different conditions."

While Cummins made an immediate impact as captain, coach Justin Langer's future looks uncertain once his contract expires after the Pakistan tour.

They are also scheduled to tour Sri Lanka and India later this year.

Ireland Register Historic ODI Series Win Over West Indies

Agencies

KINGSTON: Ireland achieved a historic series win over the West Indies after winning their deciding one-day international by two wickets at Sabina Park.

The 2-1 come-from-behind series victory from the third ODI gave Ireland a first ODI series win away from home against a full member. This also was only its second series win against a full member, after Zimbabwe at home in 2019.

After bowling out the West Indies for 212 inside 45 overs, Ireland reached a winning 214-8 in the 45th.

It was a remarkable end to a COVID-19-disrupted two-nation tour which began with Ireland's own his-



toric loss to a hosting United States in a Twenty20.

An over-eager William Porterfield was lost to the first ball of Ireland's chase on Sunday but the batting was mainly patient and practical.

The poised top order did its job.

Stand-in captain Paul Stirling, dropped before he scored by Jason Holder in

the slips, made 44 off 38 balls with five boundaries and a six. Stirling was out at 73-2.

No. 3 batter Andy McBrine, after taking four wickets, scored 59 off 100 balls before he edged behind. He was out at 152-3 and eventually given a second straight man of the match award. That also earned him man of the

series. His offspin earned 10 of the West Indies' 30 wickets in the series.

No. 4 Harry Tector notched a third half-century in three matches with his 52 off 76 balls. Tector lifted Ireland to the brink of victory when he was out at 197-6 in the 42nd over.

Two wickets in three balls for Akeal Hosein added some late drama, but tailender Craig Young completed Ireland's triumph with a boundary for the match and series with 5.1 overs to spare.

The West Indies won the first ODI by defending 269 runs, lost the second on Thursday after making 229, and gave itself little chance after putting up only 212, all at Sabina Park.

Yellow Card Amnesty Agreed For WC Playoffs In Europe

Agencies

ZURICH: An amnesty for yellow cards in European qualifying for the World Cup has lifted the threat of suspension for dozens of players involved in the playoffs in March, FIFA said Monday.

UEFA had asked FIFA to help wipe the disciplinary records of players from the 12 European teams involved in the playoffs who were set to carry over a single yellow card collected in group-stage qualifiers.

The decision means no player can be suspended for one of the three playoff finals on March 29 for getting a yellow card in the six semifinals played five days earlier.

The ruling potentially helps around 100 players who could be selected across the 12 squads.

One reason for the request was some playoff teams had

10 games in their qualifying groups last year and others played only eight so had fewer chances to be booked.

The amnesty does not relieve players like Zlatan Ibrahimovic who are already suspended for the playoff semifinals because of getting two yellow cards in the group stage.

Ibrahimovic is unavailable when Sweden hosts the Czech Republic on March 24. He can play if Sweden advances to play at Russia or Poland in their bracket final.

In other brackets, European champion Italy hosts North Macedonia with the winner playing away at Portugal or Turkey. Wales hosts Austria for the right to host Scotland or Ukraine.

The three playoff winners complete Europe's 13-nation quota in the 32-team World Cup lineup. The tournament is played Nov. 21-Dec. 18 in Qatar.



Yemeni Daily to UAE: Abu Dhabi's Fragile Glass Towers 'Easy To Reach'



Agenceis

A Yemeni daily says the United Arab Emirates (UAE) should await a harsh response for its escalations against Yemen, reminding the Persian Gulf country that Abu Dhabi's fragile glass towers are "easy to reach."

In an article published on Saturday, Al Masirah newspaper said the Emiratis have entered into a dangerous game by dispatching mercenaries and Takfiri elements under their command to the Yemeni provinces of Ma'rib and Shabwah.

"Observers confirm that the continuation of the Emirati escalation will have a great impact on Abu Dhabi, in the form of material, human, and economic losses; losses that will be inflicted upon the Emirati enemy inside Yemen and deep into [the UAE's] own geographical depth, which is full of oil installations," the paper noted.

"The fragile glass towers are easy to reach," it added.

In a series of tweets on Wednesday, the spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces announced that the Yemeni forces inflicted heavy losses on the UAE mercenaries in the southern province of Shabwah, killing and wounding dozens of them.

"The armed forces affirm their full readiness to defend the country and its people and to confront

the great escalation of Emirati enemy until victory is achieved," Brigadier General Yahya Saree wrote. "The consequences of this Emirati escalation will be great and they must bear consequences of their escalation."

On Friday evening, Saree said that Yemeni forces confronted UAE-sponsored mercenaries and the Daesh terrorists in Ma'rib province.

"The armed forces call on the people and families of the UAE mercenaries to withdraw their sons from engaging them in battles that serve only America and its alias in the region," he added.

Saudi Arabia and its regional allies, chief among them the UAE, launched the war on Yemen in March 2015, seeking primarily to dismantle the popular Ansarullah resistance movement and regain Yemen as a pawn by re-installing Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

The war, supported by Western powers, has left hundreds of thousands of Yemenis dead and displaced millions more. It has also destroyed Yemen's infrastructure and spread famine and infectious diseases there.

The Ansarullah movement has vowed to defeat the Saudi- and Emirati-backed mercenaries and liberate Yemen in its entirety. It says the war on Yemen was waged to subjugate the Arab country to the US, the British and the Israelis.

Teachers' Union In France Call For "Massive" Strike Over Covid Protocols

Agenceis

Paris: French teachers' unions called Monday for a second major strike this week to protest the government's Covid testing and isolation protocols, which they say are severely disrupting classes.

The move follows a one-day walkout last week that saw half of the country's primary schools close, according to unions, who accuse authorities of failing to establish clear rules that would keep as many students in school as possible.

Teachers say class disruptions have become unmanageable with the spread of the highly contagious Omicron coronavirus variant, with many parents struggling to get vaccination appointments for their children and long lines for tests forming outside pharmacies.

In response the government promised to provide five million high-grade FFP2 facemasks for school staff and to hire over 3,000 substitute teachers to replace those forced to isolate after contracting Covid or coming into contact with an infected person.

But that was not enough for unions, who said the new strike

Thursday would be a prelude to a "massive" nationwide walkout on January 27.

"The chaos resulting from the handling of this health crisis requires strong measures, beyond the commitments made by the prime minister and education minister," a group of four unions said in a statement that was also signed by the FCPE, France's biggest parents' federation.

They want the government to hire enough substitutes to replace all teachers absent as Covid cases spread rapidly throughout schools.

Children who test positive for the virus have to remain home for up to 10 days while their classmates are forced to take three tests in four days.

Teachers also want more personal protection equipment "well beyond the amounts promised," and more fundamental investments in the French education system, where average teacher pay lags behind that of many other European nations.

However the call for a new Thursday strike was not joined by other main union groups, including the Snuipp-FSU, the largest among primary school teachers.

Drones from Yemen Strike Abu Dhabi

Agencies

ABU DHABI: Rebels fighting Saudi and UAE backed forces in Yemen on Monday struck Abu Dhabi sparking panic across Gulf region.

Drone attack sparked an explosion that struck three oil tankers in Abu Dhabi and another fire at an extension of Abu Dhabi International Airport on Monday that killed three people and wounded six, police said.

Abu Dhabi police identified the dead as two Indian nationals and one Pakistani.

Houthi controlled Yemeni army said it has launched drone attacks deep inside the UAE and Emirati officials confirmed the hits.

The Yemeni military conducts regular retaliatory attacks against targets in Saudi Arabia over its devastating war on Yemen. But, attack against the UAE, which is fighting alongside Saudi Arabia, has been rare.

The incident comes while Yemen's yearslong war rages on and as an Emirati-flagged vessel carrying arms found itself recently captured by the Houthis.

The UAE has been at war in Yemen since early 2015 and was a key member of the Saudi-led coalition that launched attacks against the Iranian-backed Ansarullah movement after the group overran the capital Sanaa.

Although the UAE has de-



creased the number of troops it has on the ground, it continues to be actively engaged in the war and supports key militias fighting the Houthis. It also cooperates closely with the United States in military operations in Yemen.

Meanwhile a senior Ansarullah leader warned UAE if it does not stop aggression on Yemen, it will receive more painful attacks than the attacks reported in Abi Dhabi.

Mohamed al-Bukhaiti, a member of Yemen's Supreme Political Council, said the Yemeni army and popular committees have shown more patience towards the UAE rather than Saudis, adding, "This is because Emirati peo-

ple oppose the invasion of Yemen and the participation of their rulers in the Saudi-led coalition."

This comes as al-Bukhaiti had warned the UAE not to continue its aggressive moves in the south of Yemen otherwise it would be targeted deep inside its territories by Yemenis.

Yemen's Armed Forces spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree said Monday that the Yemeni military struck areas deep inside the UAE after a warning a few days ago by Al-Bukhaiti.

The Yemeni army used as many as 20 UAVs and 10 ballistic missiles that struck targets deep in the UAE, Lebanese Al-Mayadeen reported.

Massive Underwater Volcanic Eruption Felt Around The World

Agenceis

NUKU'ALOFA, TONGA: A massive volcanic eruption in Tonga that triggered tsunami waves around the Pacific caused "significant damage" to the island nation's capital and smothered it in dust, but the full extent was not apparent with communications still cut off on Sunday.

The eruption on Saturday was so powerful it was recorded around the world, triggering a tsunami that flooded Pacific coastlines from Japan to the United States.

The capital Nuku'alofa suffered "significant" damage, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, adding there had been no reports of injury or death but a full assessment was not yet possible with communication lines down.

"The tsunami has had a significant impact on the foreshore on the northern side of Nuku'alofa with boats and large boulders washed ashore," Ardern said after contact with the New Zealand embassy in Tonga.

"Nuku'alofa is covered in a thick film of volcanic dust but otherwise conditions are calm and stable."

Tonga was in need of water supplies, she said: "The ash cloud has caused contamination."

There has been no word on damage in the outer islands and New Zealand will send an air force reconnaissance aircraft "as soon as atmospheric conditions allow," the NZ Defence Force tweeted.

"We're working hard to see how we can assist our Pacific neighbours after the volcanic eruption near Tonga."

The United States was "deeply concerned for the people of Tonga," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, pledging support for the island nation.

A 1.2-metre wave swept ashore in the Tongan capital with residents reporting they had fled to higher ground, leaving behind flooded houses, some with structural damage, as small stones and ash fell from the sky.

"It was massive, the ground shook, our house was shaking. It came in waves. My younger brother thought bombs were exploding nearby," resident Mere Taufua told the Stuff news website Saturday.

She said water filled their home minutes later and she watched the wall of a neighbour-ing house collapse.

'People screaming'

"We just knew straight away it was a tsunami. Just water gushing into our home," Taufua said. "You could just hear screams everywhere, people screaming for safety, for everyone to get to higher ground."

Tonga's King Tupou VI was reported to have been evacuated from the Royal Palace in Nuku'alofa and taken by police convoy to a villa well away from the coastline.

Dramatic satellite images showed the long, rumbling eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano spew smoke and ash in the air, with a thunderous roar heard 10,000 kilometres (6,000 miles) away in Alaska.

The eruption triggered tsunamis across the Pacific with waves of 1.74 metres (five and a

half feet) measured in Chanaral, Chile, more than 10,000 kilometres away, and smaller waves seen along the Pacific coast from Alaska to Mexico.

In California, the city of Santa Cruz was hit by flooding due to a tidal surge generated by the tsunami, videos retweeted by the US National Weather Service showed.

Peru closed 22 ports as a precaution while waves of around 1.2 metres (four feet) hit along Japan's Pacific coast.

By 0300 GMT on Sunday, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii said the threat from the eruption had passed.

Heard in Alaska

The US Geological Survey recorded Saturday's eruption as equivalent to a 5.8-magnitude earthquake at zero depth.

The volcano's eruption lasted at least eight minutes and sent plumes of gas, ash and smoke several kilometres into the air.

New Zealand scientist Marco Brenna, a senior lecturer at Otago University's School of Geology, described the impact of the eruption as "relatively mild" but said another eruption with a much bigger impact could not be ruled out.

The eruption was so powerful it was even heard in Alaska, the UAF Geophysical Institute tweeted.

"A part of the pressure signal in Alaska was in the audible range. The very large signal is not that surprising considering the scale of the eruption, but the audible aspect is fairly unique," it said, citing Alaska Volcano Observatory scientist David Fee.

Twitter Bans Account Linked To Iran Leader Over Video Threatening Donald Trump

Agenceis

WASHINGTON: Twitter said Saturday it had permanently suspended an account linked to Iran's supreme leader that posted a video calling for revenge for a top general's assassination against former US president Donald Trump.

"The account referenced has been permanently suspended for violating our ban evasion policy," a Twitter spokesperson told AFP.

The account, @KhameneiSite, this week posted an animated video showing an unmanned aircraft targeting Trump, who ordered a drone strike in Baghdad two years ago that killed top Iranian commander General Qassem Soleimani.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's main accounts in various languages remain active. Last year, another similar account was suspended by Twitter over a post also appearing to reference revenge against Trump.

The recent video, titled "Revenge is Definite", was also posted on Khamenei's official website.

According to Twitter, the company's top priority is keeping people safe and protecting the health of the conversation on the platform.

The social media giant says it has clear policies around abusive behavior and will take action when violations are identified.

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Pak Prisoner In US, Whose Release Sought By Armed Man, Serving 86 Years

Agenceis

ISLAMABAD: Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani prisoner in the United States whose release was reportedly demanded by a Texas hostage-taker this weekend, is serving an 86-year sentence for the attempted murder of American soldiers.

Four people were freed unharmed on Sunday following a more than 10-hour standoff at a synagogue in the US state. Their suspected captor was killed.

Media, quoting a US official briefed on the matter, reported that the man was calling for the release of 49-year-old Siddiqui.

Her lawyer said in a statement to CNN that she had "absolutely no involvement" in the hostage situation, and condemned the man's actions. A US-educated Pakistani scientist, she was jailed in 2010 for attacking American soldiers in Afghanistan.

She was the first woman to be suspected of Al-Qaeda links by the US, but never convicted of it.

At 18 years old, Siddiqui travelled to the US, where her brother lived, to study at Boston's prestigious MIT, later earning a PhD in neuroscience at Brandeis University.

But after the 9/11 terror attacks of 2001, she came up on the FBI's radar for donations to Islamic organisa-

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As head of the Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Soleimani was the architect of its strategy in the Middle East.

He and his Iraqi lieutenant were killed by a US drone strike outside Baghdad airport on January 3, 2020. Khamenei has repeatedly promised to avenge his death.

On January 3, the second anniversary of the strike, the supreme leader and ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi once again threatened the US with revenge.

Trump's supporters regularly denounce the banning of the Republican billionaire from Twitter, underscoring that accounts of several leaders considered authoritarian by the United States are allowed to post on the platform.

tions and was linked to the purchase of \$10,000 worth of night-vision goggles and books on warfare.

The US suspected she joined Al-Qaeda from America, returning to Pakistan where she married into the family of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed — an architect of the 9/11 attacks.

She disappeared in around 2003, along with her three children, in Karachi. Five years later she turned up in Pakistan's war-torn neighbour Afghanistan, where she was arrested by local forces in the restive southeastern province of Ghazni.

'Death to America'

During her interrogation by US forces, she grabbed a rifle and opened fire, while screaming "Death to America" and "I want to kill Americans".

The soldiers escaped unhurt, but she was injured.

Her imprisonment sparked outrage in her home country and her supporters claim she was the victim of a secret Pakistan-US plot.

After she was sentenced, Al-Qaeda's then number two called on Muslims to "avenge" the decision.

Her release has previously been at the centre of militants' demands, including during two hostage crises in Pakistan as well as the capture of James Foley, an American journalist who was beheaded by the Islamic State in 2014.



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