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P5 STATE

GOVT SAYS DIVESTING PRINCIPLES OF ADMIN POWERS WILL STRENGTHEN THEM

Amid controversy over delegation of powers to principals of medical colleges to bureaucrats, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday said that it will strengthen the

P7 CALORIE CONUNDRUM

A calorie is a calorie is a calorie, at least from a thermodynamic standpoint. It's defined as the amount of energy needed to raise the temperature of 1 kilogram of water by 1 degree Celsius (2.2 pounds by 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit). But when it comes to health and



P11 SPORTS

AFRIDI LEADS PAKISTAN'S DOMINATION OF ICC AWARDS

Fast bowler Shaheen Afridi was named men's Cricketer of the Year on Monday, combining with team mates Babar Azam and Muhammad Rizwan to help his



Widom Quote!
First impressions are always unreliable
— Franz Kafka

NEWS DIGEST

Patwari Falls In ACB Net

Srinagar: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Monday arrested a Patwari, who had demanded and accepted a bribe of Rs 15,000 from a person for issuing revenue extracts, in north Kashmir's Kupwara district. **More on P10**

Drug Peddler Booked Under PSA: Police

Srinagar: Police on Monday said that a notorious drug peddler from Baramulla district has been booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA) and shifted to Kot Balwal Jail in Jammu. According to a police spokesperson, Muzamil Majeed Bhat alias **More on P10**

14 Gamblers Held In Baramulla

Srinagar: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested 14 gamblers in a series of raids in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Acting on reliable information about presence of gamblers at Takiya Batpora, Hardu Aboora, **More on P10**

Ladakh Reports 159 New Covid Cases

Leh: Ladakh in a day reported 159 fresh Covid cases, which took the tally to 24,655, while the active cases in the Union Territory stand at 1,255, officials said on Monday. The union territory has recorded 222 Covid-related deaths -- 164 in **More on P10**

BSF On High Alert Along India-Pak Border

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: BSF troops deployed on the India-Pakistan border in Jammu and Kashmir are on high alert following a threat of anti-social elements creating trouble on Republic Day, the force's Inspector General DK Boora said on Monday.

The Border Security Force (BSF) had already announced two-week-long heightened vigilance along the border, he said. Boora said troops have begun anti-tunnel operations along the International Border (IB) in the Jammu frontier.

'About 135 Militants Waiting To Sneak In' **More on P10**

J&K Logs 5394 New Corona Cases, Eight Deaths

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir showed a slight decline on Monday as 5394 fresh cases were detected during the last 24 hours during which eight more people also succumbed to the deadly infection in the Union Territory.

According to officials, Kashmir Valley reported 3349 fresh cases of novel Coronavirus while 2045 were registered from various districts of Jammu division, taking the total number of people infected since the outbreak of pandemic in J&K past 4 lakh mark.

On Saturday last, the J&K recorded its highest daily case count of 6568 since the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

In the Valley, officials said, Srinagar reported the highest 963 new cases of virus, Budgam 574, Baramulla 514, Kulgam 276, Kupwara 267, Bandipora 252, Anantnag 229, Pulwama 188, Ganderbal 51 and Shopian 35.

In the winter capital, officials said, Jammu detected a maximum of 1204 new cases of Coronavirus, Udhampur 234, Doda 187, Ramban 121, Reasi 99, Samba 71, Kishtwar and Rajouri 40 each, Kathua 34 and Poonch 15.

'Moreover, 3643 more COVID-19 **More on P10**

R-Day: Security Bandobast Tightened Across Kashmir

Drones Being Used For Aerial Surveillance; Parade Venue Sealed



Zaid Bin Shabir

SRINAGAR: The government forces on Monday intensified aerial surveillance, carried out random search operations and sealed the routes leading to Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium (SKCC) here in this capital city in the run upto the

R-Day celebrations being held on Wednesday.

Security has been put on maximum alert in major towns and districts of the Valley amid apprehensions of militant attacks to disrupt the January 26 functions, reports and officials said.

Contingents of police and

CRPF personnel in full battle gear have been deployed in this capital city and elsewhere to ensure smooth conduct of R-Day celebrations, officials said.

Stringent security measures have also been put in place near the SKCC, the main venue. At many roads leading to the venue, **More on P10**

Will Ensure Peaceful Celebrations Across Valley: IGP

The Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, Vijay Kumar said on Monday that security has been beefed up across Kashmir to ensure peaceful and incident free R-Day celebrations.

"For the past one week, police with help of the army and the CRPF have been **More on P10**

Raj Bhawan Cancels 'At Home' Due To Covid

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday announced to cancel this year's 'At Home' reception at the Raj Bhawan in Jammu on January 26 in view of Covid-19 pandemic, an official spokesperson said.

Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha has urged the **More on P10**

Yemeni Missiles Hit Dubai, Petrol Prices Jump

Observer Monitoring Desk

ABU DHABI: Yemeni military on Monday struck UAE and Saudi Arabia for the second time in a week in retaliation for recent deadly air strikes by Saudi led coalition that left over 100 civilians dead in the impoverished Arab country. The Yemeni drone and missile strikes stoked tensions in the oil-exporting region even as the U.S. forces stationed in the region said they had intercepted the missiles fired from Yemen.

Oil gained, remaining near the highest levels since 2014 as geopolitical risk and the prospect of improving demand pushed crude to five straight weekly gains. Brent crude traded near \$90 a barrel on Monday after reports of the attack.

Shrapnel fell over scattered areas of Abu Dhabi after military defenses repelled two ballistic missiles, but there was no damage or loss of life, the UAE Defense Ministry said in a statement. The UAE said it had destroyed the launchers in Yemen's northern Al Jawf region, more than 1,270 kilometers (790 miles) from Abu Dhabi, immediately after the missiles were fired and was "taking all necessary procedures to protect the country."

U.S. military **More on P10**

Govt Reserves 15% Non-Gazetted Posts In JKP For Women

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday announced 15 percent reservation for women in non-gazetted police posts.

The announcement about it was made by Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday on the occasion of National Girl Child Day.

"On #NationalGirlChildDay, approved 15% reservation for women in non-gazetted posts of @JmukmrPolice. This is just the beginning. We are determined and committed to increase it further in future," office of the J&K LG tweeted.

In another tweet, Sinha said his administration is committed to ensure 'Nari Shaktis' social and economic empowerment. "For women and girls to be agents of change, J&K government is committed to ensure Nari Shaktis' social and



Policewomen participating in a full dress rehearsal of the R-day parade at SKCC on Monday. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

economic empowerment while redressing long-standing inequalities to build a more just and resilient society," he said.

According to an official spokesperson, the step of 15% reservation for women in JKP will give due representation to women in the Police force and will ensure the availability of sufficient women personnel to engage exclusively in the matter of gender-based crimes.

"The move will lay the foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable

society," he said.

Despite several assurances before 2019, he said, the matter of reservation for women in J&K Police was never addressed.

"At present, without any exclusive reservation, women constitute 3% of the total strength of J&K Police and the numbers will increase after the reservation is implemented in future recruitments," he added.

The government's decision to grant 15% reservation to **More on P10**

Govt Sacks Two More School Teachers

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday sacked two more school teachers, including the one who remained unauthorisedly absent from duties for the last 19 years.

The Director of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) issued separate orders on Monday stating that these teachers have remained absent unauthorisedly from their legitimate duties.

One among the teachers posted at the Primary School Khumriyal, Kupwara has not resumed her duties since July 1, 2002, the order reads.

It further adds that the teacher was provided an opportunity to be heard by DSEK on 06-07-2021 wherein she was directed to present herself before the directorate along with a statement of defense within seven days.

DSEK said that the teacher responded the notice on 15-07-2021 but on its examination it was found unsatisfactory and unsubstantiated and could **More on P10**

Mercury Dips After Fresh Snowfall In Parts Of Kashmir

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The minimum temperature in most parts of Kashmir dropped but settled several degrees above normal for this time of the season, except in Gulmarg, officials said on Monday.

Fresh snowfall was recorded in several areas of the valley especially in south Kashmir, the officials said.

They said the tourist resort of Pahalgam received about five inches of snowfall, while

Kokernag about two inches.

The ski-resort of Gulmarg recorded five inches of snowfall, they said.

There are reports of snowfall in some other areas in the upper reaches of the valley, including in Sonamarg, as well, they said. The officials said the administration has pressed men and machinery into the job to clear the snow.

The minimum temperature at most places in the valley went down on Sunday night.

The minimum **More on P10**

Highway Reopens After 30-Hour Closure

Banihal: The strategic Jammu-Srinagar national highway was cleared for stranded vehicles on Monday as road clearance agencies pulled out a rice-loaded truck that was stuck in mud near Panthiyal in Ramban district for nearly 30 hours, officials said. Senior Superintendent **More on P10**



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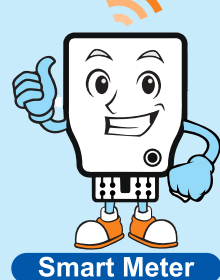
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Ahead of 73rd Republic Day, full dress rehearsal was held, on Monday, in Srinagar, giving a glimpse of the grand spectacle to unfold on Wednesday. Pic Abid Bhat

4 employees injured as major fire incident averted at JLNM hospital

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Four employees of Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial (JLNM) hospital suffered minor injuries after they successfully averted a major fire incident at the hospital on Monday afternoon.

Deputy Medical Superintendent of JLNM hospital Dr Bilques Shah said that a major fire incident was averted as an Oxygen plant at the rooftop caught fire while welding work was going on.

She said that during the welding work, a PVC sheet of the rooftop caught the fire following which four employees of the hospital successfully managed to avert a major fire tragedy at the hospital, but added they suffered minor injuries while dousing the flames.

It was due to the timely efforts of these employees that no loss of property was reported during the incident, adding that the condition of all injured employees is stable—

Two structures demolished at Foreshore road

Observer News Service

Srinagar, JANUARY 24: The Enforcement Wing of Lake Conservation & Management Authority (LC&MA) today conducted a special demolition drive in the areas of Dodoh Mohalla Northern Foreshore road.

During the demolition drive, illegal constructions were demolished including one shop and one plinth. At the site of the shop there was stiff resistance from the locals which resulted in partial demolition of the structure. Also the encroachment of an illegally developed approach road for ferrying illegal building material was cut in the middle to stop the transportation of illegal building material.

All the public residing within the LDA jurisdiction and in lake are hereby once again directed not to go for any sort of illegal constructions/ encroachments, as the Enforcement wing will continue its demolition drives of illegal constructions/ removal of encroachments.

Moreover the Tipper/Load carrier owners are advised not to carry/ ferry any construction material in the prohibited area of Dal/ Nigeen Lake without getting proper permission and in case anybody found shall be dealt with as per law. Also, CCTV Cameras have been installed and barricades have been erected in order to curb the transportation of illegal building material in the LCMA jurisdiction.

GI tagging of Houseboat in pipeline: Govt

Observer News Service

Srinagar Travel Agents Association of Kashmir (TAAK) Monday held an interactive meeting with Director Handloom and Handicrafts Mahmood A Shah as part of the department's efforts to promote handicrafts and artisans associated with it among the travellers.

In this regard, Mahmood Shah said the department has been conducting Craft Tours to give boost to artisan community by giving them direct access with the buyers.

He urged the travel and tour operators to include Craft Tours in their Tour itineraries to help the department's initiative.

He said Srinagar has earned itself a place in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) and is among 49 world-wide cities to earn this honour this year.

On the occasion, he also distributed digital brochures of Craft Tours highlighting Craft Centers in the old city Srinagar where in most of the artisans are national awardees.

The Director Handloom and Handicrafts further said they are making efforts to get the GI tags to Kashmir specific crafts and products.

In this regard, Mahmood Shah said, a dossier for Wagov ,Namda and Shikara has been prepared and is



ready to be submitted to GI Authorities in Chennai.

"The GI tagging for Houseboat ,crescent, chain stitch ,copper, wicker willow is under process," he informed.

Notably, Pashmina, Sozni, Kani, Paper Machie, Walnut, Carpet and Khatumbund have already been GI tagged to preserve its originality and uniqueness.

The interactive session was held after TAAK held its Executive Committee Meeting which was chaired by its President Farooq Kuthoo.

The members in the meeting appreciated the efforts of the Handloom department in promoting the craft and creating craft tours in the old city.

President TAAK urged the members to acquaint themselves with Kashmir's rich history of art and craft beside its heritage.

He also urged them to diversify their tour itineraries by incorporating Art and Craft Tours and Haritage tours in their packages.(KNS)

Need to ensure ‘Right to Dignity’ of girls: Kamili

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Celebrated every year on January 24 throughout the country, the ‘National Girl Child Day’ was today observed in Jammu and Kashmir with an aim to create awareness about the rights of girl child.

On the occasion, several programs were held across Jammu and Kashmir with an aim to raise awareness related to the issues of girls, which include female infanticide, gender inequality, physical and mental abuse.

In her message, the Mission Director (MD) Women Empowerment, Shabnam Shah Kamili said that a girl child should exercise her rights, she deserves in the society, as we all are aware of the rights of a girl child but most of the girls are deprived of their basic rights, particularly the Right to Education.

In her message, the Mission Director (MD) Women Empowerment, Shabnam Shah Kamili said that a girl child should exercise her rights, she deserves in the society, as we all are aware of the rights of a girl child but most of the girls are deprived of their basic rights, particularly the Right to Education.

Kamili said that the Department is committed to ensure that every girl child gets all her rights.

She added that the Central Government and UT administration has introduced enormous pro-

grams and schemes in this regard and made a special reference to the central scheme ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhav’. She said that with the help of such kinds of schemes, girls have been empowered in various spheres of life.

“It is a matter of concern that girls are deprived of Right to Dignity, and I urge all especially parents to ensure that a girl child is dignified and given love and respect equally”, said Kamili in her message on the eve of National Girl Child Day.

She said that her department will work on this theme Right to Dignity. She further added that no one should compromise with the respect and dignity of his/her girl child. While giving good habits to their daughters, parents should make them aware of the values of their dignity.

Kamili urged upon people to create an emotional and mental balance in girls.

“Girls are usually subjected to mental trauma, which is the worst form of domestic violence. Physical trauma can be healed, but mental trauma cannot be healed”, said Kamili.

H&ME deptt’s fresh proposal: Govt reacts to criticism

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid controversy over delegation of powers of principals of medical colleges to bureaucrats, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday claimed that it will strengthen the position of the principals as they will be able to devote more time towards healthcare.

The Health & Medical Education Department, as per the news agency today said that the positions of administrators, personal officers and administrative officers have existed in medical colleges for several years.

“As the name suggests, these posts have been created to assist the Principals of medical colleges and relieve them of day-to-day routine administrative matters,” the department said.

It said the role and responsibilities of these officers needed clarity and definition to avoid confusion. “It may be appreciated that accountability can be fixed only when responsibilities are clearly defined. This is the essence of a well-run institution,” the government said.

It further added that medical college is essentially an academic institution and consists of the college and associated hospitals. “The principal of a medical college provides academic leadership and facilitates research. This role of the principal shall be impacted if he has to deal with routine administrative matters like electricity, sanitation and cleanliness of hospital

DIAL-EMMA

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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311


✈

RAILWAYS

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

🚂

HIGHWAY STATUS



Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)

Mughal Road - (Closed)

Srinagar- Leh- (Closed)

☾☼

HIJRI

CALENDAR

21 Jumada al-Sani

1443

PRAYERS

FAJR

6: 06

ZUHR

12:42

ASR

4:16

Magrib

5:57

ISHA

7: 21

This Day In History

- 1348 - Friuli Earthquake in [European southern Alps measuring approximately 6.9, largely destroys Villach, killing 5,000
- 1565 - Battle at Talikota India: Deccan sultanate destroy Vijayanagar's army and the last Hindu kingdom of Southern India
- 1579 - Treaty of Utrecht signed, marks beginning of Dutch Republic
- 1721 - Tsar Peter the Great ends Russian-orthodox patriarchy
- 1840 - American naval expedition under Charles Wilkes is first to identify Antarctica as a new continent
- 1964 - Echo 2, US communications satellite launched
- 1971 - Himachal Pradesh becomes 18th Indian state
- 1971 - Military coup in Uganda under Major General Idi Amin
- 1974 - Dr Christiaan Barnard transplants 1st heterotopic heart transplant (adding donor heart without removal of old)
- 1975 - Bangladeshi parliament disposes of premier Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
- 1979 - 1st documented case of a robot killing a human in US
- 1980 - Highest speed attained by a warship, 167 kph, USN hovercraft
- 1983 - Infrared telescope satellite launched into polar orbit
- 1988 US VP George H. W. Bush & Dan Rather clash on "CBS Evening News" as Rather attempts to question Bush about his role in Iran-Contra affair.
- 1990 - Avianca Flight 52, runs out of fuel & crashes in Cove Neck NY, 73 die.
- 1992 - Hubble space telescope optics finds NGC3862/3C264.
- 1994 - Mine fire at Asansol, India, kills 55
- 1994 - US space probe Clementine launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California
- 2001 - A 50-year-old Douglas DC-3 crashes near Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela killing 24.

From KO Archives

SHO Killed In Boulevard Blast

NC activist gunned down in Sopore

Observer News Service

SrinagOAR - A bomb planted at high security Boulevard here killed a senior police officer this morning while four persons died in separate incidents of violence elsewhere in the security ridden state ahead of Republic day. Four more people were injured in two separate explosions that rocked the city since last evening.

Even as police and other agencies stepped up security for the Republic day, suspected militants blew up an improvised explosive device (IED) inside a public urinal near Hotel Tramboob intercontinental at around 09:45 hours killing instantly station house officer of Ram Munshi Bagh police station, Ghulam Hasan Naaz.

The deceased SHO on his daily round had stopped for a chat with his counterpart from Nehru Park police station. Naaz went to nearby public convenience to relieve himself and immediately afterwards an explosion took place. Naaz was blown to pieces. Reports said. The driver and four guards of the police officer narrowly escaped the blast that also smashed windcreens of several nearby hotels. The guards fired in panic in air. Traffic came to an immediate halt on the vital road which also leads to Rajbhavan. Security forces sealed off Dalgate and adjacent areas. Policemen stationed near the Sulaiman Shopping Complex turned violent and beat up pedestrians and drivers of passenger buses smashing several vehicles. According to the CNS Hizbul Mujahedin has claimed responsibility for the explosion.

An official spokesman quoted by PTI said the blast is suspected to have been caused by an IED activated by a remote-controlled device. Senior police and army officials visited the explosion site and vigil has been stepped up in the highly guarded area frequented by government officials and security vehicles.

In Handwara troops shot dead a civilian after two militants slipped through a security force dragnet following an encounter early today, a CNS report said. Personnel of the 3rd RR according to CNS raided the house of one Samandar Khan in village Dooruhah Handwara after a tip off. While the two militants holed up there gave them a slip after an encounter, troops shot dead the house owner Samandar Khan before destroying his house. Police however said Khan was caught in cross fire.

Meanwhile, a couple received splinter injuries when suspected militants hurled a grenade at a security picket in downtown Srinagar last night, he said. The device fell short of its target and exploded on the road wounding the couple, the spokesman added.

Unknown gunmen shot dead one Tariq Ahmad allegedly a police informer, near Nowpora crossing this afternoon. Gunmen shot dead one Mohinder Kumar inside his house at Kulhand in Doda district while body of an unidentified person was found in Kunzar area in Baramulla.

A woman was wounded when she was caught in a cross-fire between militants and security forces at village Kotli Kalaban in Rajouri district an official spokesman said.

Militants abducted one Muhammad Sharif Ganai from Kulhand area in Doda district, the spokesman said.

NC BLOCK SEC SHOT: Unidentified gunmen shot dead a block secretary of the ruling National Conference at Tujar Sharif, Sopore this evening. Identified as Ghulam Muhammad Mir alias Gula Mir of Tujar Sharif, the deceased was shot point blank at 6:30 pm. He died instantly. Mir, 45, is said to have been working as a manager and accountant with the marketing society, Sopore.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 25 January, 2001)

Anti-CAA Protest: Delhi Court Frames Sedition Charge Against Sharjeel Imam



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI : A Delhi court on Monday framed charges under sedition against JNU student Sharjeel Imam in a case related to alleged inflammatory speeches made by him during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) in 2019.

Charges are being framed under sections 124 (sedition), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration), 505 (Statements conducting to public mischief) of Indian Penal Code, and Section 13 (punishment for unlawful activities) of UAPA, Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat ordered.

As per the prosecution, Imam

had allegedly made speeches at Jamia Millia Islamia on December 13, 2019, and at Aligarh Muslim University on December 16, 2019, where he threatened to cut off Assam and the rest of the Northeast from India.

In his defense, Imam had earlier told the court that he is not a terrorist and his prosecution is a whip of a monarch rather than a government established by law. Whereas, the prosecution claimed that violent riots took place pursuant to Imam's speech.

He is in judicial custody since January 2020.

Delhi Police had filed a charge sheet against Imam in the case, in which it alleged that he allegedly gave speeches inciting hatred, contempt, and disaffection towards the Central Government and instigated the people which led to the violence in December 2019.

Haj House vs Amar Jawan Jyoti: Samajwadi Party, BJP Attack Each Other Ahead Of UP Polls



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GHAZIABAD: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday took part in a door-to-door campaign in Ghaziabad and launched a scathing attack on the Samajwadi Party, saying while a Haj House was built here earlier, his government constructed the Kailash Mansarovar Bhawan.

During the day, Adityanath addressed his party workers in Krishna Dental College of Sahibabad and in Saraswati Shishu Mandir in Nehru Nagar, besides the door-to-door campaign in Rajiv Colony of Sahibabad.

"Earlier Haj House was made in Ghaziabad. Our government constructed Kailash Mansarovar Bhawan. Earlier the mafia used to harass traders, but now no mafia can dare to grab property of any trader, doctor or a poor person," he said.

"In the past, ration meant for the poor did not reach them and it would go to Bangladesh through the food grains mafia. But today

food grains are reaching the poor and 15 crore people have got it. The 'double engine' government is making available a double dose of food grains," he said, referring to the BJP-led dispensations in the state and at the Centre.

The Haj House in Ghaziabad was inaugurated in September 2016, while the Kailash Mansarovar Bhawan was inaugurated in December 2020.

Adityanath also targeted the Samajwadi Party over its promise of providing 300 units of electricity free to domestic consumers, saying that during its rule there was no electricity supply.

He said the SP was making many promises, knowing well that it would not win the elections.

"We distributed tablets to the youth and they are saying that they will also give smart phones. They know that they are not going to come to power, hence they are promising anything and everything," Adityanath said.

He also targeted SP president Akhilesh Yadav over the pension scheme for the elderly.



OMICRON IS NOW IN COMMUNITY transmission in India and has become dominant in multiple metros: Report

India's Omicron Wave May Intensify In Coming Weeks, Say Experts

Reuters

NEW DELHI: India's COVID-19 infections, led by the Omicron variant, may see a sharp rise in the coming weeks, some top experts said, noting that the variant was already in community transmission and hospitals were seeing more patients despite a decline in cases in major cities.

The country reported 3,06,064 new infections over the last 24 hours, the health ministry said, about an 8% decline from the average daily cases reported in the last four days. Deaths were 439, the lowest in five days.

But weekly positivity rates have risen to 17.03% in the week to Jan. 24, from about 0.63% Dec. 27, led by the highly-transmissible Omicron

THE NUMBER of cases in cities like Mumbai and Pune are the tip of the iceberg,"

variant.

"Omicron is now in community transmission in India and has become dominant in multiple metros," a report by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) said on January 10 in a report released on Sunday.

Most cases of the Omicron variant have been mild, the advisory group said, although hospitalisations and cases in intensive care were increasing.

In last two weeks major cities such as the capital, Delhi, and financial hub Mumbai in the wealthiest state of Maharashtra, have been reporting big

falls in cases after hitting peaks.

That might change, said Dr. Subhash Salunke, a member of the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research and the national taskforce on COVID, as the variant is spreading to semi-urban and rural areas. The state expects to see multiple peaks in the next eight to 10 weeks, said Dr. Salunke, who previously advised the Maharashtra government.

"The number of cases in cities like Mumbai and Pune are the tip of the iceberg," Dr. Salunke told Reuters, adding that the deadly Delta variant from the previous wave was also circulating.

The country's tally of overall infections reached 39.54 million, the second-highest globally behind the United States. The country has seen 489,848 people die of the virus.

China Our Real Enemy, BJP Harps On Pakistan For Votes: Akhlesh

Agencies

NEW DELHI: Akhilesh Yadav today defended his comment that China is the real enemy while Pakistan is only the "political enemy" targeted by the BJP for votes and referenced General Bipin Rawat, the Chief of Defence Staff, who died in a helicopter crash on December 8.

"I said the same on Pakistan that General Bipin Rawat used to say. He had said that China is our biggest enemy. Can I not quote Bipin Rawat?" the Samajwadi Party chief told NDTV in an interview, responding to the BJP's sharp criticism of his recent comments.

In an interview with Economic Times, Akhilesh Yadav had said: "Our real enemy is China. Pakistan is our political enemy. But BJP only targets Pakistan because of their vote politics. In the Lok Sabha, only Samajwadi Party raised this question - when will we have members on 24 assembly seats in PoK? The then home minister said that we will reach till



Aksai Chin. Now we are hearing what's happening in Galwan. They are encroaching our land, encroaching our businesses. The Indian government should think about this and consult opposition parties on how to deal with the situation."

General Rawat had in November said he considered China, not Pakistan, "India's biggest enemy".

"We should not come under any pressure from the psychological games played by China. That is what they want. China is our biggest enemy today, not Pakistan," General Rawat had said, adding that there was "no doubt" the threat

on the northern borders was much bigger.

On Akhilesh Yadav's comment, the BJP said the Samajwadi Party leader had made his preference "obvious" in his choice of candidates.

"I want to tell Akhilesh Ji, who talks about Jinnah and Pakistan, that had Yakob Meemon been alive today, Samajwadi Party would have been given a ticket to him as well," Mr Patra had said, referring to the 1993 Bombay blast accused who was executed in 2015.

Uttar Pradesh will vote in seven phases from February 10. The results will be declared on March 10.

'No Saint Can Be CM': Top Hindu Seer On Adityanath



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PRAYAGRAJ: A saint cannot be a chief minister as after taking the oath of secularism as a constitutional dignitary, he cannot stay "religious", a prominent seer said here on Monday, in an apparent reference to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The claim was made by Swami Avimukteshwaranand in his reply to a query on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's status as a saint and the mahant of Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur.

"No man can abide by two pledges. A saint can be a 'mahant' but not a chief minister or prime minister. This is possible in the 'khilafat' system of Islam in which the religious head also happens to be the king," the seer, attending the Magh fair here on the bank of Ganga, said.

The seer also expressed concern over the alleged mismanagement in organising the Magh fair in Prayagraj this year. "The Magh fair has been greatly ignored this year. Some saints have gone to extent of threatening fast and self-immolation too. If the leaders are busy in elections, can't the government officials properly manage the fair?" he asked.

On the sudden rise of water level in the Ganga, inconveniencing the saints, Swami

Avimukteshwaranand asked, "Why the water level is not being controlled when the government has the mechanism to regulate the flow in rivers?" Owing to the sudden rise in the water level, many people had to shift their tents, he said.

On the alleged interference of politics in religion, the seer accused all political parties of making transgression into religion. He said all parties have transgressed into politics and the trend is no longer limited to merely having ties with saints and seers but they are installing their men on key religious positions.

He said political parties are seeking to man the religious positions with their votaries to advance their views.

Some people in the country want religious gurus to speak in their language, he said, adding "that is why the people propagating religion following its 'old books' are irritating them and a policy to remove such people is on work."

On the upcoming Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, he said, "The people should elect the right man and right party so that they should not be left repenting after the formation of the government as is being felt these days that many people are lament that they have committed a mistake. The people must not commit the same error in the elections ahead."

Schools Reopen In Maharashtra Amid Flattening Covid Curve

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI: Schools resumed physical sessions for classes 1 to 12 in Maharashtra on Monday and the state government expressed hope that students would enjoy being back to their classrooms in a safe atmosphere.

Last week, the Maharashtra government allowed the offline classes to resume from January 24 after Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray approved a proposal to this effect that was sent to him by the school education department.

Schools across the state were closed in the first week of January due to a spike in the coronavirus cases and in the wake of the emergence of the highly infectious Omicron variant. However, a number of parents, activists in the field as well as teachers had strongly opposed the move to shut the schools, saying it would adversely affect the students.

In Mumbai, the local civic body had earlier announced the closure of schools for Classes 1 to 9 till January 31.

But, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) assessment later indicated that the cases of Omicron infection were not on the rise, and it had said the curve was flattening. It had prompted officials to propose the reopening of schools for physical attendance.

On Monday morning, Maharashtra School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad greeted students and parents on the reopening of physical classes.



"Wishing all parents and students the very best as physical classes reopen today onwards. We hope you enjoy your day back in a safe atmosphere. #BackToSchool. @scertmaha @CMOMaharashtra @msbshse," Gaikwad tweeted.

In Mumbai also, various schools resumed offline classes in the morning. Last week, BMC Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal had said that in-person or offline classes will resume in pre-primary schools too.

While allowing the schools to resume physical classes, the state government has asked them to strictly adhere to COVID-19 protocols and guidelines.

On Sunday, Maharashtra reported 40,805 COVID-19 cases, taking its tally to 75,07,225, while 44 fatalities pushed the toll to 1,42,115, a health department official earlier said.

No Omicron case was detected in the state on Sunday, keeping the tally of those affected by the new variant to 2,759, of whom 1,437 have been discharged so far, the official said.

SHORT TAKES

Humiliated Farmer Returns With Rs 10 Lakh To Buy Vehicle!

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BENGALURU: Allegedly humiliated by a sales executive at a showroom for his looks, a farmer in Tumakuru district, who had gone to buy a new pick-up truck, threw up a challenge and returned with the cash in quick time, but claimed that the promise to deliver the vehicle immediately was not honoured.

The video of the purported incident has been widely circulated in the social media and has drawn criticism with some users accusing the sales team at the showroom of being "classist".

The incident is said to have taken place on Friday, when the farmer named Kempegowda from Ramana-palya in Chikkasandra hobli, along with seven of his associates, had gone to buy the Bolero pick-up truck



at a showroom.

"Looking at my clothes and my condition, they felt that I'm not in a position to pay the money...one of their field officers told me- you probably don't even have Rs 10, will you buy this vehicle? He even said that those who come to buy a vehicle don't come in the way we had," Kempegowda said.

He said, "Humiliated, one of my uncles challenged the salesman that they were ready to pay Rs 10 lakh and would he deliver the vehicle immediately to which he replied if they get full cash in half-an-hour, he would deliver the vehicle immediately."

Kempegowda said when he got Rs 10 lakh and placed it before the sales persons within 30 minutes, "They changed the plate," and said they won't be able to deliver the vehicle immediately for various reasons.

Angered by this, Kempegowda and his associates informed the police and refused to leave the place, demanding that the vehicle be delivered to them immediately or a written apology for the humiliation.

After police persuaded them, they left the spot stating that they don't want a vehicle from the showroom anymore, but want them to apologise.

Pak Returns 20 Indian Fishermen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD: Twenty Indian fishermen arrested by Pakistan for allegedly entering into the country's territorial waters are set to be handed over to India through the Wagah border crossing on Monday, according to a senior jail official.

The fishermen, kept in Karachi's Landhi Jail, were released on Sunday on humanitarian grounds.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Azeem Thebo said that with the release of these 20 Indian fishermen as a goodwill gesture, there are now 568 Indian fishermen left in the jail, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The released fishermen, arrested for illegally entering into the Pakistani waters and fishing without



permission, were escorted to Lahore by road by the Edhi Foundation.

A spokesperson of the Edhi Foundation, a non-profit social welfare organisation, said that the charity would bear their travelling cost to Lahore, where they would be handed over to India's Border Security Force.

The Edhi Foundation also paid 5,000 to each fisherman as a goodwill gesture.

One of the fishermen, Bhavesh Bhika, who has served four years in the prison, said that the boat he was on had drifted towards the Pakistani waters at night.

"There is no boundary in the sea. We had no way of knowing that we had violated your border," he said.

Pakistan and India regularly arrest rival fishermen for violating the maritime boundary which is poorly marked at some points.

According to the lists of prisoners exchanged by India and Pakistan at the start of this year, at least 628 Indian prisoners were held in Pakistan, including 51 civilians and 577 fishermen.

The Indian Government also shared the list of 355 Pakistani prisoners in India, including 282 civilians and 73 fishermen.

Fishermen from Pakistan and India usually end up in jails after they are arrested for fishing illegally in each other's territorial waters.

The Pakistan Fishermen Forum NGO said that due to the absence of a clear demarcation line in the coastal area of the Arabian Sea between the two countries, fishermen who do not possess the modern-day navigation equipment mistakenly cross the red lines and end up in jails.

Overloaded Load Carriers Plying On Banihal Highway Warned Of Strict Action

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Taking a serious note of a rice-loaded truck getting stuck for nearly 30 hours on Jammu-Srinagar national highway, Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday directed the officials to take strict action against "overloaded" load carriers.

It has also directed for opening of Panthiyal tunnel by middle of April to bypass the landslide stretch.

The directions were passed by Chief Secretary A K Mehta at a meeting which was convened to review the condition of the 270-km highway - the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with rest of the country- here, an official spokesman said.

The strategic highway was cleared for stranded vehicles Monday afternoon after road clearance agencies pulled out the truck that was stuck in mud near Panthiyal in Ramban district for nearly 30 hours.

The Chief Secretary was apprised of the recent traffic disruption on the highway due to the breakdown of an overloaded vehicle carrying 36-ton dry ratoon in violation of the laid down norms, the spokesman said. He said Mehta directed for ascertaining reasons for the incident to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future.

He also directed the National Highways Authority of India

(NNHAI) and traffic police to forthwith put in place a mechanism for calibrated checking of all load carriers to prevent plying of overloaded vehicles, which not only disrupts the usual traffic flow but also compromises the road quality, the spokesman said.

Mehta maintained that all load-carrying vehicles are to be passed through weighing bridges at toll plazas in a staggered manner to avoid any jams and action against overloaded vehicles is to be initiated to ensure smooth flow of traffic.

Reviewing the progress of works at the Panthiyal Tunnel, the Chief Secretary directed the NHAI to double its efforts and complete the pending works by April 15.

The Chief Secretary emphasized that on completion the tunnel will provide reliable connectivity by-passing the current landslide-prone stretch of NH-44 and as such will provide safe and secure transit to vehicles.

To further facilitate smooth traffic flow on the Ramban-Banihal stretch of the highway, the traffic police and district administration were directed to properly demarcate single-lane driving zones and ensure lane-driving and traffic discipline among the commuters, the spokesman said.

Mehta also stressed the need for wearing of body cameras by traffic police and regular drives to check traffic violations, he said.

Recently Released DGGI A Tool To Assess Status Of Governance In J&K

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The District Good Governance Index is a tool to assess the status of governance and impact of various interventions taken by the Central and State Governments including UTs, a government spokesperson said on Monday.

The Government of Jammu & Kashmir under the aegis of Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) released District Good Governance Index (DGGI) on 22nd January at Convention Centre, Jammu.

This index was formally launched by Amit Shah, Home Minister in presence of Dr. Jitendra Singh, MoS and Manoj Sinha, Lt. Governor of J&K and other senior officers including Administrative Secretaries of various departments, HODs, Deputy Commissioners and the teams from DARPG GoI, CCG Hyderabad and CPOs/DSEOs from Planning, Department and Monitoring Department of J&K Government.

"The District Good Governance Index is a tool to assess the status of governance and impact of various interventions taken by the Central and State Governments including UTs," the official spokesperson said.

He said that in the UT of J&K, for this index, 10 sectors, 58 indicators and 116 data sets were identified keeping in view the central and the UT Government priorities. The ranking of districts under the index will bring about healthy competition amongst districts which in turn will benefit the citizens and improve their living standards.

"This initiative which is first of

its kind exercise in UT of J&K will leverage the districts to make improvements in the particular area of governance," he said.

The launch ceremony of District Good Governance Index, he said, was webcast all over India. During the event, the core team involved in development of District Good Governance Index like V. Srinivas, Secretary, DARPG, Government of India, Saurabh Bhagat, Director General, J&K IMPARD and Dr. Reva Sharma, Director Training, J&K IMPARD, Jammu were felicitated.

The efforts of Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, Principal Secretary, General Administration Department, J&K; Dr. Shabbeer Shaikh, Director Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad as technical partner for the development of District Good Governance Index and Satvir Kour, Director General Economics & Statistics Department J&K were also lauded and they were also felicitated for their contribution.

"On the occasion, the five top ranking District Development Commissioners of Jammu, Doda, Samba, Pulwama and Srinagar districts were also felicitated with award of appreciation certificates by the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir," the official spokesperson said.

He further said that the award of appreciation was also given to various districts for achievements made in 10 identified sectors like Agriculture, Commerce & Industries, Human Resource Development, Public Health, Public Infrastructure & Utilities, Financial Inclusion, Social Welfare & Development, Judicial & Public Safety, Environment and Citizen Centric Governance.

Masoodi Writes To FM For Regularisation Of Workers In J&K

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: National Conference (NC) MP Hasnain Masoodi on Monday sought regularisation and removal of pay anomalies of daily-wager and contractual employees in Jammu and Kashmir.

In a letter addressed to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Masoodi highlighted the grave problems faced by such workers serving in different government departments, local bodies, public sector undertakings and other government institutions in Jammu and Kashmir.

"It is satisfying that the issue raised by me during Zero Hour on December 1, 2021 prompted the Government of India to write to the J-K administration seeking necessary information/inputs.

"The relevant details are expected to have been submitted by now. The plight of more than 61000 daily rated, temporary, casual, need-based, seasonal, local fund,



contractual, contingency paid and other workers is of grave concern," Masoodi, the NC MP from Anantnag, said.

He said 6,1000 "daily rated workers" and other workers have been waiting for regularisation for decades. With the delay in regularisation they are deprived of a number of benefits like pay scale, grade pay, HRA, education allowance etc available to their colleagues in a pay scale performing similar and in some cases less onerous duties," he said.

Referring to the implementation of minimum wages act

in Jammu and Kashmir, Masoodi said the Code on Wages 2019 was expected to convey urgency in implementation of Minimum Wages law pending the National Floor Level Minimum Wages (NFLMW).

In view of the preparations for the Union Budget, Masoodi urged the Union Finance Minister to provide sufficient funds in J-K Budget for the regularisation of workers.



A BOY PASSES THROUGH a snow-covered orchard in Shopian district which witnessed heavy snowfall during the last two days.

Pic: Abid Bhat/KO

Govt Says Divesting Principles Of Admin Powers Will Strengthen Them

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Amid controversy over delegation of powers to principals of medical colleges to bureaucrats, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday said that it will strengthen the position of the principals as they will be able to devote more time towards healthcare.

The Health & Medical Education Department, as per the news agency KNO said that the positions of administrators, personal officers and administrative officers have existed in medical colleges for several years.

"As the name suggests, these posts have been created to assist the Principals of medical colleges and relieve them of day-to-day routine administrative matters," the department said.

It said the role and responsibilities of these officers needed clarity and definition to avoid confusion. "It may be appreciated that accountability can be fixed only when responsibilities are clearly defined. This is the essence of a well-run institution," the government said.

It further added that medical college is essentially an academic institution and consists of the college and associated hospitals. "The principal of a medical college provides academic leadership and facilitates research. This role of the principal shall be impacted if he has to deal with routine administrative matters like electricity, sanitation and cleanliness of hospital premises or personal matters of employees. It is, therefore, imperative to strengthen the role of the principal as the academic head of the Institution to delegate relatively unimportant tasks of a routine nature like training or seniority lists to other functionaries," the department clarified.

It further said the initiative shall strengthen the position of the principal and he/she shall be able to devote more time to healthcare, academics and research." Delegation of authority does not mean that the executive authority of the principal gets weakened. She remains the executive head of the Institution and all matters which presently require her approval as per rules shall continue to

need her approval," it said.

The government also claimed that no matter of clinical or non-clinical nature or academic or research is being delegated. "Medical professionals will continue to exercise all authorities in such matters on which they are experts. Administrative officers are not going to be examining patients or prescribing medicines or teach medical students. The apprehension of medical professional is, therefore, unfounded," it further added. According to the department, functions like Finance, HR, Utilities and Services are even at AIIMS not under medical professionals but with the deputy director (Adm) and other officials.

It said that extensive consultation has been made before finalizing the matter. "The first meeting was held with the Principal GMC and Administrative officers on 29.12.2021 and then a draft was discussed on 21.01.2022 with all GMC Principals which was modified as per the suggestions received. All Principals appreciated the need for clear definition of roles and responsibility," it added.

2 Secret Tunnels By Pak Detected, 6 Intruders Killed In 2021: BSF

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Border Security Force (BSF) troops neutralized six intruders and apprehended three while trying to infiltrate through the India-Pakistan border last year, officials said on Monday.

It also seized 17 weapons, over 900 rounds of ammunition, 30 explosive devices and over 38 kg of narcotics in 2021, they said.

The BSF has relentlessly carried out anti-tunnel drives along the International Border, during which it detected two tunnels and made a huge dent in the infiltration attempts of militants from Pakistan, they said.

As much as 38,160 kg of narcotics, four AK-47 rifles, seven AK-47 magazines, 339 rounds of AK ammunition, 13 pistols, 32 pistol magazines, 371 pistol ammunition, 13 grenades, 233 other ammunition, 16 metres of cordtex wire (a kind of detonating wire), a wireless set, six mobile sets, a radio receiver, 13 detonators, 15 detonator fuses and four sticky mobs were among the recoveries made by the BSF along the International Border, the officials said.

The troops also neutralized a Pakistani man who was trying to smuggle a consignment of narcotics from Kathua border. About 27.25 kg of drugs was seized from his possession, they said.

The BSF troops also seized about 10.93 kg of narcotics from Akhnoor along with fake Indian currency with a face value of Rs 2,75,000, they said.

BSF Inspector General D K Boora said last year has been 'achievement oriented' with detection of tunnels and seizure of huge cache of arms, ammunition and narcotics.

"The aim of the anti-national elements to spread disharmony by carrying out nefarious activities stands thwarted. The BSF is fully prepared and has augmented its resources to rise up to the challenges in 2022," he said.

Despite deployment in hostile areas as well as in sensitive and hyper-sensitive scenarios, the BSF has always stood up to the challenges with aplomb, Boora said.

Frontier headquarters of BSF



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Frontier headquarters of BSF

Jammu mans about 192 km of the International Border with Pakistan. Its troops have also been deployed on the Line of Control along with the Indian Army in Naushera, Rajouri and Poonch sectors.

"As a result of robust domination and surveillance on the International Border, the Jammu International Border remained peaceful," the BSF stated.

At the beginning of 2022, the troops scuttled a major militancy bid by recovering 4.950 kg of narcotics and a consignment of arms and ammunition in Arnia sector, the officials said.

The consignments comprised three AK rifles, five magazines, four pistols, seven pistol magazines and 21 rounds of ammunition, they said.

The BSF Jammu Frontier has also been at the forefront in assisting border population through various initiatives, they said.

JKBOSE Class 10, 12 Results Likely In February

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) is likely to announce the annual regular results of class 10th and 12th, of Kashmir Division, in the second week of February, an official informed on Monday.

Board of School Education Joint Secretary Prof. Aijaz Ah-

mad Hakak said that the processes involved are in progress.

"Results are under process and have to undergo several stages before declaration. First stage has been completed and the second one is in process", he said adding most probably the results of both the classes will be declared in the second week of February if situation arisen due to COVID goes

well," Aijaz added.

Meanwhile, Director Academics BOSE, Dr. Farooq Ahmad Peer also maintained that results will be announced in the second week of February.

Pertinently, the examinations of Class 12th culminated in the 2nd week of December while 10th exams concluded in the first week of December last year. (GNS)

JKAS Officer Shifted, Another Given Addl Charge

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday ordered transferred a JKAS officer and assigned additional charge of the post to another in the interest of administration.

According to an order issued here, Farukh Qazi, JKAS, Sub-Registrar, Jammu (North), has been transferred and posted as

Secretary/Chief Executive Officer, J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board, with immediate effect.

Pawan Kumar, JKAS, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Jammu (North), has been asked to hold the charge of the post of Sub-Registrar, Jammu (North), in addition to his own duties, ill further orders.

PDP Seeks Probe Into 'Illegitimate' Fund Transfer To 19 Account Holders Identified By CAG

Agencies

JAMMU: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Monday demanded inquiry into illegitimate fund transfer to 19 account holders identified by Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report and said that the issue was raised in a manner to deliberately target the party.

Addressing a press conference, former MLC and PDP spokesperson, Firdous Tak said from the last few days, the issue of the CAG report has been deliberately highlighted with an aim to target the party by the government.

He said that when PDP took over in 2015, the priority of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed led government was to restore the infrastructure damaged by 2014 floods and make the state again financially healthy.

Tak claimed that under leadership of Mufti Sayeed, the administration somehow successfully restored all major projects. He said the issue of CAG, which observes financial irregularities, needs proper investigation.

PDP leader further said that

Prime Minister Package of Rs 80313 crores were granted to Jammu and Kashmir and then State government took eight components in its hand which included rehabilitation of flood victims, rehabilitation package for Jammu migrants, rehabilitation of different categories of Pakistan refugees, Interest Subvention Scheme for Industry and raising of five battalion of IRP.

Tak said that CAG gave its observation on five schemes. However, as assessment the then government provided assistance to around 2.35 lakh house owners, whose property were partially or completely damaged during floods.

He said the financial assistance were provided directly to the account of beneficiary in three heads i.e. State Disaster Relief Fund, PM National Relief Fund and PM Development Package for rebuilding damaged houses.

The second assistance was given to Jammu Migrants, which got relief at par with Kashmiri counterparts and one time relief for Pakistan refugees was also initiated in Nov 2015 by PDP.

10-Yr-Old Thane Girl Cycles From Kashmir To Kanyakumari In 38 Days

Press Trust Of India

THANE: A 10-year-old girl from Thane city, who cycled a distance of more than 3,600 km between Kashmir and Kanyakumari to spread awareness about hazards of vehicular pollution and saving the girl child, was given a warm welcome when she arrived here at the end of her expedition.

Sai Patil, a resident of Bal-kum, accompanied by her father started the cycling expedition last month.

The girl was given a warm welcome by city residents when she arrived here on Sunday evening. The local residents took out a procession with Sai Patil sitting on a decorated chariot and felicitated her at a function.

The girl pedaled at least 100 km a day and visited schools and other places during her journey to spread the message of saving

the girl child and highlighting hazards of vehicular pollution, her father said.

She completed her expedition in 38 days and has qualified to enter record books, he claimed.

Talking to the media, Sai Patil said through out the route of her journey she received love and affection from people.

"They took care of me like their family member and provided us whatever we needed. Shelter was also provided by those whom we came across. At some places, we found it difficult to communicate, but eventually overcame that barrier with the use of sign language," she said.

The Thane girl said people everywhere appreciated the causes for which had undertaken the arduous journey.

"When we explained to them the purpose of our tour they were delighted and wished me good luck," said Sai Patil, who

DC Kupwara Reviews Progress Under NTEP

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Imam Din on Monday convened a meeting of District Tuberculosis Forum committee to review the progress under National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) in the district.

The meeting was informed that 523687 persons have been screened in all 10 medical blocks of the district from December last year, of which 12539 samples have been collected so far.

It was also informed that 45090 persons have been screened under Active Case Find-

ing during the last year, of which 1972 have been examined.

It was further informed in the meeting that 377 patients are currently on treatment in the district who are undergoing regular health checkups for their proper treatment.

On the occasion, the DC impressed upon all the members to work with better coordination to ensure cent percent elimination of Tuberculosis disease from the district.

CMO Kupwara, DTO, DHO, ACP and other concerned officers attended the meeting

Kulgam Admin Launches MADADGAR Portal

SRINAGAR: The District Administration Kulgam on Monday launched a one stop helpline, and upgraded version of MADADGAR Portal with a toll free number 9103169711.

Through this helpline number, people can register their issues related to COVID-19, Health, Drinking water, Electricity, Snow Clearance, Ration, Revenue and other departments round the clock without visiting the offices of these departments.

This portal was today launched by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Dr.Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat.

It was informed that this portal functions with an Interactive Voice Response system.

The DC said that the setup of 24X7 Interactive Voice Response (IVR) MADADGAR Portal is a one stop help line platform, and people register their issues for redressal through a single call on toll free number 9103169711.

Notably on the occasion of launch of the portal a live demonstration was carried out to show the functioning of this portal.

Present on the occasion were ADC, Showkat Ahmad Rather; ACR, Mir Imtiyaz-ul-Aziz and other officers.

KASHMIR
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K O V I E W

Spread Of Omicron

That the third Covid wave has largely been driven by the new virus mutant Omicron has become clear by the latest round of genome sequencing carried out at a hospital in Mumbai which has found the Omicron variant of Covid-19 in 88 percent of the samples. Though severity is less than earlier virus mutants including that of the Delta variant, Omicron is highly transmissible. And this is apparent in Kashmir too, where the third wave has spread like a wildfire. The official figure of cases hardly reflects the reality as a large section of the population is down with Covid-like symptoms. And this section is treating itself without testing for Covid. The same could be the case in other parts of the country. So, in actual terms, the number of Covid infections could be much higher than the official figure in the country.

This is one more proof that Covid-19 may be heading towards endemicity in India, The noted vaccinologist Dr Gangandeep Kang has already said this. The endemic stage is when a population learns to live with a virus. It is therefore very different from the epidemic stage. This means we have reached a point where the disease will be very much present in society like other ailments.

So, in a sense, Covid is going nowhere and may surface again as an epidemic if we don't observe precautions. It also means that it may not be possible to eliminate the virus in the near to medium term. Strains like Delta and now Omicron are several times more infectious and also a tad resistant to vaccination.

More than two years after the coronavirus first surfaced in China's Wuhan, the world remains far from getting a grip on it. In the process, the virus has wrought havoc on the global economy. In the first quarter of 2020, India's GDP declined by one-fourth. It is only now that some recovery is underway. But to keep up the progress, the world needs to act in concert to ensure there is no further surge in cases of infections. This calls for governments around the world to stay alert. There is a greater need for collaboration on vaccination and also strict observance and enforcement of Standard Operating Procedures.

One thing about Omicron is that while it has triggered intense flare-ups, there have been less hospitalizations and deaths. In that sense, the mutant is less virulent than earlier version. Here's hoping that Omicron spread doesn't lead to the emergence of yet another deadly variant.

O T H E R O P I N O N

Side By Side

The decision to put out the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate, and honour the supreme sacrifice of India's war heroes with an eternal flame at the National War Memorial (NWM), has been described as a logical decision for several reasons. For one, the NWM houses the names of all the soldiers who died in wars that took place after independence in 1947. The Amar Jawan Jyoti, which was set up in 1972 under the initiative of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi under the arch of India Gate, seeks to commemorate those who laid down their lives in the 1971 war, but their names are not inscribed on the monument itself. The case has been made that the NWM is where all the official functions are now held to honour the country's soldiers, and having a flame there would be more apt. These are all good arguments in favour of an eternal flame at the NWM, but still not a convincing enough explanation for why the government will no longer honour Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in wars prior to 1947. This is why the decision has proved divisive, and rankled the sentiments of many. The government's virtue signalling on the issue, that the "merging of the flames", as the project is now being described, is a "de-colonising" move, has only made the issue more problematic.

It is one thing for a nation to be aware of its colonial past. But quite another for a government to use its ideological predilections to smear everything that went before as "tainted". In defence of the move, some claim that the Amar Jawan Jyoti memorial was inappropriate in its location at India Gate, a Lutyens' monument and as such a colonial relic. This insults the sacrifice of 15,000 men who laid down their lives as part of the British Army in the two world wars, and whose names are inscribed on the arch, but not at the NWM. These men were no mercenaries as they are now being cast. Moreover, the present day Indian Army is a legatee of the British Indian Army, organised much along the same lines as it was 75 years ago, and cannot turn its back on its own heroes.

The best way out of the present controversy would be to leave the Amar Jawan Jyoti burning at India Gate, along with the one at the NWM. Delhi has space for two flames. Located in a much loved public space, there is no match for India Gate's openness, which gets the monument more visitors than the gated and more select NWM can. Keeping the flame alive there will ensure that none of India's war heroes is forgotten

The Indian Express

RBA Anomaly

Social Injustice With OM Candidates As Well Off People
Get Reservation Under RBA



For representational Purposes Only

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

When the erstwhile state of J&K was put under Governor's rule, the then State Administrative Council (SAC), headed by Governor Satya Pal Malik accorded an approval for notifying 66 villages in J&K as backward areas. These villages were thus brought under the ambit of the category called Reserve Backward Areas (RBA). Many villages which are located just in the city outskirts and have also been notified as backward areas (RBA). After every three or four years, a dozen or more villages are notified as RBA though not even a single village has been de-notified till date since the RBA category was introduced in Jammu & Kashmir more than 40 years back.

In spite of the fact that there is a provision for carrying out de-notification of villages after 10 years under the periodic review programme, till date, no village stands de-notified in any part of Jammu & Kashmir. There are many RBA villages which have facilities like degree colleges, English medium schools, technical institutions, better road connectivity, municipal committees but they are still enjoying reservation under RBA.

Many so-called "backward" (RBA) villages have developed into towns where one can find financial institutions like banks, better health institutions, better road connectivity and transport facilities but the residents of these areas continue to enjoy the benefits of the RBA category. Some villages are now tehsil headquarters and there are even RBA areas which have now become subdivisions with Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM). Even then, they still want to be RBAs to grab Government jobs and admissions in Government run Medical Colleges, Engineering Colleges and other professional institutions. The ultimate sufferers in this vicious cycle are the youth who in spite of being meritorious and belonging to lower economic strata do not get the benefit of RBA.

Infact, after abrogation of article

370, the RBA quota has been reduced to 10% and even as the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota has been increased by 10%, it is very difficult to get these certificates. The process to get the EWS entitlement involves a lot of corruption as well.

The RBA areas which have developed as towns and commercial hubs are doing injustice with the actual backward villages of their tehsil or district as youth from these

All the well off people live here as most of them are Govt employees. 30 to 40 years back, the area was indeed socially and educationally backward. However, after getting the benefit of the RBA, the situation changed. From 2005 onwards, the area didn't deserve to be deemed backward (RBA). Govt employees or even gazetted officers from these twin villages whose children have studied in well off schools in Srinagar have taken benefit of RBA and

“MANY SO-CALLED “BACKWARD” (RBA) villages have developed into towns where one can find financial institutions like banks, better health institutions, better road connectivity and transport facilities but the residents of these areas continue to enjoy the benefits of the RBA category

far flung places are not able to compete with their counterparts living in towns or areas near towns but with RBA facility.

Periodic Revision after 10 years

Section 11 of Jammu and Kashmir State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1997 calls for Periodic revision of lists by the Government. Section 11 reads as:

“The Government may at any time, and shall, at the expiration of ten years from the coming into force of this Act and every succeeding period of ten years thereafter, undertake revision of the lists with a view to excluding from such lists those classes who have ceased to be backward classes or for including in such lists new backward classes. The Government shall, while undertaking any revision referred to in sub-section (1), consult the Commission”

Case studies

Rupora and Yarikalan villages are located mere 2 kms from Chadoora town and 17 kms from Srinagar city.

now they are into Govt jobs as well. This is complete injustice.

Chandilora village is located mere 2kms from Tangmarg town of Baramulla district. This area was declared as an RBA village many decades back but as on date, this is no more a backward village and in fact has developed into a town with a lot of hustle and bustle. Being located on busy Srinagar – Gulmarg road, this town has flourished a lot due to huge tourist inflow. Offices of SDM and Tehsildar Tangmarg are located in this area plus there is a Degree college as well.

Yet another “village”, Ferozpora is located only half a kilometre away from Tangmarg town and has one of the best English medium schools (Tyndale Biscoe school Tangmarg) in the valley. This place also has good road connectivity. Why is it then still categorized as an RBA village?

In Anantnag, Kamad village is an RBA village located on Khanabal – Dooru road. The village is located 7 kms from Anantnag town having best road connectivity and all other facilities. In comparison, Gopalpora Kalan, located on a Karewa in Shan-

“YET ANOTHER “village”, Ferozpora is located only half a kilometre away from Tangmarg town and has one of the best English medium schools (Tyndale Biscoe school Tangmarg) in the valley. This place also has good road connectivity. Why is it then still categorized as an RBA village?

gus constituency is not enlisted as RBA. What explains this lapse?

In Kulgam, district Damhal Hanjipora was indeed a backward area until 10 years back but right now Damhal is a town having SDM Office, a Degree College, a Tehsil office, a branch of J&K Bank and higher secondary schools as well. On the other hand, Gasirena village in the Pahloo block of the same area is not enlisted as a backward area.

In Chadoora sub division, there are many more villages like Panzan, Hushroo, Badipora, Rangar, Namthal which are located only 15 to 20 kms from Srinagar city but they continue to be backward areas (RBAs). Renowned schools of Srinagar and Budgam ply their school buses in these areas. Now, the students have access to better education as well. On the other end, students and job aspirants from villages in upper Chadoora and Chararsharif like Yusmarg, Pakherpora, Jabbad, Neegu, Kutbal, Bonen, Branwar, Darwan, Nagbal, Chalyan and Choonthead etc which are also enlisted as RBAs are not able to compete with the students and job aspirants in RBA villages located around Chadoora town. The literacy rate in these villages is still less than 40 % and getting Govt jobs is a dream for most of the young men and women of these areas.

Had the Government conducted periodic review as mandated under law, the villages located near Chadoora town would have been deleted from RBA list and justice would have been done with people living in upper reaches. The irony with students from upper reaches especially Kashmiri speaking students is that their Gujjar classmates are STs but they are asked to compete with RBA students living near Srinagar or Chadoora town.

Political parties have used RBA as a vote bank and that is the reason they keep on adding more and more areas to this list. I appeal to LG Manoj Sinha and Chief Secretary Dr AK Mehta to take this issue seriously. There are many areas which are really backward but have not been included as RBA villages and people living in such areas need to be given justice. Let us ensure social equality and social justice by holding periodic reviews for RBA villages.

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

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat is an Acumen Fellow. He is Founder and Chairman of Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement

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ACB, Law Department And The Government

This refers to an article, “Efforts of ACB, Law Dept dashed by Govt!” by Dr Raja Muzaffar published in your esteemed newspaper on Jan 18th. The author has explained this whole case which should be an eye opener for the

Govt. I am shocked to know that in spite of the Law Department's legal opinion not to promote / confirm Govt Dental College Srinagar's incharge Principal Dr Riyaz Farooq, the Govt took a decision which goes against the committee headed by Chief Secretary. The confirmation

of the incharge principal with retrospective effect has indeed demoralized the officers in JK Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) and all those public spirited citizens / activists who had exposed this case using RTI and then filed a complaint before Anti Corruption Court. I appeal

LG Manoj Sinha to take cognizance of this case and seek an explanation from his bureaucrats who played a role in promotion of Dr Riyaz Farooq

B A Bhat
Advocate JK High Court , Srinagar

IT IS INDISPUTABLE THAT FOR WEIGHT LOSS, the difference between the number of calories consumed and the number of calories exerted through exercise is the most important factor. But don't fool yourself. While weight plays a role in health and longevity, weight loss alone doesn't equate to health

Calorie Conundrum

Not All Calories Are Equal – A Dietitian Explains The Different Ways The Kinds Of Foods You Eat Matter To Your Body



Terezie Tolar-Peterson

A calorie is a calorie is a calorie, at least from a thermodynamic standpoint. It's defined as the amount of energy needed to raise the temperature of 1 kilogram of water by 1 degree Celsius (2.2 pounds by 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit).

But when it comes to health and your body's energy balance, not all calories are equal.

For example, some studies have reported that diets that are high-protein, low-carbohydrate or a combination of the two do yield greater weight loss than diets with other levels of fat, protein and carbs.

If every calorie in food were the same, you wouldn't expect to see weight-loss differences among people who eat the same number of calories that are doled out in different types of food.

Dietitians like me know there are many factors that influence what a calorie means for your body. Here's what we understand about calories and nutrition so far.

Energy actually available to your body

In the late 1800s, chemist W.O. Atwater and his colleagues devised a system to figure out how much energy – that is, how many calories – various foods contain. Basically, he burned up food samples and recorded how much energy they released in the form of heat.

Not every bit of energy in food that can combust in the lab is actually available to your body, though. What scientists call metabolizable energy is the difference between the total energy of the food consumed and the energy that passes out of your body, undigested, in feces and urine. For each of the three macronutrients – proteins, carbohydrates and fats – Atwater devised a percentage of the calories they contained that would actually be metabolizable.

According to the Atwater system, one gram of each macronutrient is estimated to provide a certain number of calories. The U.S. Department of Agriculture still uses these calculations today to come up with an official calorie number for every food.

How much energy you use

What you eat can affect what scientists call your body's energy expenditure. That's how much energy it takes to keep you alive – energy you use breathing, digesting, keeping your blood flowing and so on – along with what you exert moving your body. You might have heard this referred to as metabolism.

Diet quality can alter the body's energy expenditure, which is also called the thermic effect of food.

For example, in one study, people eating the same number of calories per day but on either a low-carbohydrate diet or a low-fat diet had differences in total energy expenditure of about 300 calories per day. Those eating very low-carb diets used the most energy, while those eating low-fat diets used the least.

In another study, high-fat diets led to lower total energy expenditure than high-carb diets did. Other researchers reported that although substituting carbs for fat did not alter energy expenditure, people who increased their protein intake to 30%-35% of their diet used more energy.

In general, diets high in carbohydrates, fat or both produce a 4%-8% increase in energy expenditure, while meals high in protein cause an 11%-14% increase above the resting metabolic rate. Protein

in turn influences energy metabolism and storage of excess energy as fat.

Foods like white rice, cakes, cookies and chips are all high on the glycemic index/load. Green vegetables, raw peppers, mushrooms and legumes are all low on the glycemic index/load. There is some evidence to suggest that foods lower on the glycemic index/load may be better for keeping blood sugar levels regulated – regardless of the calories they contain.

Reward centers in the brain light up when people eat high glycemic index/load foods, highlighting the pleasurable and addictive effect of foods like candy or white breads.

The fiber content of food is another thing to consider. Your body can't digest fiber – found in plant foods like fruits, vegetables, whole

spinach, apples and beans.

And don't think of empty calories as neutral. Nutritionists consider them harmful calories because they can have a negative effect on health. Foods that are the biggest contributors to weight gain are potato chips, potatoes, sugar-sweetened beverages and meats, both processed and unprocessed. On the other hand, foods that are inversely associated with weight gain are vegetables, whole grains, fruits, nuts and yogurt.

More to health than calories and weight

It is indisputable that for weight loss, the difference between the number of calories consumed and the number of calories exerted through exercise is the most important factor. But don't fool yourself. While weight plays a role in health and longevity, weight loss alone doesn't equate to health.

Yes, some high-protein diets seem to promote weight loss at least in the short term. But epidemiologists know that in areas where people live the longest – close to 100 years on average – they eat a primarily plant-based diet, with very low or no animal-based protein and low or moderate fat in the form of mono- and polyunsaturated fats.

I often hear friends or clients say things like "it's those carbs that are making me fat" or "I need to go on a low-carb diet." But these complaints drive dietitians like me, well, nuts. Carbohydrates include foods like Coca-Cola and candy canes, but also apples and spinach. Cutting down on simple carbs like soft drinks, refined-flour bakery items, pasta and sweets will definitely have a positive impact on health. But eliminating carbohydrates like vegetables and fruit will have the opposite effect.

A plant-based diet high in plant-based protein and carbohydrates mostly from vegetables, fruit, nuts and legumes is the healthiest diet researchers know of for longevity and prevention of chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, hypertension and many other conditions.

The modern Western diet suffers from an increase in quantity of calories consumed with a concurrent decrease in the quality of calories consumed. And researchers now know that calories from different foods have different effects on fullness, insulin response, the process of turning carbs to body fat, and metabolic energy expenditure.

Where your health is concerned, count more on the quality of the calories you consume than the calorie count.

The author is an Associate Professor of Food Science, Nutrition & Health Promotion, Mississippi State University. The article is being reproduced by arrangements with The Conversation



has a higher thermic effect because it's harder for the body to break down. Although these variations aren't huge, they could contribute to the obesity epidemic by encouraging a subtle average weight gain.

Quality of the calories you eat

Dietitians pay attention to a food's glycemic index and glycemic load – that is, how quickly and how much it will increase your blood glucose levels. A rise in blood glucose triggers the release of insulin, which

grains and beans – for energy. So foods high in fiber tend to have less metabolizable energy and can help you feel full on fewer calories.

Empty calories – those from foods with minimal or no nutritional value – are another factor to consider. Things like white sugar, soft drinks and many ultra-processed snacks don't provide much, if any, benefit in the form of protein, vitamins or minerals along with their calories. The opposite would be nutrient-dense foods that are high in nutrients or fiber, while still being relatively low in calories. Examples are



FOODS LIKE WHITE RICE, CAKES, COOKIES AND chips are all high on the glycemic index/load. Green vegetables, raw peppers, mushrooms and legumes are all low on the glycemic index/load. There is some evidence to suggest that foods lower on the glycemic index/load may be better for keeping blood sugar levels regulated – regardless of the calories they contain



Study Finds Parents Talk Less To Kids When Experiencing Financial Issues

“Our results suggest that parenting training may not be sufficient to close the academic achievement gap without addressing the broader issue of income inequality

“

In the first experiment, researchers sought to observe how parents would interact with their children (in this case, 3-year-olds) after the parents were asked to describe times in which they had recently experienced scarcity. A control group of parents were instead asked to describe other recent activities.

Agencies

A team of researchers has provided the first evidence that parents may talk less to their kids when experiencing financial scarcity.

The study has been published in the 'Developmental Science Journal'.

"We were interested in what happens when parents think about or experience financial scarcity and found evidence that such strain could suppress their speech to their children," said study senior author Mahesh Srinivasan, a professor of psychology at UC Berkeley.

"Our results suggest that parenting training may not be sufficient to close the academic achievement gap without addressing the broader issue of income inequality," Srinivasan added.

The study's preliminary results lend credence to the developmental and educational benefits of such poverty-cutting government programs as the federal American Rescue Plan's Child Tax Credit and other supplemental cash payouts for needy families.

"Existing interventions toward eliminating the word gap have often focused on improving parenting skills," Srinivasan said.

"But our findings suggest that relieving parents of their financial burdens, such as through direct cash transfers, could also substantially change the ways they engage with their kids," he added.

In the first experiment, researchers sought to observe how parents would interact with their children (in this case, 3-year-olds) after the parents were asked to describe times in which they had recently experienced scarcity. A control group of parents were instead asked to describe other recent activities.

Of the 84 parents in the study, those in the experimental group who described their experiences of financial scarcity spoke less to their 3-year-olds during laboratory observations than parents who reflected on other forms of scarcity (like not having enough fruit), or parents who had not been asked to recollect experiences of resource insecurity.

The second experiment used existing data collected via LENA technology, tiny "talk pedometer" devices worn by children that record their conversations and count the words they hear and say.

As the researchers predicted, analyses revealed that parents engaged in fewer conversational turns with their children at the month's end, a time that typically coincides

with money being tight as parents await paychecks or other sources of income.

"Because we had recordings from the same parents at different times of the month, we could essentially use parents as their own controls," said study lead author Monica Ellwood-Lowe, a Ph.D. student in psychology at UC Berkeley.

"This allowed us to really pinpoint differences in their speech patterns when they were more or less likely to be experiencing financial strain, independent of any of their own personal characteristics," she added.

The term "word gap" was coined in the early 1990s when University of Kansas researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley tracked verbal interactions in the homes of 42 families to study early language development in the children's first three years.

Each day, the researchers recorded an hour of conversation in each household, and then counted all the words the children heard during those recording times.

The results were detailed in their 1995 book, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*, and in a 2003 follow-up article, "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3."

While some have questioned Hart and Risley's methodology, their basic finding has been replicated many times, prompting calls for approaches to narrow the disparity. Enter Srinivasan and his research team:

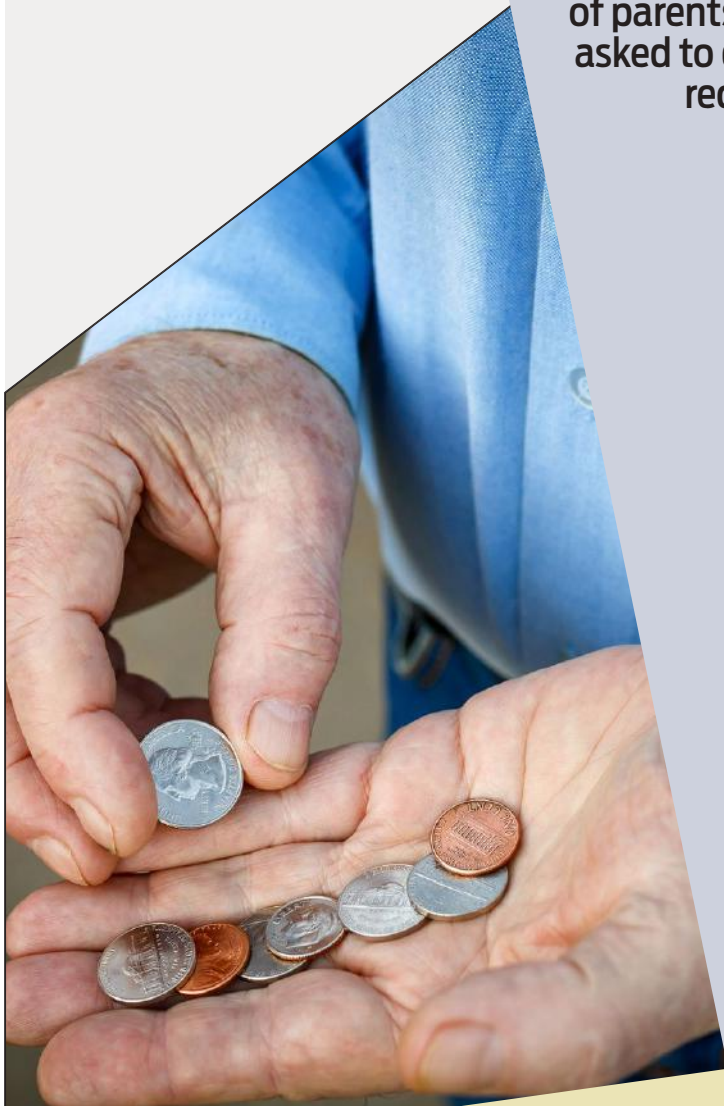
"It struck us that what was missing from the conversation about the word gap was the possibility that poverty, and the many difficult experiences associated with it, could itself affect parents' speech," Srinivasan said.

Preliminary findings support the researchers' hypothesis but also call for a deeper dive into the relationship between money worries and parents' verbal engagement with their children, he said.

"This research doesn't mean that children whose parents are struggling financially are doomed to have smaller vocabularies," Ellwood-Lowe said.

"The takeaway here is really just the importance of making sure parents have the resources they need to parent," she added.

"If you are worried about putting food on the table tonight, or scraping together money for that medical bill, or figuring out where to enroll your child in school now that you have been evicted from your neighborhood, you may be less likely to narrate the color of the sky to your child as you ride together on the bus," the study concluded.



Investors Lose Over Rs 19.50 Lakh Crore As Markets Slide For 5th Straight Day



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Investors have become poorer by a massive Rs 19,50,288.05 crore as equity market sell-offs continued for the fifth day in a row on Monday.

The BSE Sensex plunged 1,545.67 points or 2.62 per cent to settle at 57,491.51 on Monday, while, the NSE Nifty slumped 468.05 points or 2.66 per cent to settle at 17,149.10.

This is the steepest single-day drop for the indices in about two months.

Over the last five sessions, the 30-share Sensex has tumbled 3,817.4 points or 6.22 per cent.

As a result of hectic selling over the five days, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies have eroded by a whopping Rs 19,50,288.05 crore to Rs 2,60,52,149.66 crore.

On Monday alone, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms tanked by Rs 9,13,651.88 crore.

Interestingly on January 17 this year, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies had reached a record high of Rs 280 lakh crore.

"Fears of higher-than-expected rate tightening by the Fed and the heightened tensions on the Russia-Ukraine border had created the perfect storm that spooked the markets. FPIs have been stepping up their sales

during the last several day's," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

In Monday's trade, Tata Steel was the biggest drag among the 30-share frontline companies pack, falling 5.98 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Titan, Reliance Industries and HCL Tech.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap index declined by 4.43 per cent and midcap index tanked 3.82 per cent.

"Markets have been correcting in the last few days on the back of fears of interest rate hikes across the developed economies plus the ongoing tapering of stimulus. Though the Covid numbers are still something to ponder on, but Omicron variant not being as severe has made market believe that the days of easy liquidity seem to be nearing an end," Devang Mehta, Head - Equity Advisory, Centrum Wealth, said.

Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said, "Markets plunged sharply lower and lost nearly 3 per cent pressurised by weak global cues. We expect volatility to remain high as investors await the Fed meet outcome. Moreover, pre-budget jitters, earnings announcements and upcoming monthly expiry would further add to the chopiness.

Air India Likely To Be Handed Over To Tata Group By Weekend



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Air India is likely to be handed over to the Tata group by the end of this week, senior government officials said on Monday.

After a competitive bidding process, the government had on October 8 last year sold Air India to Talace Private Limited -- a subsidiary of the Tata group's holding company -- for Rs 18,000 crore.

Following that, on October 11, a Letter of Intent (LoI) was issued to the Tata group confirming the government's willingness to sell its 100 percent stake in the airline. On October 25, the Centre signed the share purchase agreement (SPA) for this deal.

Officials said on Monday that the remaining formalities re-

garding this deal are expected to be completed in the next few days and the airline will be handed over to the Tata group by the end of this week.

As a part of the deal, the Tata group will also be handed over Air India Express and a 50 per cent stake in ground handling arm Air India SATS.

Tatas had on October 8 beat the Rs 15,100-crore offer by a consortium led by Spicejet promoter Ajay Singh and the reserve price of Rs 12,906 crore set by the government for the sale of its 100 percent stake in the loss-making carrier.

While this will be the first privatisation since 2003-04, Air India will be the third airline brand in the Tatas' stable it holds a majority interest in AirAsia India and Vistara, a joint venture with Singapore Airlines Ltd.

Restaurant Owners Struggling To Survive, 50% Hotel Booking Cancelled: Tourism Players

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Amid the surge in positive cases in J&K and weekend lockdown, the restaurant owners in Kashmir are struggling hard to survive while people associated with tour and travels said that around 50 per cent booking have already been cancelled.

Sheikh Feroz Ahmad president of Restaurants association of Kashmir (RAK) said that restaurant owners have been suffering from the last three years now mostly and with new restrictions of weekend lockdown they are struggling hard to survive.

"Due to the economic crunch,

business was already down and elite class remains out of the valley in winter so work was already down, but weekend lockdown has further dented our businesses," Feroz said.

Feroz said since the last few years new youth have started their cafes and restaurants but due to losses in the initial stage, they are now in depression.

"During weekend lockdown, tourists are also suffering as they find it hard to get cultural dishes like wazwan and are forced to have their lunches at their hotels," he said.

"Our economic condition is very bad at this stage and we are unable to understand what

we will pay to our employees after completion of this month," Feroz said.

President Travel Agents Association of Kashmir (TAAK) Farooq A Kuthoo said that around 50 percent of the booking have got cancelled after cases started rising in J&K.

However, Kuthoo said that as experts predict this wave won't last long we are pretty hopeful that it will start working normally again.

"We have started receiving enquiries again although not in large numbers but we are hopeful it will resume soon," he said, adding that, our losses due to the third wave are quite significant. (KNO)

India's Fuel Demand Recovery To Continue: Fitch

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: India's fuel demand will continue to recover through the current quarter as the easing of Covid-19 pandemic-related restrictions boosts economic activity, Fitch Ratings said on Monday, adding a caveat that this was subject to the risk of a resurgence in infections and the resultant impact on economy and mobility.

The recovery should support higher throughput at most oil marketing companies and strong prices are expected to improve the financial profiles of upstream oil and gas companies.

Fitch said it "expects India's petroleum product demand to remain moderately strong in the fourth quarter of the financial year ending March 2022 (4QFY22), as the easing of Covid-19 pandemic-led restrictions boosts economic activity.

"However, recovery expectations remain subject to further restrictions due to the risk of a resurgence of Covid-19 cases in India with the emergence of new variants, even as the country makes progress in its vaccination plan.

"We expect improved demand for petroleum products to reach pre-pandemic levels in 4QFY22 (January-March 2022), but the full financial year's demand is still 2-4% below that in FY20," Fitch said.

Demand rose by 5% yoy in April-December 2021, but the overall monthly average was about 8-10% lower than the pre-pandemic level at 16.4 million tonnes.

This is because there were still some pandemic-related restrictions in some regions of the country in 1HFY22. "We expect the recovery to continue through to 4QFY22, subject to the risk of a resurgence in Covid-19 cases and the resultant impact on economic activity and mobility," it said.

In its 'India Oil & Gas Watch' report, the rating agency said capex is likely to stay high as oil marketing companies (OMCs) expand their refining capacity and retail networks, and upstream companies enhance



production.

"We expect stable crude oil production, which should marginally increase in FY23 as upstream producers continue to invest in exploration and development," it said.

India's natural gas production increased by 22% yoy in April-December 2021 and the momentum is likely to continue over the next 12-18 months, driven by expanded production at new fields, before stabilising in FY23.

"We believe rising domestic production and higher liquefied natural gas (LNG) spot prices are likely to weigh on LNG imports through to 1HFY23.

However, LNG imports should rise steadily over the medium-term as consumption picks up pace," it said.

Core oil refining margins are likely to improve in 2HFY22 (October 2021 to March 2022), as petrol and diesel spreads continue to strengthen amid the economic recovery.

The 1HFY22 (April-September 2021) reported margins of BPLC, IOC and HPCL improved to USD 5.1 per barrel, USD 6.6 and USD 2.9 a barrel, respectively, on account of rebounding demand, wider gasoline spreads and inventory gains.

"We expect the OMCs to generate steady marketing margins in 2HFY22, as they continue to pass on higher crude oil prices to consumers," Fitch said.

"Government cuts to gasoline (petrol) and gasoil (diesel) excise duties, as well as to value-added tax in some states, should cushion retail fuel-price affordability and the OMCs' marketing margins." However, record-high retail fuel prices may limit the extent to which

the changes are passed on should the crude oil prices continue to rise, it said.

India's crude oil production declined by 3% year-on-year in April-December 2021, while natural gas production rose by 22%.

The steep rise in gas output was due to a production ramp-up at the KG-DWN-98/2 and KG-D6 deepwater projects. Natural gas production to further increase over the next 12-18 months, driven by expanding production at the new fields, before stabilising in FY23.

"Crude oil production should stay stable in 4QFY22, before marginally increasing as upstream producers continue to invest in exploration and development and enhance existing facilities to offset the natural decline from mature fields," Fitch said.

The government increased the domestic gas price at the last October 2021-March 2022 reset to USD 2.9 per million British thermal units (mmbtu), from an all-time low of USD 1.8 in April 2021-September 2021.

The price is linked to prices of four global liquefied natural gas (LNG) benchmarks, including Henry Hub and National Balancing Point, in the previous 12 months and is implemented with a quarter's lag.

Global gas prices rose during 2021 and we expect global prices to stay high in 1Q22, driven by high demand in Asia, production bottlenecks and uncertainty around Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline as well as limited gas in European storage facilities.

This is likely to result in higher domestic gas prices during 1HFY23, helping boost profitability at upstream companies.

However, the impact on upstream companies will be marginal, due to its low share in the revenue mix, Fitch said.

The government's higher price ceiling for gas produced from deepwater and other difficult fields of USD 6.13 per mmbtu, from USD 3.62, is likely to benefit production at Reliance Industries Ltd's Krishna Godavari basin field.

Dir Agri Initiates Valley Wide Campaign Against Unregistered Insecticides

37,800 liters of unregistered TSO/HMO seized from Pulwama



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Director Agriculture Kashmir, Chowdhary Mohammad Iqbal who is also Controller, Insecticides UT of J&K Monday initiated a valley wide campaign to curb the inflow of unregistered insecticides in Kashmir Division.

In this connection, the Director reiterated the Department's commitment against the sale of unregistered products (Insecticides).

Expressing his views, Iqbal instructed the concerned Enforcement Officers to ensure that no unregistered product shall be allowed for sale in Kashmir Division.

He said that to serve the farmer's interests on and off the field is the Department's paramount objective and therefore the Officers and the officials are keeping a vigil on the movement of inputs like insecticides/pesticides and ensuring that farmers get the genuine products which have a major impact on the

overall success of agriculture enterprise.

Director asked the Enforcement Wing of the department, Plant Protection Officer Kashmir and Agriculture Chemist Kashmir to work in close coordination so that the consumers (farmers) get quality products at their disposal.

He impressed on the concerned officers to uphold the provisions of Insecticides Act 1968 and make sure that the Act is adopted and implemented in letter and spirit.

Earlier, on the instructions of Director Agriculture, a team comprising of Deputy Director Law Enforcement, Assistant Director Law Enforcement, District Law Enforcement Inspector Pulwama along with the officials of Enforcement Wing inspected the godowns of M/S Himalaya Enterprises at Bus Stand Pulwama and seized 37,800 litres of unregistered Tree Spray Oil (TSO)/ Horticulture Mineral Oil (HMO).

ACS Finance Launches e-Abgari Portal Of Excise Deptt



Observer News service

JAMMU: Additional Chief Secretary, Finance, Atal Dulloo, Monday launched e-abgari portal of Excise Department in presence of Excise Commissioner J&K, Kishore Singh Chib; Deputy Excise Commissioner, Accounts Amarjeet Singh; Addl SIO, NIC, Salim Khan; Senior Programmer, Sandeep Kumar and other officers from Finance and NIC.

Officers of NIC West Bengal also joined through virtual mode.

The ACS, Finance impressed upon the officers to effectively implement the project by taking all stake holders on board through hands on trainings. He directed them to make all the functions of the department IT based, hassle-free, transparent and without any requirement for any to visit the offices physically. He asked them to implement all the phases in a time bound manner.

It was said that the e-Abgari, portal is an e-Governance project that provides end-to-end solution in workflow for comprehensive transformation of Excise Department. It was added that it would also bring total transparency and efficacy in service delivery by the department.

The portal, as said, has been developed in line with the Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) of the Govt of India to provide ease of doing Business. It is going to eliminate totally the physical interaction of Licence holders and other stake holders with the Department. They can now apply online for all the services and can also keep a track of status of their application.

The said move is also going to expedite the service delivery and bring in total transparency in the system. The project has in-built system for calculation of applicable duties and their remittance on-line through e-GRAS portal of the government thereby weeding out role of any intermediary to take the undue benefit out of it.

The e- Abgari project, as informed on the occasion, covers all the core activities and functions of the department covering all the stages of business right from manufacturing, import, transport up to final sale of the product. It shall automate the process of issuance of Licenses, Label Registration, issue of Permits /Passes/ EVCs for import/export/transport etc, as revealed by the programmers who developed the portal.

NEWS MAKERS

'Electronics Production In India To Reach \$300 Billion By 2026'

NEW DELHI: Electronics production in the country is expected to reach USD 300 billion by 2026, industry body ICEA said in a report on Monday.

The National Policy on Electronics (NPE) 2019 had set a target of achieving a turnover of USD 400 billion by 2025. However, the industry will be unable to achieve the target set by NPE 2019, due to the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the sector, the report said, adding that "the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it unforeseen and unprecedented challenges."

"The NPE 2019 targets for electronics production in 2025-26 at USD 300 billion appears to be more realistic considering the disruption on account of COVID-19 in the past 18 months which has been aggravated with the new variants of the COVID-19 virus such as Omicron," the report said.

The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo while sharing the details of the report said that the reduced target still aims for a 400 per cent increase from the current level, which will require significant and persistent policy initiatives and efforts to create a conducive electronics manufacturing ecosystem. (PTI)

'Subsidies, Tax Rebates Critical For Faster Adoption Of EVs'

NEW DELHI: Hero MotoCorp-backed electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy on Monday said subsidies and tax rebates under the FAME II policy are extremely important to push for faster adoption of electric vehicles.

The company, which markets two scooters - Ather 450X and the Ather 450 Plus - also sought the inclusion of electric vehicle (EV) startups under the PLI (Production-Linked Incentive) scheme.

"The demand for electric vehicles continues to surge ahead as consumers reap benefits offered by the FAME II subsidy and tax rebates. To keep up the consumer demand and to drive faster adoption of EVs, we are hopeful that the FAME II subsidy would continue well beyond 2023," Ather Energy co-founder and CEO Tarun Mehta said in a statement.

The demand for electric vehicles continues to surge ahead as consumers reap benefits offered by the FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicle) II subsidy and tax rebates, he added. (PTI)

Gold Jumps Rs 255 On Global Trends

NEW DELHI: Gold prices on Monday jumped by Rs 255 to Rs 48,431 per 10 grams in the national capital on strong global trends and rupee depreciation, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at Rs 48,176 per 10 grams.

Silver also moved up by Rs 80 to Rs 64,793 per kg from Rs 64,713 per kg in the previous trade.

The rupee declined 9 paise to 74.52 against the US dollar in opening trade on Monday.

In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,841 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 24.25 per ounce.

"Gold prices traded firm with spot gold prices at COMEX trading 0.32 per cent up at USD 1,841 per ounce on Monday," Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities), HDFC securities said. (PTI)

'Telecom Deptt Will Not Interfere In Mobile Manufacturing'

NEW DELHI: Communications and IT Minister Ashwani Vaishnav on Monday said the telecom department will not interfere in matters related to mobile phone manufacturing.

His comments came amid the industry's apprehensions that there could be heavy regulations if the Department of Telecom decides to control the mobile manufacturing activities.

"Telecom department is not going to enter mobile manufacturing at all. That regime is not going to change," Vaishnav said after the release of a vision document on electronics manufacturing. At present, the Ministry of Electronics and IT is the nodal organisation to manage matters related to mobile manufacturing.

Vaishnav also said that the government is also working on fine-tuning the labour laws to support hiring a large number of the workforce by big companies and allowing residential facilities within the company's campus. He said that housing within the campus is not allowed but asked mobile phone makers to give a location where the government can work and find out the laws that need to be fine-tuned to meet the industry requirements. (PTI)

SEBI Amends Its Employee Service Rules

NEW DELHI: Sebi on Monday tweaked the rules pertaining to the filing up of the posts of executive director at the regulator.

Under the new rules, two-third of the total posts for executive directors will be filled up with internal candidates and the remaining one-third, not more than three, will be filled up by deputation or on contract basis, Sebi said in a notification.

In this regard, Sebi has amended employee's service regulations.

Earlier, 50 per cent of the total posts of executive directors were required to be filled up with internal candidates and the remaining 50 per cent were to be recruited by deputation/ contract and/or direct recruitment.

The capital markets regulator, earlier this month, began a recruitment drive and invited applications for 120 senior-level executives as part of its plan to beef up its head count for faster and more effective execution of its role.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) plans to recruit legal as well as IT experts, researchers, and other officials for general administration. (PTI)

SC Grants Bail To Alleged Kingpin Of Cattle Smuggling Racket On Indo-Bangla Border

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday granted bail to a prime accused in a multi-crore cattle smuggling racket operating on the Indo-Bangladesh border in alleged collusion with officials of Border Security Force and customs.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Dinesh Maheshwari allowed the appeal against the Calcutta High Court order by which it had dismissed a bail plea of Mohd Enamul Haque, alleged to be the kingpin of cattle smuggling racket.

The bench said, having due regard to the nature of allegations, the offence involved and the maximum sentence, the continued detention of the appellant who has suffered custody of over a year and two months is not warranted. In the circumstances, we order and direct that the appellant (Haque) shall be released on bail subject to such terms and conditions as may be opposed by the special judge CBI at Asansol.

Additional Solicitor General Aman Lekhi, appearing for CBI, opposed the bail plea and supported the judgement of the High Court saying that the prior involvement of Haque in a case at Kochi, would indicate that he is habituated to committing similar offences arising out of the smuggling of cattle across the porous Indo-Bangladesh border.

There are serious allegations against him of having exploited the conditions at the border and therefore indicate national security threat, though the appellant was permitted to travel abroad in terms of the conditions, which are imposed by the competent court at Thiruvananthapuram by granting bail, the appellant evaded the lookout circular, which was issued against him by entering through land frontier through West Bengal, he said.

Lekhi added that the investigation is still pending involving the complicity of BSF officials and it would be inappropriate to grant bail to him.

He added that the High Court has for justifiable reason declined to grant bail on the ground of parity due to the fact the appellant was the main perpetrator on whose behest the conspiracy was hatched and the bribe was paid.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Haque, submitted that he was in custody since November 6, 2020, and the submission of the charge sheet and supplementary charge sheet after investigation renders the accused in custody unnecessarily.

He submits that all the other accused save and except for the appellant has been enlarged on bail and bail has also been granted to the commandant of

the BSF, who is alleged to have accepted the bribe.

He added that all the offences of which Haque is charged are of the maximum sentence of seven years and there is a wider issue involved on the CBI jurisdiction to investigate the offences upon the withdrawal of consent by the state of West Bengal.

The bench said, Having heard the rival submissions, we are of the considered opinion that the continued detention of the appellant in custody is not warranted in the facts of the present case.

It noted that Haque has already been granted default bail by the special judge CBI at Kochi in May 2018.

In the regular case out of which the present appeal arises, from the denial of bail to the applicant, the appellant was arrested and is in custody since November 6, 2020. The charge sheet has been submitted on February 6, 2021, and supplementary charge sheet on February 23, 2021, it noted.

Noting the facts of the case, the bench said that on January 31, 2018, the CBI has registered a case against him in Kochi and the allegations against him were that the commandant of 83 battalion of Border Security Force (BSF) in Roshanbagh, in Murshidabad, West Bengal had accepted illegal gratification for rendering favour to alleged

smugglers of cattle, on the Indo-Bangladesh border which had resulted in the seizure of Rs 45.30 lakh in currency notes, when the commandant disembarked in Alleppey railway station in Kerala.

It noted that on March 4, 2018, Haque was arrested in connection with the case registered in Kochi from Kolkata and was produced before the court in Thiruvananthapuram on March 7, 2018.

Though the appellant was denied bail on March 21, 2018, by the special judge CBI court in Thiruvananthapuram, he was granted default bail on May 7, 2018, the bench said and added that in the meantime, on April 6, 2018, the CBI registered a Preliminary Enquiry (PE) against another commandant of 36 battalion of the BSF in which Haque was again named.

The allegation in the fresh case was that cattle were sent from India to Bangladesh in large numbers by payment of illegal gratification to BSF personnel. It has been alleged that between December 2015 and April 2017, there was the seizure of cattle but immediately thereafter, auctions were held and traders including the petitioner or his nominees procured them at a lower price by paying bribes to BSF and custom officials, the bench noted.

Centre Introduces New Ranking System For State Authorities Giving Environment Clearance To Increase Efficiency

Press Trist pf India

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Environment on Monday introduced a new system of ranking the State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs), which have been delegated powers to consider and grant environmental clearance.

The ranking system, whose criteria include the time taken for giving clearance, has been introduced to encourage efficiency, transparency and accountability in the functioning of SEIAAs without diluting any regulatory safeguards, according to the ministry.

It is based on the provisions of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2006 and various guidelines issued by the ministry from time to time.

However, there is no negative marking proposed for not meeting the criteria for ranking, the ministry said in a statement.

There are seven criteria for ranking the SEIAA one of which is the average number of days for granting environmental clearance (EC).

The EIA Notification provides a time period of 105 days for granting EC which includes 60 days for appraisal and 45

days for decision by the regulatory authority.

This criterion has been introduced to encourage the efficiency of SEIAAs in order to abide by the timeline given in EIA Notification.

“The SEIAAs which follow the timeline provided in the EIA Notification 2006 are granted 1 mark. Even 0.5 mark being given who will take a decision between 105 and 120 days.

Marks are not reduced for SEIAAs which take decisions in more than 120 days but an extra mark is granted which take decisions between 80-105 days. There is no negative marking proposed for not meeting the criteria, it said.

Other criteria include the percentage of disposal of the fresh term of reference (ToR) proposals awaiting for more than 30 days, percentage of disposal of fresh EC/ EC amendment proposals awaiting for more than 105 days and percentage of cases wherein more than one-time environment design solutions (EDS) were sought.

The average number of days taken for accepting the proposals for ToR/EC, complaints redressed by SEIAA, etc is also taken into account.

“The complaint redressal condition has been included to increase the accountability of the

government agency to the common man. The complaints which are raised need to be addressed and not ignored. There is no negative marking proposed for not meeting the criteria, it said.

The ministry had in February 2020 notified that all new projects or activities shall be referred to the experts’ appraisal committee (EAC) or SEAC (state expert appraisal committee) by the Regulatory Authority, as the case may be, within 30 days from the date of application, for recommending the specific ToR in addition to the Standard ToR, deemed necessary.

In case, the regulatory authority does not refer the matter to the EAC or SEAC, within 30 days of the date of application, sector-specific Standard ToR shall be issued, online, on the 30th day, by the Regulatory Authority.

The Ministry has taken several initiatives for streamlining the EC process and reduce the undue time taken in the grant of clearances inter-alia complete online submission and processing of EC proposal, standard ToR for all expansion proposals, raising all queries at one go and avoiding multiple EDS/ADS, conducting fortnightly EAC meetings, etc, it said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

J&K Logs 5394

patients have recovered and been discharged from various hospitals including 1732 from Jammu Division and 1911 from Kashmir Division,” the officials said.

Also, they said that eight more people, four each from Kashmir and Jammu divisions, died of Coronavirus related complications, taking the death toll in the pandemic to 4613 in J&K—2253 in Jammu division and 2360 in Kashmir Valley.

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

R-Day: Security

forces were seen frisking people and asking for their identity cards behind the barricades that have been erected to meet any possible militant attack.

“The route leading towards the venue has been sealed, in an attempt, to maintain a strong security cover for VIPs and VVIPs who will be regularly visiting the stadium until R-day celebrations conclude.” CRPF PRO Abhi Ram Pankaj told Kashmir Observer on Monday.

“Intensified anti-terror measures are being taken for the last few weeks because Kashmir is always a target. This year too, we are alert with security personnel maintaining a strict vigil in north, south and central Kashmir,” he said.

The official further added, “To maintain peace during 26th January celebrations, security forces have also been laying surprise door to door cordon and search operations in various parts of the city to maintain peace and thwart any nefarious designs.”

He further added that “sniffer dogs, anti-sabotage checking, sharpshooters on high rise buildings, surprise Nakas and CCTV surveillance are being used to maintain vigil in the city.”

“The city is also being monitored with drones and new bunkers and barricades have been placed at various parts of the city to maintain peace and normalcy,” Pankaj said.

Meanwhile, reports of heightened security have also been received from Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara districts of north Kashmir.

In Baramulla and Sopore, police and paramilitary forces were seen carrying out searches of all the passenger and private vehicles on the Kupwara-Baramulla and Baramulla-Srinagar highway.

Similar reports have also been received from south Kashmir.

Will Ensure Peaceful

carrying out area domination and other drills. We are also carrying out drone surveillance to ensure peaceful celebrations not only in Srinagar but in all district headquarters,” Kumar said on Monday.

Security forces have been carrying out random checking of vehicles to prevent movement of subversive elements, the officials said.

The deployment of security forces around vital installations and sensitive areas in the city has been increased, they added.

The main Republic Day programme of Jammu and Kashmir will be held at Jammu where Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will preside over the official function. In Kashmir, the main

function will be held at the Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium.

Meanwhile, a full dress rehearsal of the R-Day parade was held on Monday.

Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, P K Pole presided over the dress rehearsal parade at the Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket stadium here amid tight security arrangements, officials said.

Various contingents of the police and other paramilitary forces took part in the march past, they said.

Raj Bhawan Cancels

people of the Union Territory of J&K to follow Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB) and safety protocols issued by the health officials, he said.

Yemeni Missiles

forces “successfully reacted to multiple inbound threats” during an attack near Abu Dhabi in the early hours of Monday, the U.S. Air Force said.

The UAE-based Al Dhafra Air Base, home to the U.S. Air Force’s 380th Air Expeditionary Wing and other U.S. forces, “remain in a heightened state of alert following the attack,” Brig. Gen. Andrew Clark said in an emailed statement.

The strike comes barely a week after Abu Dhabi suffered its first deadly attack in Yemen’s seven-year conflict, with the Yemen’s military allied to Houthi dominated Ansarullah group warning international investors to leave and vowing to expand their range of targets in a country that’s built its economy and attracted millions of expatriates on the back of its reputation as a safe harbor in a volatile region.

The U.S. embassy in Abu Dhabi issued a rare alert urging its “citizens in the United Arab Emirates to maintain a high level of security awareness” and offering detailed advice on how to cope with missile strikes.

The escalation comes at a critical time for regional diplomacy; Iran’s longtime support of the Sanaa government means the incidents could upset fragile diplomatic efforts to ease frictions with Gulf Arab neighbors as well as broader negotiations to restore Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Military spokesman Yahya Saree said in a televised speech on its Al-Masirah TV Monday that the group targeted the Al Dhafra military air base in Abu Dhabi and attacked several targets in the UAE’s commercial capital of Dubai using drones. There was no confirmation of any attack on Dubai.

Last week’s missile and drone attack on Abu Dhabi killed three people and wounded six, igniting a fire at the airport and setting fuel trucks ablaze.

Drones have made it possible to conduct small, targeted assaults that slip through multibillion-dollar defense systems designed to deter more advanced weapons. The physical damage -- both on land and at sea -- is usually minimal but the reputational impact could still be huge for the UAE, OPEC’s third biggest oil producer.

More than 80% of the UAE’s population is comprised of foreigners, with the emirate of Dubai establishing itself as a key global trade hub and home to one of the world’s busiest international airports.

Over the weekend, the UAE grounded all private drones and light sports aircraft for a month following what

it termed as “misuse” of permits and “trespassing” into prohibited areas.

“Sensitivity to attacks is high in the UAE given their absence historically and the high contribution of tourism to the economy,” said Hasnain Malik, the Dubai-based head of research at Tellimer, putting the tourism industry’s direct contribution to the UAE economy at about 5%. This “usually implies a figure at least double this in terms of indirect contribution, and likely multiples of this in the less oil-rich emirates such as Dubai.”

Govt Reserves 15%

women comes a day after the LG called for securing equal rights for every girl child and empowering them with opportunities.

“National Girl Child Day provides an opportunity to reiterate our commitment towards securing equal rights for every girl child, empowering them with opportunities for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable society,” Sinha said on Sunday.

“I salute the daughters of the nation for their accomplishments in various fields. They are also the backbone of our healthcare system fighting the global pandemic. It is our social and moral responsibility to bring change in the social perception, increase awareness on the importance of girls’ education, and their health and nutrition,” he added.

The National Girl Child Day is being observed on January 24 with an objective to generate awareness about the rights of girl child and spread the message on the importance of girl education, health and nutrition.

BSF On High

Babu Singh said that about 135 militants were present at launch pads across the border and are waiting to infiltrate into India.

However, he asserted that the overall situation at the Line of Control (LoC) is “peaceful” and said the number of infiltration bids was lesser in 2021 in comparison to previous years.

“The overall scenario along the LoC is peaceful. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, there has been a general peace all along the LoC in the Kashmir frontier,” the Border Security Force (BSF) officer said while speaking to reporters here.

Giving details on infiltration bids, he said in 2021, 58 attempts were made, in which five militants were killed, 21 returned and one surrendered.

“There have been reports that 31 infiltrated in 2021, 130 in 2019, and 36 in 2020,” the inspector general (IG) said.

During 2021, the BSF successfully recovered or seized three AK-47 rifles, six nine-mm pistols, 1,071 ammunition, 20 hand grenades, two IEDs and 17.3 kg of heroin -- worth Rs 88 crore -- in different operational incidents, he said.

The IG BSF said there are reports that “104 to 135 terrorists” are present at different launch pads across the LoC and waiting to infiltrate.

“There are also reports that some guides have gone from here and crossed the LoC to that side. So, we need to monitor them as and when they return. Their families need to be monitored, he said.

Singh said there is a lot of synergy between the army and the BSF.

“The more we conduct area dominations, keep watch and surveillance,

the more difficult it will be for them to infiltrate. We are putting in all-out efforts so that no infiltration is allowed, that zero infiltration happens,” he said.

“As and when anyone is spotted crossing the LoC, he is challenged and if firing is used, he is killed like the recent killing of a terrorist on January 2, the IG BSF added.

Asked about the Taliban threat, he said Taliban, “there is nothing like that till now, but we are keeping an eye on the developments”.

“Nothing concrete has come into notice so far, but we are keeping an eye on it. We are keeping a strict vigil,” he said while responding to another question about the apprehensions of weapons from Afghanistan making their way into Kashmir.

On the issue of drones, the IG BSF, said the drone threat is “very real”.

“Last year also, drones were noticed, but no one ventured inside our territory.

This year, we are taking enough measures, anti-drone techniques, we are also getting a few drones, and we will tackle it very effectively,” he said.

He said the other challenge before the security forces on the LoC is narcotics.

“There have been attempts to push narcotics from the other side. We have seized it. We have a zero-tolerance policy against narcotics,” Singh said. (PTI)

Mercury Dips

also was several degrees above normal for this time of the season at most places, the officials said.

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of 2.8 degrees Celsius up from 0.4 degrees Celsius the previous night, they said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 9.5 degrees Celsius down from minus 6 degrees Celsius the previous night.

Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 0.8 degrees Celsius up from the previous night’s minus 1.2 degrees Celsius, they said.

The officials said Qazigund recorded a minimum of 0.2 degree Celsius, while the nearby south Kashmir town of Kokernag recorded a low of minus 0.5 degrees Celsius.

The minimum in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at a low of 0.2 degrees Celsius.

The MET Office has forecast light rain or snow at isolated places over two days.

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

‘Chilla-i-Kalan’ is a period when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies including the famous Dal Lake here as well as the water supply lines in several parts of the valley.

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

The ‘Chilla-i-Kalan’ will end on January 31, but the cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with another 30-day cold spell.

Highway Reopens

of Police, traffic, Shabir Ahmad

Malik said 130 heavy motor vehicles and 10 oil tankers besides dozens of light motor vehicles, which were stranded on the highway, were allowed to move towards their destination after completion of the road clearance operation at Panthiyal, where the carriageway is single.

However, he said no fresh vehicle was either allowed from Jammu or Srinagar for the second day on Monday.

The traffic on the highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with rest of the country, was suspended on Sunday following multiple landslides and shooting of stones from hillocks between Chanderkote and Ramsu and snowfall in Banihal sector.

While the road clearance agencies pressed its men and machines and cleared the highway of the obstacles, a truck loaded with rice got deeply embedded in the mud at Panthiyal and could not be moved.

The operation was called off late Sunday evening and was resumed this morning with fire and emergency service joining the effort which proved fruitful and the truck was pulled out around 1 pm, the officials said, adding the normal traffic is likely to resume Tuesday.

Officials said the helicopter service to Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine atop Trikuta hills in Reasi district was briefly resumed this morning after remaining suspended for the past two days.

Pilgrimage through the new track to the shrine was also affected due to landslides triggered by overnight rains.

The officials said the yatra to the shrine was continuing smoothly when last reports were received.

A spokesperson of the Meteorological department said Katra, the base camp for the pilgrims visiting Vaishno Devi shrine, recorded the highest 24.7 mm of rainfall during the past 24 hours till 8.30 am.

Bhaderwah town of Doda district in Jammu region recorded 7.4 cm snowfall during the same period, while Jammu city recorded a rainfall of 1.6 mm, the spokesperson said.

He said the minimum temperature recorded in Jammu was 7 degrees Celsius, Katra 6 degrees Celsius, Bhaderwah 0.2 degrees Celsius and Banihal zero degrees Celsius. (PTI)

Govt Sacks Two

not justify her long unauthorized absence

“The issue was placed before the Designated Committee and pursuant to the decision of the committee, the teacher is hereby removed from the service of the State in terms of Article 113 of J&K Civil Services Rules (Volume I) of 1956 and rule 30(vii) of J&KCCA rules 1956,” reads the order.

Another teacher who was posted at High School Nowpora in Baramulla was also terminated for remaining absent from October 1, 2014.

According to the order, she had proceeded outside the country without obtaining prior station leave permission or the sanction of leave from the competent authority.

Both the teachers were terminated under the Article-128 of J&K civil service rules.

Patwari Falls

According to a Bureau spokesperson, an FIR 02/2022 was registered at Police station ACB Baramulla after a

written complaint was received from a person alleging that Abdul Aziz Dar, Patwari of Halqa Mufalpora in Kupwara was demanding Rs 15,000 for issuing revenue extracts.

The complainant, the ACB spokesperson said, alleged that the accused Patwari was adopting delaying tactics and was not preparing revenue extracts which were required by the complainant for registration of sale deed for the land purchased by him recently.

“The complainant had also deposited a necessary fee of 420 in form of GR in the Tehsil office Kupwara on 14-02-2022. It was also alleged by the complainant that Patwari had already taken a bribe of Rs10, 000 from them and is demanding more for providing revenue extracts,” the ACB spokesperson said.

He said that after filing an FIR, a team was constituted to trap the accused Patwari.

The trap team caught Abdul Aziz Dar, Patwari red handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 5000/- from the complainant. He was arrested and taken into custody by ACB Team. The bribe money was also recovered from his possession in presence of independent witnesses,” the Bureau spokesperson said, adding that a further investigation in the case was going on.

Drug Peddler Booked

Hashim of Mohalla Mir Sahib Baramulla was detained under PSA for his active involvement in drug peddling activities in Baramulla Town.

“Several cases under the NDPS Act stand already registered against him. He has been lodged at Central Jail Kot Bilwal Jammu under detention orders received from Divisional Commissioner Kashmir,” he said.

He further said that persons found indulging in criminal activities shall be dealt as per law.

“Community members are requested to share information regarding the crimes in their neighbourhood with the local police units,” he added.

14 Gamblers Held

Hanjiwera Bala and Kripalpura Payeen, teams of policemen from of Police Station Kunzer and Pattan carried out raids and arrested fourteen gamblers from the locations, a police spokesperson said Monday.

Besides playing cards, the police spokesperson said an amount of Rs 36,440/- were also recovered from the accused.

“Case under sections of 13 Gambling Act registered in Police Station Kunzer/ Pattan and investigation set into motion,” he added.

Ladakh Reports

Leh district and 58 in Kargil district -- since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, they said.

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

As many as 179 patients have recovered and been discharged from hospitals in Ladakh. The total number of cured patients is 23,178, they said.

Of the 159 fresh cases, 148 were reported from Leh district and 11 from Kargil district, they said.

The number of active Covid cases in Ladakh has gone down to 1,255 -- 1,044 in Leh and 211 in Kargil. (PTI)

'Post-Mortem' Urged For India After Humiliating SA ODI Whitewash



Agencies

NEW DELHI: India's cricket pundits on Monday called for changes in the team after South Africa's one-day series whitewash following Virat Kohli's exit as skipper.

India lost their third and final ODI by four runs in Cape Town to end a disappointing tour that also saw the tourists lose the Test series 2-1.

Quinton de Kock's 124 set up a tense win in the final 50-over match, which followed two emphatic victories for the hosts.

"Huge for South Africa. Huge. And very well played. Proper post-mortem for India now," commentator Harsha Bhogle wrote on Twitter.

KL Rahul captained the ODI side in the absence of white-ball leader Rohit Sharma, who missed out due to injury.

Kohli, who quit as Test skipper after the South Africa series loss, was the top scorer with 65.

Deepak Chahar, a pace bowler who bats in the middle order, hit a gritty 54 in India's chase of 288 but got out with the team needing 10 runs to win, and the remaining two batters soon departed.

"What's lacking about this

particular Indian outfit is the batters that they have in the team, none of them chip in with three-four overs of bowling," former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar told ESPNcricinfo.

"That's got to be the quest for India with their 50-overs team. If they can't find an obvious sixth bowling option...you have got (to have) pure batters who walk into the team and can chip in with some bowling."

Former captain Sunil Gavaskar had backed Chahar's inclusion in the XI after the first two losses, saying veteran fast bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who went wicketless in two matches and gave away too many runs, has lost his sting.

Gavaskar had also told TV channel India Today that captain Rahul "had run out of ideas" during opposition partnerships in the first two ODIs.

But cricketer-turned-commentator Aakash Chopra said the losses could help the team reinvent itself.

"Losing... allows you to take bold decisions," he said.

"India's white-ball cricket template needs a makeover... this could very well be the beginning of the new approach."

Afridi Leads Pakistan's Domination Of ICC Awards

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: Fast bowler Shaheen Afridi was named men's Cricketer of the Year on Monday, combining with team mates Babar Azam and Muhammad Rizwan to help his country dominate the annual awards announced by the governing International Cricket Council (ICC).

England captain Joe Root won the Test Player of the Year honours to prevent a sweep of the men's awards by Pakistan.

Captain Babar was adjudged One-Day Cricketer of the Year while his deputy Rizwan grabbed the T20 award.

A fourth Pakistan cricketer, Fatima Sana, won the Emerging Women's Cricketer of the year award.

Known for his sizzling yorkers and an ability to swing the ball, Afridi claimed 78 wickets in 36 internationals in 2021 and was at his best at the Twenty20 World Cup even though Pakistan went out in the semi-finals.

"I got five-fors in Tests but my most memorable performance was during our victory against India in the World Cup," the 21-year-old left-arm said.

Captain Azam earned his honour in recognition for his prolific run in 2021 wherein he amassed 405 runs in six innings at an impressive average of 67.50.

The 27-year-old was the second-highest run-scorer with 228 runs and was the Player of the Match in both of Pakistan's wins in the 2-1 series victory against South Africa.

The architect of the chase of 274 in the first ODI, Azam made a century and laid the foundation with an 82-ball 94 in the



final ODI where the visitors posted 320 batting first.

He was the lone warrior for Pakistan when they were swept by England 3-0. Azam accumulated 177 runs in three games but found no support as none of the other batters managed to score more than 100 in the series.

His best performance this year came in a losing cause in the final ODI against England.

Walking in to bat early in the innings, Azam strung a 92-run stand with Imam ul-Haq to bail Pakistan out of trouble. He was cautious in his approach initially, bringing up his half-century in 72 balls. He made up for it by bringing up the next fifty runs in just 32 balls — his second ODI century of the year.

A day earlier wicket-keeper batsman Mohammad Rizwan was named cricketer of the year in T20 format by the body.

Rizwan last year scored 1,326 runs at an average of 73.66 in 29 matches.

The aggressive batter, who was instrumental in the green shirts'

victories, especially against India in T20 World Cup last year, also scored a century and took 24 catches behind the stumps.

On Monday, Root was rewarded for his sublime form in 2021 when he became only the third player — after Mohammad Yousuf of Pakistan and West Indies great Viv Richards — to score over 1700 runs in Test cricket in a calendar year.

"If there was one hundred that really sticks out it would probably be in Chennai against India," Root said referring to his stellar 218 at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

"With it being my 100th game it is something that will live long in the memory."

In the women's category, India opener Smriti Mandhana won the Cricketer of the Year award.

South Africa's Lizelle Lee took the one-day honours, while England's Tammy Beaumont bagged the T20 award.

South African Marais Erasmus was Umpire of the Year.

Smriti Mandhana Named ICC Women's Cricketer Of The Year

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: India's swashbuckling opener Smriti Mandhana was on Monday named the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year for the second time for her stellar run of form across all formats in 2021.

Mandhana, who also made it to the ICC T20 women's Team of the Year, pipped fellow nominees Tammy Beaumont of England, Lizelle Lee of South Africa and Gabby Lewis of Ireland for the top award -- the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy, the ICC said in a statement.

The Southpaw had won the award in 2018 as well when she was also named the women's ODI Cricketer of the Year, making her only the second women's player to win the highest individual distinction in the overall category.

The Indian T20 vice captain is only the second India woman player to bag an ICC award after veteran fast bowler Jhulan Goswami, who was named the ICC Player of the Year in 2007.

Despite India enduring a difficult 2021, Mandhana's stock continued to rise this year.

In the limited-overs series against South Africa where India won just two of the eight matches at home, Mandhana played a major role in both of the wins. She made 80 not out as India chased down 158 in the second ODI that helped them level the series and scored 48 not out in



the win in the final T20I.

The 25-year-old played a sublime innings of 78 in the first innings of the one-off Test against England that ended in a draw. She played an important knock of 49 in India's only win in the ODI series.

Her 15-ball 29 and fifty in the T20I series went in vain though as India fell short in both the matches and lost the series 2-1.

The Southpaw was in good touch in the series against Australia, starting with the ODI series where she scored 86 in the second ODI.

She compiled a brilliant century in the only Test (the first of her career), and was awarded the Player of the Match. She scored her second T20I fifty of the year in the final T20I, though India fell short and lost the series 2-0.

Mandhana made India's first-ever pink-ball Test even more memorable by smashing her maiden century in the longest format.

Former Zimbabwe Captain Brendan Taylor Says Blackmailed To Spot-Fix

Reveals taking cocaine with Indian businessman; faces ICC ban

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Former Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor on Monday said is facing a multi-year ban from the ICC for failing to report a corrupt approach by an Indian businessman and also claimed that he was blackmailed after "foolishly" taking cocaine during that meeting.

In a detailed confession on social media, Taylor claimed that he was invited by the businessman to India to discuss "sponsorships" and potential launch of a T20 event in Zimbabwe besides an offer of USD 15,000 in October, 2019. He did not name the businessman in question.

"We had drinks and during the course of the evening they openly offered me cocaine, which they themselves engaged in, and I foolishly took the bait. I've gone over it a million times since and still feel sick to my stomach reliving that night and how they played me," Taylor wrote.

"The following morning, the same men stormed into my hotel room and showed me a video taken of me the night before doing cocaine and told me that if I did not spot fix at international matches for them, the video would be released to the public.

"I was cornered. And with 6 of these individuals in my hotel room, I was scared for my own safety. I'd fallen for it. I'd willingly walked into a situation that has changed my life forever."

The 35-year-old, who played 205 ODIs, 34 Tests and 45 T20s before retiring last year, now expects the ICC to ban him for not reporting the incident back then. The game's governing body is yet to comment on the matter.

"...the timing was such that we hadn't been paid for 6 months by Zimbabwe cricket and it was questionable whether Zimbabwe would be able to continue playing in the international arena," he said while trying to give his reasons for accepting the offer.

The Harare-born cricket said he was blackmailed "post dinner and drinks".

BCCI Anti-Corruption Unit chief Shabir Hussain Shekhdam Khandawala told PTI, "if the incident happened in India, we would like to know the details and if he has spoken to



the ICC, we will seek the details from the global body.

"As of now, no one has contacted us but we would like to know more about the issue."

Taylor said he was also given a part payment to spot fix matches.

"I was handed the USD 15,000 but was told this was now a 'deposit' for spot fixing and that an additional USD 20,000 would be paid once the 'job' was complete.

"I took the money so I could get on a plane and leave India. I felt I had no choice at the time because saying no was clearly not an option. All I knew was I had to get out of there."

"When I returned home, the stress of what had taken place severely impacted my mental and physical health. I was a mess. I was diagnosed with shingles and prescribed strong anti-psychotic medication - amitriptyline."

Taylor decided to report the incident to the ICC four months later and said he delayed it to protect his family.

"The 'businessman' wanted a return on his investment which I could not and would not give. It took me 4 months to report this offence and interaction to the ICC."

"I acknowledge this was too long of a time but I thought I could protect everyone and in particular, my family. I approached the ICC on my own terms and I hoped that if I explained my predicament, my genuine fear for our safety and wellbeing, that they would understand the delay."

"Unfortunately, they did not, but I cannot feign ignorance in this regard. I have attended many anti-corruption seminars

over the years and we know that time is of the essence when making reports."

Taylor insisted that he has never been involved in any wrongdoing on the field.

"I would like to place on record that I have never been involved in any form of match-fixing. I may be many things but I am not a cheat. My love for the beautiful game of cricket far outweighs and surpasses any threats which could be thrown my way."

"As a result of approaching the ICC I attended multiple interviews and engagements and was as honest and transparent as I could be during their investigations. Inside and outside I was beating myself up and I still wish I had sought support and advice earlier for a multitude of reasons."

"That being said, the ICC are taking the decision to impose a multi-year ban on my international cricketing career. I humbly accept this decision and only hope that my story will be used as a means of encouragement for cricketers to report any approaches early."

Taylor will also be spending time in a rehab centre to get his life back on track. "And so, I would also like to let you know that on Tuesday the 25th of January I am checking into a rehabilitation centre to get clean and to get my life back on track."

"I have to tell my story now because I know people will want to hear from me. To try and understand what led to this point. But for many weeks I will be away and trying to get better."

"To end I need to let you know I am sorry for those I have hurt. I am sorry for those I have let down," he added.

All India Matches At Asian Cup Cancelled: AFC

Host India outed from tournament after "massive" COVID outbreak

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: The Asian Football Confederation on Monday formally announced India's ouster from the ongoing Asian Cup for women here, saying that all their matches stand "null and void" after the hosts' withdrawal from the clash against Chinese Taipei owing to a massive COVID-19 outbreak in their camp.

A day after India failed to field a team against Chinese Taipei following 12 players' RT-PCR reports coming positive, the Asian Football Confederation issued a statement confirming that the home side "is considered to have withdrawn" from the tournament as per the guidelines.

"Following the cancellation of the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 Group A match between Chinese Taipei and India... India is considered to have withdrawn from the competition in accordance with Article 4.1 of the 'Special Rules Applicable to AFC Competitions during the COVID-19 pandemic,'" the AFC said in a statement.

"All matches of India are now cancelled and considered null and void pursuant to Article 6.5.5 of the Competition Regulations."



The continental body added that the result of the lone India match so far, the draw against Iran, will not be taken into consideration while determining the final standings in the group.

India were placed in Group A alongside eight-time champions China and Chinese Taipei, besides Iran.

"For the avoidance of doubt, all points and goals in those matches shall not be taken into consideration when determining the final rankings in the group in conformity with Article 7.3 of the Competition Regulations," it said.

"Additionally, based on Article 7.4 of the Competition Regulations, the calculation of the best third-placed Participating Teams among all groups shall be determined by the method set out in Appendix 2 of the AFC Competition Operations Manual."

As a result of India's forced withdrawal from the continental showpiece, only three teams China PR, Chinese Taipei and Islamic Republic of Iran - will now be participating in Group A of the competition.

West Indies' Chase Ends In Run Short As England Holds On



Agencies

BRIDGETOWN (Barbados): West Indies went down fighting after smashing England for 28 in the final over and losing the second Twenty20 international by just one run to leave the five-match series level at 1-1.

England, which followed up its 4-0 Ashes defeat with a nine-wicket loss to West Indies in the T20 opener on Saturday, appeared on course for an easy victory.

After losing the toss, England scored 171-8, including 45 for opener Jason Roy off 31 balls, before reducing West Indies to 78-7 after 13 overs.

At 111-8, West Indies still needed 60 runs off the last three overs to match England's total before letting rip to finish agonizingly short on 170-8.

West Indies' No. 10, Akeal Hosein, hit Saqib Mahmood for three straight sixes off the last three balls of the game, finishing on 44 not out off 16 balls with

three fours and four sixes. All-rounder Romario Shepherd was also 44 not out in 28 deliveries, with one four and five sixes.

Shepherd and Hosein shared an unbroken 72-run stand from just 29 balls.

The equation came down to 30 from the last over and, while England ensured its total could not be overhauled without a no-ball or wide before the climax, Hosein closed the show in style with his trio of sixes.

Moeen Ali was the outstanding bowler for England, returning 3-24 off four overs.

Adil Rashid (2-24) earlier snared Kieron Pollard and Darren Bravo as the hosts crumbled from 47-2 to 65-7 before giving England a huge scare at the end.

Roy top-scored for England with more than half his runs coming from one over from Fabian Allen (2-50), while Ali added a sketchy 31 and Chris Jordan a cameo 27 on the ground where he spent a lot of his childhood. The third T20 is on Wednesday.

Benzema's Home Robbed During Real Madrid Game



Agencies

MADRID: Real Madrid's France striker Karim Benzema was the victim of a robbery at his home while he was playing against Elche at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium on Sunday, police said on Monday.

The police said the incident took place between 3:00 pm and 7:00 pm local time at the player's empty home in the Madrid suburb of San Sebastian de los Reyes before Benzema and his family returned from Real's 2-2 LaLiga draw against Elche.

The police added that they were investigating whether the

incident was connected with the February 2019 robbery Benzema suffered at his home during a match against Barcelona.

There was no information about the value of items stolen.

This was not the first such incident affecting players in Europe. In December, Manchester City and Benfica defenders Joao Cancelo and Nicolas Otamendi respectively were assaulted during robberies at their homes in England and Portugal.

In Spain, Gerard Pique and Ansu Fati have been victims of robberies at their homes during Barcelona games.

Lucknow IPL Team To Be Called Lucknow Super Giants

Agencies

Owners of the latest Indian Premier League franchise from Lucknow have revealed that the team will be called Lucknow Super Giants.

The owners, RPSG Group, announced that the name of the team has been chosen by fans, with Sanjiv Goenka revealing the name in a video message on Monday.

"Thank you so much for your overwhelming response to our contest. Lakhs and lakhs of people responded," Goenka said.

"And the name that we have chosen based on your recommendations is Lucknow Super Giants. Thank you so much for your response and love and continue to give us your blessings in



the future as well."

The Sanjiv Goenka-owned RPSG Group bought the Lucknow franchise last year for an amount of Rs 7090 Crores. Ahmedabad, bought by the Irelia Company Pte Ltd. (CVC Capital Partners) for Rs 5635 Crores, will be the other team to make its debut in the IPL 2022 season.

Lucknow have already made various additions to the team, having signed KL Rahul for Rs 17 crore, Australia's Marcus Stoinis for Rs 9.2 crore, and young leg spinner Ravi Bishnoi for Rs 4 crore.

US Warns Against Travel To Russia, Orders Diplomats' Families To Leave Ukraine



Agenceis

WASHINGTON: The United States has ordered the families of its diplomats in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv to leave the country "due to the continued threat" of a Russian invasion, the State Department said Sunday.

Washington has also authorized the "voluntary" departure of its non-essential embassy staff and urged US citizens in the Eastern European country to "consider departing now," saying it will not be in a position to evacuate them after any possible incursion by Moscow.

Russia has been massing tens of thousands of troops on its border with Ukraine, along with an arsenal of tanks, fighting vehicles, artillery and missiles.

The movements have ignited stern warnings from Washington and Europe -- but so far intense diplomacy has yielded little results.

The US embassy remains open and Charge d'Affaires Kristina Kvien is staying in the country for now, a senior State Department official told reporters.

The official repeated earlier warnings from the White House that an invasion could come at "any time."

Washington "will not be in a position to evacuate US citizens in such a contingency," the official said, urging Americans to consider leaving via commercial or private transport as soon as possible.

The official refused to specify the number of Americans on Ukrainian soil, but State Department representatives last month

put the figure at between 10,000 and 15,000.

The State Department already advises against all travel to Ukraine because of the possibility of a Russian invasion.

On Sunday, it also advised against travel to Russia, particularly to areas on its border with Ukraine, warning that Americans could face "harassment" and that Washington would have "limited ability" to assist them.

US citizens "who are visiting or residing in Russia have been interrogated without cause, and threatened by Russian officials and may become victims of harassment, mistreatment, and extortion," the advisory said.

The Kremlin denies any intentions to invade its neighbor -- but is making de-escalation conditional on treaties guaranteeing non-expansion of NATO, especially to Ukraine, and a withdrawal of the alliance from Eastern Europe.

Earlier Sunday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken dismissed the idea of slapping punitive sanctions on Moscow before any potential invasion, saying they should be used as a means of "dissuading" an attack.

"Once sanctions are triggered, you lose the deterrent effect," Blinken told CBS.

"So what we're doing is putting together a whole series of actions that would figure into President (Vladimir) Putin's calculus."

That includes beefing up defenses in Ukraine with more military assistance, Blinken said.

Protest Over Move To Add Caste To US University's No Discrimination Policy

WASHINGTON: More than 80 faculty members of the California State University (CSU) have opposed a recent announcement of the university to include caste in its non-discriminatory policy.

In a blistering letter to the CSU Board of Trustees opposing the move, the faculty members have written that the new policy would unfairly target a minority community for policing and disparate treatment. Adding caste as a specific and separate protected category would apply only to the faculty of Indian and South Asian descent, they said.

"The addition of caste is a misguided overreach given the existence of comprehensive policies that already protect against various forms of discrimination," said Praveen Sinha, professor of accountancy at CSU, Long Beach.

"We cannot but oppose the unique risk that CSU's move puts on us as they add a category that is only associated with people of Indian descent such as myself and thousands of other faculty and students in the CSU system. It is going to create divisions where they sim-

ply do not exist," he added.

The faculty members have written that there are more than 600 CSU faculty of Indian and South Asian origin who would be rendered vulnerable should the collective bargaining agreement be passed as currently written, according to a media release.

"As a faculty member of Indian origin, I am well aware that discrimination is a daily reality for many students of varied backgrounds, and there is a robust mechanism to address all such complaints under the existing laws and the CSU policy," said Sunil Kumar, professor of engineering at the San Diego State University.

"But this policy change has been made in the absence of any scientifically reliable evidence or data. Rather than redressing discrimination, it will actually cause discrimination by unconstitutionally singling out and targeting Hindu faculty of Indian and South Asian descent as members of a suspect class because of deeply entrenched, false stereotypes about Indians, Hindus and caste," he said.

Missiles Hit Saudi & UAE As Yemen War Escalates

Agenceis

The United Arab Emirates says it intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles over Abu Dhabi that were fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels, the latest escalation in Yemen's long-running war.

Monday's attack came a week after another Houthi drone-and-missile attack on Abu Dhabi killed three civilians.

"The remnants of the intercepted ballistic missiles fell in separate areas around Abu Dhabi," the UAE defence ministry said in a statement in state-run WAM news agency on Monday, adding that it "is ready to deal with any threats and ... takes all necessary measures to protect the state".

In Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, state media said late on Sunday that a Houthi ballistic missile had fallen in the kingdom's south, injuring two residents -- a Bangladeshi and a Sudanese citizen -- and damaging workshops and vehicles in an industrial area. Another missile was intercepted and destroyed over Dhahran al-Janub, according to a coalition statement.

The Houthis said they targeted Abu Dhabi's Dhafra airbase as well as "vital and important" locations in the Dubai area, with military spokesperson Yahya Saree saying in a televised statement that the attack had "achieved its objectives with high accuracy". UAE authorities did not report an attack on Dubai.

"We are ready to expand the operation during the next phase and confront escalation with escalation," Saree added.

Principal MENA analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, Torbjorn Soltvedt, said there's a "difficult dilemma fac-



ing the Emirati authorities now".

"They are increasingly under threat from the Houthis, but at the same time ... we've had a pretty extensive military campaign in Yemen and rather than reduce the missile threats to the GCC states, what we've seen instead is an increase in that threat," Soltvedt told Al Jazeera.

If the UAE decides to target the Houthis more aggressively, that would be "stoking tensions further and triggering a downwards spiral," he said.

"It's going to have to be something that goes beyond just purely defensive military posture ... It will have to involve diplomacy, efforts to increase the resilience of critical civilian and energy infrastructure in the country," Soltvedt added.

Videos on social media had shown the sky over Abu Dhabi lit up before dawn on Monday, with points of light looking like interceptor missiles, the Associated Press news agency reported. The videos corresponded to known features of Abu Dhabi.

The missile fire disrupted traffic into Abu Dhabi International Airport, home to the long-haul

carrier Etihad, for about an hour.

The coalition

The UAE is a member of a Saudi-led military coalition backing Yemen's government in its seven-year fight against the Houthis, in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and has spawned what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The coalition had announced earlier that it was pursuing hostile activity from Yemen's Houthi rebels using drones while taking measures in accordance with international humanitarian law to protect civilians.

At least 60 people were killed when a temporary detention centre in the northern province of Saada was bombed on Friday, and about 20 were killed in the Houthi-held capital of Sanaa in an attack on Tuesday.

The escalation has raised concerns of a worsening humanitarian crisis in Yemen where the World Food Programme has warned that more than five million people are on the brink of famine, and 50,000 others were living in famine-like conditions.

Club World Cup On Track Despite Houthi Attacks On UAE: FIFA

Agenceis

FIFA says the Club World Cup 2021, scheduled to take place in Abu Dhabi in February this year, is scheduled to go ahead as planned despite the escalation in Yemen's long-running war that has seen the UAE capital targeted by Houthi missiles in the last week.

On Monday, the UAE said it had intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles over Abu Dhabi fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

The incident follows a Houthi drone-and-missile attack on Abu Dhabi that killed three civilians last week.

The Club World Cup, involving regional champions and host country representatives, is scheduled to take place from February 3 to February 12 at two venues in Abu Dhabi.

The escalation in violence and the twin attacks raised doubts over the tournament but FIFA, football's world governing body, told Al Jazeera that the event is planned to go ahead as scheduled.

"The FIFA Club World Cup UAE 2021 will be hosted as planned," a FIFA spokesperson said.

"When it comes to security at the FIFA Club World Cup UAE 2021, FIFA is continuing to monitor the situation and working closely with the Local Organising Committee, and other key stakeholders in the UAE, regarding security arrangements for the tournament."

The seven-team event gets under way with host team Al Jazira Club taking on Tahiti's AS Pirae, replacement for Auckland City FC which withdrew from the tournament for the second year running due to COVID regulations.

CAF Champions League winners Al Ahly SC, CONCACAF Champions League champions CF Monterrey, winners of the AFC Champions League Al Hilal SFC, Copa Libertadores champions SE Palmeiras and Chelsea, European champions, complete the lineup.

Following last week's attack that targeted an oil facility and an under-construction area

outside Abu Dhabi airport, Brazil's Palmeiras also confirmed to Al Jazeera that there are "no planned changes to the club's schedule and procedures in Abu Dhabi".

On Monday, videos on social media showed the sky over Abu Dhabi lit up before dawn, with points of light looking like interceptor missiles, The Associated Press reported.

The UAE defence ministry, quoted by state-run WAM news agency, said "the remnants of the intercepted ballistic missiles fell in separate areas around Abu Dhabi", adding that it "is ready to deal with any threats and ... takes all necessary measures to protect the state".

Two Indians and a Pakistani working for oil giant ADNOC died last week as three petrol tanks exploded near a storage facility.

The war in Yemen began in 2014 when the Houthi rebels took over much of the country, including the capital Sanaa, forcing President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to flee.

British MP Says She Was Sacked Because Of 'Muslimness'

Agenceis

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has ordered an inquiry into claims by a UK minister who said she was fired partly because her Muslim faith was making colleagues uncomfortable.

Nusrat Ghani, 49, who lost her job as a junior transport minister in February 2020, told the Sunday Times that she had been told by a "whip" - an enforcer of parliamentary discipline - that her "Muslimness" had been raised as an issue in her sacking.

"The Prime Minister has asked the Cabinet Office to conduct an inquiry into the allegations made by Nusrat Ghani MP," Downing Street said.

"As he said at the time, the Prime Minister takes these claims very seriously."

The government's chief whip, Mark Spencer, said he was the person at the centre of Ms Ghani's allegations. He said they were completely false and defamatory.

"I have never used those words attributed to me," he said.

Mr Johnson met Ms Ghani to discuss the "extremely serious" claims in July 2020, a spokesperson from the prime minister's office said on Sunday.

Downing Street said that when the allegations were first made, Mr Johnson recommended she make a formal complaint to the Conservative Campaign Headquarters.

"She did not take up this offer," Downing Street said.

The allegation added to the

turmoil Mr Johnson's government is facing over parties held at his Downing Street office during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Recent scandals have drained public support from both Mr Johnson personally and his party, presenting him with the most serious crisis of his premiership.

The Conservative Party has previously faced accusations of Islamophobia, and a report in May last year criticised it over how it dealt with complaints of discrimination against Muslims.

The report also led Johnson to issue a qualified apology for any offence caused by his past remarks about Islam, including a newspaper column in which he referred to women wearing burqas as "going around looking like letterboxes".

The main opposition Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said the Conservatives must investigate Ms Ghani's account immediately.

"This is shocking to read," he said on Twitter.

Mr Johnson, who in 2019 won his party's biggest majority in more than 30 years, is fighting to shore up his authority after the "partygate" scandals, which followed criticism of the government's handling of a corruption row and other missteps.

Senior civil servant Sue Gray is expected to deliver a report into the parties next week, with many Conservative MPs saying they will await her findings before deciding whether they will take action to topple Mr Johnson.

Pak Gets First Female SC Judge



Agenceis

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan swore in Ayesha Malik as its first female Supreme Court judge on Monday, a landmark occasion in a nation where activists say the law is often wielded against women.

Malik attended a ceremony in the capital Islamabad where she now sits on the bench alongside 16 male colleagues at Pakistan's highest court.

"It's a huge step forward," lawyer and women's rights activist Nighat Dad told AFP.

"It is history in the making for Pakistan's judiciary."

Malik was educated at Harvard University and has served as a high court judge in the eastern city of Lahore for the past two decades.

She has been credited with rolling back patriarchal legal mores in her Punjab province jurisdiction.

Last year, she outlawed a deeply invasive and medically discredited examination used to deter-

mine a woman's level of sexual experience.

Women in Pakistan often struggle to gain justice in rape and sexual assault cases, and the test was deployed as a means of discrediting victims by casting aspersions on their character.

Malik's elevation to the Supreme Court of Pakistan may clear the way for more women to enter the historically conservative and male-dominated judiciary of the Islamic republic.

"She has broken all barriers in the judicial system and it will allow other women in the system to move forward," said lawyer and women's rights activist Khadija Siddiqi.

"I hope this will lead to more women-centric decisions by the judiciary in the future."

But her appointment has been mired in controversy for the past four months, with claims she jumped a queue of more senior male candidates qualified for the post.

Earlier this month the Pakistan Bar Council staged a strike to protest against Malik's nomination.



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