

'Till Death Do Us Part': Husbands Sacrificing Kidneys To Save Sick Wives In Kashmir

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: Director Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Dr Parvaiz Koul on Thursday said that Kashmir is witnessing a healthy organ donation trend wherein male spouses are coming forward to donate kidneys to save their ailing partners.

Parvaiz said that in the past few years, it has been seen that husbands are coming forward

to donate kidneys who suffer from chronic kidney diseases.

"Earlier, it was not the case" Parvaiz said.

"Females were more sacrificing. They would come forward to donate kidneys for their husbands, brothers and even parents."

"It is a routine for females to come forward for their spouses as potential donors but it is changing, which is encouraging" he said.

Parvaiz further said that the



DIR SKIMS [DR PARVAIZ KOUL]



A VERY WELCOME TREND IS BEING OBSERVED IN KIDNEY TRANSPLANT DONATION in Kashmir.

Increasing number of male spouses are coming forward to donate a kidney for their respective female spouses with renal failure. This healthy trend wasn't seen till recently. Kudos to all donors"

trend should be encouraged not only in Kashmir but in other parts of India as well so that the positive message goes out and other males also come

forward to donate organs to their ailing wives.

Speaking to Kashmir Observer, Dr Koul said that SKIMS has data evidence to

support his statement.

"We hold meetings to check and evaluate the donors and over the years it has come to forth that husbands come forward to donate kidneys, which was not the case earlier," he said

He further said before issuing authorizations for organ donations a donor is evaluated 'nicely' and only then an authorization is issued.

Dr Koul clarified that it does not affect the health of the donor and the donor "survives

normally."

Earlier, on Wednesday Dr Parvez had put out a tweet as well.

"A very welcome trend is being observed in kidney transplant donation in Kashmir. Increasing number of male spouses are coming forward to donate a kidney for their respective female spouses with renal failure. This healthy trend wasn't seen till recently. Kudos to all donors" he tweeted.

Netizens welcomed the move, **More on P10**

Govt Warns Employees Against Non-Submission Of APRs

Observer News Service

Srinagar- The government on Thursday asked all employees to submit details of annual property details between January 1 to 31 and warned against non-submission with action under Prevention of Corruption Act and denial of their Vigilance Clearance.

Sub Section 2 of Section 9 of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Men and Public Servants Declaration of Assets and other Provisions Act, 1983 lays down that it shall be incumbent on the part of every public servant to submit annual returns of the assets held by him and his family members in the month of January every year and shall indicate the reasons for increase, if any, in the assets and source of the same.

"The Jammu and Kashmir Public Servants Declaration of Assets Act and Rules made thereunder provides for imposing a penalty for non-submission of the property returns by the public servants", the government said in a circular. "It is further

provided that if any public servant without any reasonable cause which he shall be required to show, fails to submit the return annually, he shall be guilty of committing criminal misconduct under the Prevention of Corruption Act and shall be punishable under the said Act".

The Act and Rules also lay down that every public servant shall submit annual property returns as per instruction issued by the Government from time to time, in respect of all the assets possessed by him and his family members.

"With a view to make the process of filing of property returns employee friendly, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir has launched online portal for filing of annual property returns (PRS-Portal) by each and every **More on P10**



Azad Expels 3 Close Confidants, Including Tara Chand

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Ghulam Nabi Azad on Thursday expelled three top leaders - former ministers Tara Chand and Manohar Lal and former legislator Balwan Singh - from his Democratic Azad Party (DAP) for anti-party activities.

An order for their expulsion with immediate effect was issued by DAP general secretary R S Chib. "They were expelled for



anti-party activities. The chairman (Azad) was convinced that they were not **More on P10**

Chand Hits Back, Says I'm Congressman By Birth

Former deputy chief minister Tara Chand on Thursday said that he is returning to Congress as "Ghulam Nabi Azad-led Democratic Azad Party is only dividing the secular vote."

Tara Chand, who was deputy CM during NC-Congress regime, said that he is likely to rejoin Congress. "I will rejoin the party. I am Congressman by birth," he said, adding that he is holding consultation **More on P10**



A MAN PASSES THROUGH A WOODEN BRIDGE in the interiors of the Dal Lake on Thursday, when Srinagar recorded coldest day of the season at minus 5.5 Degree Celsius freezing water supply lines and parts of the water body: KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Srinagar Shivers As Mercury Falls To Minus 5.5 Deg Celsius

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: 'Chilla-i-Kalan', the 40-day harshest winter period, has made its presence felt in the Kashmir valley with Srinagar recording its coldest night this winter, even as water supply lines and interiors of the Dal Lake froze due to the cold conditions, officials said on Thursday.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar recorded on Wednesday night was minus 5.5 degrees Celsius, which is the lowest so far this season, they said.

The city had recorded minus 4.2 degrees Celsius the previous night.

The cold conditions led to freezing of water supply lines in many places across the valley, even as the interior parts of the Dal Lake also developed a thick layer of frost.

The officials said Pahalgam, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 6.8 degrees Celsius and was the coldest recorded place in the valley.

It was also the coldest night of the season so far at the tourist resort.

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius, they said. **More on P10**

PM Chairs Review Meeting On Covid Situation Amid Spike In Cases

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a high-level meeting on Thursday to review the situation related to COVID-19 in the country.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Home Minister Amit Shah, Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and top officials attended the virtual meeting.

Ahead of the meeting, in a statement in Lok Sabha, Minister Mandaviya asked states to remain alert and create awareness about wearing face masks and using hand sanitisers, especially in view of upcoming festivals and new year celebrations.

On Wednesday, Mandaviya had reviewed the situation and asked people to follow Covid-appropriate



behaviour, including wearing masks in crowded places, and getting vaccinated. Official sources have said random sample testing will be done at airports for

international passengers arriving from China and other countries. There has been a sudden spurt in Covid cases in China and some other countries.

Dogra Employees Protest Outside BJP Office In Jammu

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Angered over Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's remarks about stopping their salaries, Dogra and Kashmiri Pandit employees on Monday intensified their months-long protest demanding a transfer from the Valley in the wake of the targeted killings by terrorists in Kashmir.

In their response to the LG's remark, the employees made it clear to the government that they will not return to Kashmir until their demands for transfer policy and relocation are not addressed.

Dogra employees assembled under the banner of "All Jammu-based Reserved Categories Employees Association" at the BJP headquarters office here and staged a sit-in to press on their demand for framing a policy under which they should be transferred from the Valley to their home districts in the Jammu region.

"Let them stop salaries. Unless our demand for framing of transfer policy is made no one will join. Salaries are not more important than life", one of the protesters told reporters here.

Expressing her concern over the LG's remarks, **More on P10**

Any Person From Jammu Will Not Be A Guinea Pig: BJP

Barely a day after Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha remarked that reserved category employees cannot be transferred, BJP on Thursday said that transfer policy will be framed and no one from Jammu be made "guinea pig" in wake of selective killings in Kashmir. "Come what may, **More on P10**

S H O R T T A K E S

Five OGWs Held In Kupwara: Police

Five Hizb-ul-Mujahideen associates have been arrested and arms and ammunition recovered from their possession in North Kashmir's Kupwara district, police said on Thursday. "A credible information was received by District Police Kupwara and Army from Military intelligence and other intelligence agencies that a militant module of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) outfit is active in Kralpora area which is not only helping the militants in providing safe shelter but also other logistics including arms and ammunition", said a police spokesman in a statement issued. "Based on this information, joint team of Police and Army apprehended three militant **More on P10**

Truck Crushes Man To Death

Man Killed After Being Hit By Speedy Truck In North Kashmir's Sumbal Srinagar- A 35-year old man killed in a road accident in Sumbal area of North Kashmir's Bandipora district on Thursday. Quoting an official, news agency KNO reported that a speedy truck hit the man near Sumo stand Sumbal, resulting in serious injuries to him. He said the injured was rushed to CHC Sumbal, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. He identified him as Aijaz Ahmad Khan, a driver by profession, of Markundal Hajin and said the body was handed over to family after completing all legal formalities. Meanwhile, a case **More on P10**

Man Injured In Bear Attack

A middle-aged man on Thursday was attacked and injured by a black bear in South Kashmir's Shopian district. 55-year-old Mohammad Maqbool Dar of Nusipora village was attacked by bear in Haaji Check village of the district on Thursday evening, reports said. Dar received injuries in the surprise bear attack and was rushed to district hospital Pulwama for treatment. His condition is said to be stable. Meanwhile, reports added that a team of Wildlife department has rushed to the spot to track down the beast. The villagers have also been advised to avoid venturing out unnecessarily.

BSF Shoots Down Drone Along IB

A drone that entered into India from Pakistan has been shot down near the international border in Punjab by the Border Security Force (BSF), an officer said Thursday. The unmanned aerial vehicle was downed by firing at 8 pm on Wednesday near the Harbhajan border post in the Ferozepur sector of Tarn Taran district. BSF troops fired "heavily" taking aim of the drone. It was recovered lying in a farmland on Thursday morning when a search of the area was conducted, a BSF spokesperson said. The search is continuing to find if the drone dropped any consignment, he said.

10 Day Winter Break In Jammu Schools

The authorities on Thursday announced 10-day winter vacation for schools in summer zone of Jammu division from December 26. According to an order, all schools in summer zone will observe winter vacation from December 26 to January 04. "It is hereby ordered that all Government and recognised Private Schools of Summer zone of Jammu Division shall observe winter vacation from December 26 to January 04," reads the order. It reads all teachers shall remain available on demand for any online guidance of students during vacation period. **More on P10**

Drug Peddler Held In Baramulla: Police

Police on Thursday claimed to have arrested a drug peddler and recovered psychotropic substances from his possession in North Kashmir's Baramulla district. "A Police party of Police Post Wagoora during patrolling at Mirangund Kreeeri intercepted a vehicle (alto car) bearing registration number JK05G-0401 driven by Jatinder Singh son of Rajinder Singh resident of Mirangund Kreeeri. During the search, officers recovered psychotropic substance including 1000 tablets of Spasmaproxyvon plus, 480 tablets of Alprazolam and 10 bottles of Daslin CD from his possession. He has been arrested and the vehicle used in the **More on P10**

Do Zodiac Signs Correlate To Our Personality Traits?

Press Trust Of India

Are you sure astrology isn't a science? Both astrology and astronomy are in the business of making predictions. The theories of astrology claim that the positions of the planets and the stars influence who you are and what happens to you: your job, your personality and your romantic partner. Astrologers make these predictions based on the positions of the planets at the time of your birth.

Astronomy, in contrast, makes predictions about such phenomena as the movements of planets and the expansion of galaxies. Astronomers explain their predictions with such properties as masses, distances and gravitational forces.

As a philosopher and an anthropologist who study what science means to society, we think it is important to separate the question of

whether something is a science from the question of whether it is true or false.

Astrology makes scientific claims

Science, in essence, involves making and testing factual claims about the world. Factual claims are true or false descriptions of the world (Joe is 1 metre tall) as opposed to descriptions of how we define things (1 metre is 1,000 millimetres). In this sense, astrologers, like astronomers, make factual claims about the world. To us, that makes astrology sound a lot like a set of scientific beliefs.

For a very long time, until the 17th or 18th century, astronomy and astrology were practised side by side. After all, knowing where the planets were relative to the stars was necessary to make accurate predictions about how their locations influenced human affairs.

That's why astronomers and astrologers populated medical schools and governments, advising people on what the heavens signalled was to come on Earth.

Even famed astronomers Galileo and Kepler practised astrology. Any rule that says they are scientists only if they make one set of factual claims but not when they make another set of factual claims divides these thinkers into two halves that aren't meant to be contradictory. In both cases, they wanted to know how things worked so they could predict how things would go in the future.

Being false vs. being unscientific

But here's the rub: When researchers test the predictions astrology makes about people's lives, those predictions turn out to be no better than guesswork.

There is currently no broadly accepted evidence that galactic forces are capable of influencing the choices people make. The truck parked on the street exerts more gravitational pull on you than Mars does, and the radio waves from your local station far overpower those from Jupiter, for instance.

There is an important difference between being false and being unscientific. Currently, astrological theories are false precisely because they make scientific claims about the world, and those claims turn out to be wrong. Although the predictions astrology makes are false, they are nonetheless a matter of science. That's how we know they are wrong, after all.

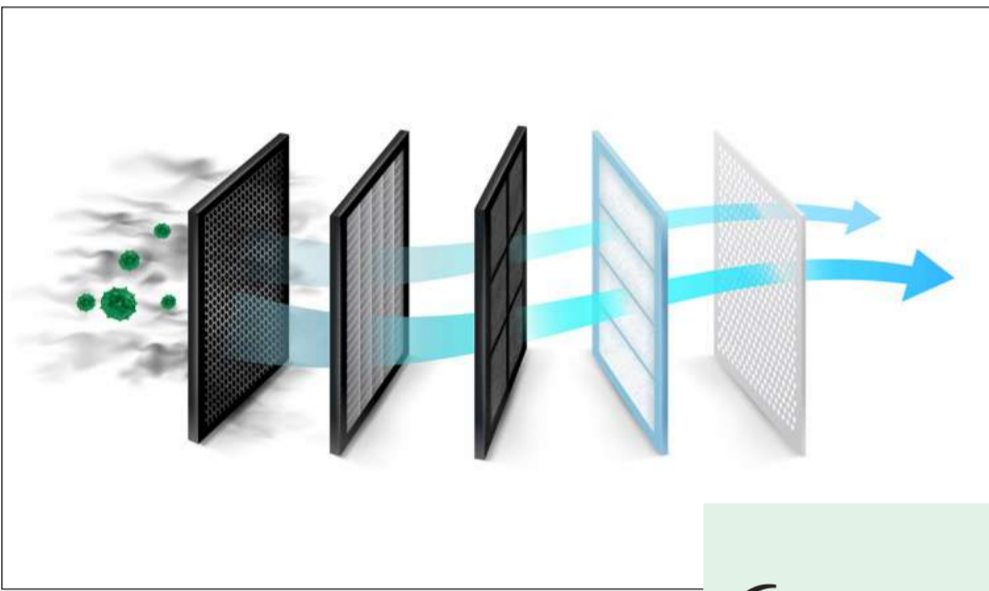
Some people believe they find support for astrological predictions in their own personal experience. They read their horoscope and it seems just right: They did meet

someone interesting or benefit from listening to a close friend's advice. But the predictions are vague enough that they would often be true even if astrology were utterly bogus. That's why it can be difficult to figure out how to assess an astrologer's predictions with precision.

Theories of astronomy, on the other hand, have evolved over the years with advances in technology. They are routinely corrected in response to increasingly precise measurements.

For example, Einstein's theory of general relativity got a boost over Newton's because it predicted the precise migration of Mercury's closest point to the Sun year after year. If astrology had the same ability to make correct predictions with such precision, it might still be a major focus of scientific attention.

IISC-Bangalore Develops 'Green' Tech To Rid Air Filters Of Germs



A newly developed air filtering technique that uses ingredients commonly found in green tea can deactivate germs that find refuge inside air filters, the Ministry of Science and Technology said in an official statement.

A research team led by Prof Suryasarathi Bose and Prof Kaushik Chatterjee at Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, has developed a germ-destroying air filter that can inactivate germs using ingredients like polyphenols and polycationic polymers commonly found in green tea.

The 'green' ingredients rupture the microbes through site-specific binding, the statement said.

With a prolonged use,

air filters become a breeding ground for captured germs. The growth of these germs clog the pores of the filter, reducing their life.

Re-suspension of these germs can infect people in the vicinity, the statement said.

The novel antimicrobial air filters were tested at an NABL accredited laboratory and were found to be 99.24 per cent effective against SARS-CoV-2 (delta variant).

The technology was transferred to AIRTH, a start-up that is replacing the existing germ-growing air filters with these germ-destroying air filters for commercial purposes, the statement said.

The air-filtering technique was granted a patent in 2022. The deployment of these

The technology was transferred to AIRTH, a start-up that is replacing the existing germ-growing air filters with these germ-destroying air filters for commercial purposes, the

novel antimicrobial filters in ACs, central ducts, and air purifiers can play a crucial role in fight against air pollution and mitigate the spread of airborne pathogens such as several coronaviruses, the statement said.

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Friday | 23-12-2022

Fraught Situation

Over 70,000 Chinese troops are reportedly deployed along the Indian-claimed border in eastern Ladakh, and infrastructure is being built inside of Indian lines on the strategic Depsang Plains and other friction points. The Chinese are also reported to have deployed a large number of surveillance drones over the buffer zones created within India-claimed lines to keep a watch on the movements of Indian troops. The Chinese have mobilized more men and machinery to the Galwan Valley and other standoff points, where earlier partial disengagements took place. The Chinese are continuing with their massive infrastructure development in Depsang Plains claimed by India.

Such reports follow the statement by external affairs minister S. Jaishankar on Monday that India had made its biggest-ever LAC deployment to counter the Chinese buildup in Ladakh. Earlier in December, Indian troops foiled a Chinese attempt to transgress the border in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh. The consequent clash injured 15 to 20 Indian soldiers. This has created a fraught situation along the entire stretch of Line of Actual Control, stretching all the way from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

The two countries have been engaged in a bitter standoff ever since the Chinese army staged incursions across the Line of actual Control in multiple areas in April-May 2020. The situation came to a head when 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives during a scuffle along the border. Ever since multiple Corps Commander-level talks and a few meetings between the foreign ministers of the two nations yielded little result.

Last year, in a first breakthrough in talks, India and China pulled back their troops from the south bank of Pangong lake area in eastern Ladakh following their agreement for "synchronised and organised disengagement". In September, the two countries began disengaging from the Gogra-Hotsprings border area in Ladakh after reaching a consensus in the 16th round of India-China Corps Commander-level meeting. This momentarily calmed the situation on the border. In October, the outgoing Chinese ambassador Sun Weidong in his farewell speech talked about 'broad prospects' in ties between India and China. He, however, added that both countries should refrain from interfering in the internal matters of the other, while acknowledging that it was natural for the neighbours to have differences. But with the Tawang incident, the situation seems to have gone back to square one. It injected fresh bitterness into the bilateral ties. And now the unprecedented massing of troops along the LAC has added a dangerous new dimension to the situation. This calls for the two countries to seek closer diplomatic engagement to resolve the developing crisis.

OTHER OPINION

Keep the pledge

The United Nations COP15 summit on biodiversity reached a landmark decision in Montreal, Canada, earlier this week, with 195 nations committing to the conservation of 30% of all land and water on the planet by 2030. At a time when forests and oceans are being depleted and polluted at record rates, and species of flora and fauna are being pushed into extinction, bold targets to reverse these trends are welcome — although as always, the devil will lie in the details. Wealthy nations are expected to aim to provide \$200 billion in support for these initiatives by 2030, including a minimum of \$20 billion a year until 2025 and \$30 billion annually after that. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, home to the world's second-largest area of rainforests, had objected to the deal, arguing that the financial commitments from developed countries were not enough. Nor are they legally binding. The DRC was eventually convinced to accept the deal, but its concerns are legitimate: the Global North does not have a good track record in meeting its commitments on financial support for climate and biodiversity initiatives in poorer nations.

Other differences among signatory nations could also trip up the implementation of the COP15 deal. India, for instance, objected to suggestions that each nation must meet the goal of protecting 30% of its water and land. The Union environment minister, Bhupendra Yadav, told the Montreal conference that such area-based targets are not acceptable. India also pushed back against a proposal to drastically cut down subsidies for fertilisers, fuel and other ingredients used in the farming, forestry and fishing sectors, arguing that it needed to balance the long-term protection of the planet with the livelihood needs of its population. India's criticism underscores how different nations have different prisms through which they view COP15. To genuinely preserve biodiversity, it is also vital that governments around the world empower the indigenous communities that have over centuries protected water bodies, forests and the planet itself. Research has shown that indigenous peoples — often among the most discriminated communities — remain humankind's best bet to secure nature for the future. Yet, in paying lip service to them, COP15 failed to provide a clear roadmap to strengthen their hands. For too long, the world has stumbled along in the face of an existential climate and biodiversity crisis, pacifying itself with promises. Now it is time to start keeping them.

Telegraph India

Iran: To Veil Or Not To Veil

Sharmine Narwani

The explosion of protests in Iran that began in September were not about the Islamic Republic's "hijab law" specifically, but about the abuses and excesses of the so-called morality police — the Gasht-e-Ershad (also known simply as Ershad, or in English, the 'guidance patrol') — against regular Iranian women who were considered to be immodestly garbed.

Public disgruntlement was triggered by the widely-publicized death of Mahsa Amini, who was apprehended by the Ershad and died while in their custody.

Although subsequent video footage released by Iranian police authorities showed that Amini had collapsed herself — likely due to her personal health history, as her official autopsy indicates, and not from alleged "beatings" — Iranians argued that the stress of it all may have triggered that collapse.

In the weeks ahead, protests morphed into riots, and people were killed, both civilians and security forces. Whether the two sides shot at each other, or other, external provocateurs were at play, is not the subject of this commentary.

The question is more where these recent events will take Iran, and whether public sentiment on the hijab will be addressed by the country's governing bodies — and how.

Iran's very diffused decision-making centers

Iran is by no means the 'caricature dictatorship' often portrayed in western mainstream media. While Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei remains the final authority on strategic matters, it is a privilege he rarely exercises to counter domestic critics.

As opposed as he was to Iranian nuclear talks with western powers, Khamenei fully permitted the government of former President Hassan Rouhani to proceed with its negotiation agenda, in its desire to normalize economic relations and end Iran's then-isolation.

There is probably no figure in Iran who has gone on the record as vehemently as Khamenei, warning that the west is never, ever to be trusted, and that Iran's greatest power lies in its economic self-sufficiency and complete independence from western-dominated global networks.

And yet Khamenei sat back and allowed the Rouhani administration to pursue a policy that completely contradicted his deepest national convictions.

The Supreme Leader's actions, however, speak to the very real diffusion inherent in Iranian decision-making processes today. There is no single authority in the state. Decisions are either made collaboratively or in heated and often very public disputes that play out in the Iranian media, in parliamentary debates, or behind closed doors.

In essence, Iran has three main power centers today: First, the Supreme Leader and his various state revolutionary organs that include the army, the police force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), and the millions-strong volunteer Basij forces.

Second, Iran's government and its state institutions that include the elected president, his cabinet, the country's ministries, and parliament.

And third, the hawza (seminary) of Qom, Iran's religious center, which consists of thousands of Shia scholars, authorities, and influencers who impact the interpretation of religion, actions, and behaviors for the Islamic Republic.

All three power centers impact state policy in varying ways, and their fortunes have all ebbed and flowed at different times. Within each of these centers exists a vast network of supporters, institutions, media, economic interests, and influential personalities. They, as in other democratic societies, vie for their perspectives to be taken into account and put into action.

To imagine for a second that a single person or decision-making

body can issue a directive on an issue as complex and symbolic as the hijab, is to be absolutely clueless about the intricacy, contradictions, and diversity within the Islamic Republic's body politic.

A view from the ground

During a two-week visit to Tehran in late November, I noticed significant differences on the ground than in my many previous visits, which stopped in January 2020 due to Covid travel restrictions.

During my last visit to the Iranian capital in 2020, one would occasionally see Iranian women sitting without their hijabs in restaurants. Today, however, the ladies were walking on streets, in malls, at the airport, in traditional bazaars, universities and parks, both uptown

Nonetheless, three months of protests and riots later, the issue of the hijab appears to be coming to a head among the Islamic Republic's competing power centers.

In my personal experience, Iran's security branches like the IRGC — which operate under Khamenei's authority — are the least belligerent on the hijab issue. They are focused on foreign infiltration, sabotage, anti-terror operations, and warfare, not on the nitty-gritty of daily life and behaviors.

The hijab is a 'symbol' of the Islamic Republic, and symbols — as we have seen in countless hybrid wars conducted in West Asia and beyond — are the first and easiest targets for external provocateurs.

Whether it is changing the colors of the national flag to symbolize opposition, or crafting ditties

dark or hidden inside carriages to avoid confrontation with the police who would if necessary use force to unveil them. Even older Christian and Jewish women found the ban on headscarves hard to comply with," writes Maryam Sinaee — ironically, for Saudi-backed publication Iran International, which runs 24/7 propaganda for Iranian oppositionists nowadays.

These matters aside, Iran's security leaders have an unusually strong case to put to the clergy today: 'The hijab, which we respect, has entered the national security realm. Foreign-backed agendas have weaponized the hijab to promote regime-change operations.' This is not a position the clergy can argue given recent events.

It is probably why Iranian authorities are reportedly considering



“The hijab is a ‘symbol’ of the Islamic Republic, and symbols — as we have seen in countless hybrid wars conducted in West Asia and beyond — are the first and easiest targets for external provocateurs.

and downtown, without the customary head-covering.

Here are some random photos taken by myself at different locations in the city:

What is of utmost importance in the current heated discourse on the Iranian hijab is that this 'uncovering' trend did not start in September with the protests. This critical detail goes entirely unmentioned in the western media narrative.

Many Iranian women — in the intervening three years since my last visit — had dropped the headscarf, and the scenes in my photos above have been the norm for years. Did the pandemic help relax the social norms during these years? Nobody I asked had a clear answer. "It just became normal," was a common refrain.

Today, you can see Iranian ladies — young and old — without a hijab, with a headscarf, and with the more traditional floor-length chador walking together on the same streets; everybody doing their own thing and minding their own business.

It is a fascinating development, because by law in Iran, hijab is mandatory. And yet nobody forcibly implements this law until the Ershad pops back onto the scene.

This is important, because the Ershad is not always there, at all times. While they have been a functioning body since 2006, Iranian authorities appear to only mobilize them at specific intervals: perhaps Qom is getting restless over morality issues, or conservatives are vying for influence over reformists, or there are geopolitical tensions on the country's borders.

The point is that the Ershad has never been a constant on the streets of Iran, but usually a result of something happening politically somewhere in the country.

Authorities gather to discuss the hijab

to replace the national anthem, or encouraging women to whip off their headscarves and videotape it — these are the low-hanging fruit of hybrid warfare.

In a January 2018 interview by a private Iranian publication that has a closed distribution and whose readers are specifically security officials and 'principalists,' I was asked about the use of these tools in Syria and Iran. My response, with some length-related edits, is below:

The interview was published alongside a photo of me without a hijab. A few weeks later, I received a message from a top Iranian analyst who is reportedly closely affiliated with the IRGC's Quds Force. He sent a screenshot of my comments on the hijab, and asked if I had written this. To my surprise, he told me that he fully agreed with my assessment.

On another occasion, Iranian IRGC-backed publication Javan requested an interview along with a translation of one of my Syria articles for a special-issue magazine on the regional Axis of Resistance. Again, they published a photo of myself without the hijab.

Hijab and the state

Simply put, the hijab isn't a priority issue for Iran's security sector. They have more important fish to fry. But it is a vital subject for the theologians inside and outside Qom.

And perhaps also for the millions of Iranian women who choose to do it, and don't want to be bullied out of it, as were their grandmothers in 1936 when then-monarch Reza Shah Pahlavi outlawed the traditional Islamic head covering.

"With the ban on hijab, many women stayed inside their homes for years or left home only in the

host of options to take the threat off the table, including, potentially, the suspension or dissolution of the Ershad, to be replaced by a general program to teach and advise about Islamic modesty across the country, for both men and women.

The Ershad — established under the administration of former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — are off the streets now, and have been for many weeks. And the three main Iranian centers of authority are deep in conversation about how to calm residual tensions and address this social grievance among segments of the population.

Interestingly, this development somewhat mirrors that of arch-rival Saudi Arabia across the Persian Gulf, where the "mutawa," or Saudi religious police, were stripped of their once-unchecked powers and privileges in 2016 by royal decree. Since then, it has become more common to see women publicly unveiled and not wearing the traditional black abaya over their regular clothes, despite there never having been a Saudi written law mandating it.

Qom — and many others — will never agree to retract the hijab law. After all, its over-zealous enforcement by the few was what the argument was originally about. Like many laws without teeth that remain on the books of countries everywhere, Iran's hijab law may experience a similar fate.

But while we can expect a gentler Iranian hand in regard to the hijab, it will be also accompanied by a merciless de-fanging of those who sought to use this symbol of piety to undermine the state.

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

Mindful Fridays

WHAT TOP RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT HOW PSYCHOTHERAPY WORKS?

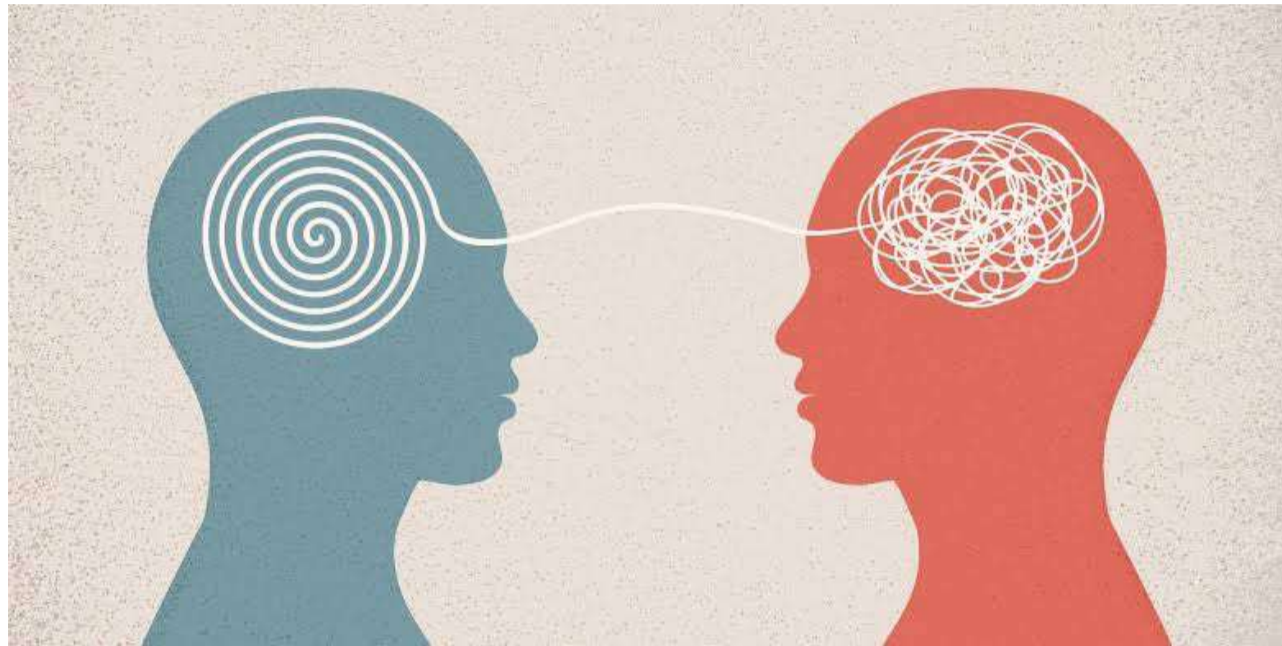
Wasim Kakroo

Outcomes of psychotherapy and the way it brings change in a person's attitude and behavior have historically been studied on the psychological and social levels, by assessing changes in symptoms, psychological functioning, personality, or social functioning. Many clinicians have also held the problematic view that psychotherapy is a treatment for "psychologically based" issues while medication is a treatment for "biologically based" issues. It has been evident over the past few decades that the brain's neural networks are the source of all mental functions. In other words, any alteration to our psychological processes will reflect itself in the ways that the brain's architecture or functions change. However, there is ample evidence that our subjective experiences have an impact on the brain, contradicting simple reductionistic positions that many of the clinicians hold.

Though, it has been very difficult to study human neuroplasticity that I discussed in the previous week's article on neuroplasticity, (i.e., how brain changes its structure based on life experiences), however, animal studies have yielded better results to understand the concept. Various experimental approaches have been used on animals to detect changes in the brain in response to various experience at the cellular and molecular levels. It is now possible to study changes at the brain systems level (by measuring changes in brain blood flow or metabolisms) and, increasingly, on the molecular level using SPECT and PET in the living human brain thanks to the development of functional neuroimaging, which includes single photon emission CT (SPECT), positron emission tomography (PET), and functional MRI.

What research studies say about the impact of psychotherapy at the brain system level?

The brain changes following psychotherapy for depression, anxiety disorders, and borderline personality disorder have been the subject of innumerable studies to date in the past few decades and the data has been published in various top scientific journals. The first study was released in 1992. In this study, the researchers contrasted fluoxetine treatment with behavior therapy. Similar changes in the brain were seen with both treatment regimens, particularly in the caudate nucleus, a part of brain responsible for various functions such as planning the execution of movement, learning, memory, reward, motivation, emotion, and romantic interaction.



In other words, any alteration to our psychological processes will reflect itself in the ways that the brain's architecture or functions change. However, there is ample evidence that our subjective experiences have an impact on the brain, contradicting simple reductionistic positions that many of the clinicians hold.

When these system level studies are combined, they suggest that patients with major depressive disorder (MDD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and borderline personality disorder (BPD) may experience changes in brain function as a result of various psychotherapy modalities such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), psychodynamic psychotherapy, and interpersonal psychotherapy.

Similar brain changes following psychotherapy and medication have been documented in the majority of these studies. However, some recent investigations have also demonstrated considerable variations between various therapy approaches. In the study by Goldapple and colleagues, the response to CBT treatment in patients with MDD was linked to increases in metabolism in the various areas of the brain such as hippocampus and dorsal cingulate and decreases in the other areas of brain such as dorsal, ventral, and medial frontal cor-

tex. This pattern was notably different from the paroxetine (an SSRI, used to treat depression and other emotional disorders)-induced pattern, which involved metabolic increases in the prefrontal regions and decreases in the hippocampus and subgenual cingulate. In one study by Karlsson and colleagues, notable differences between short-term psychodynamic psychotherapy and fluoxetine among individuals with Major Depressive Disorder was found.

How mechanisms of psychotherapy lead to alterations in the brain?

Some of these research studies have made it feasible to build models that explain the mechanics behind the changes that result from the various psychotherapies, in addition to just reporting the findings on brain alterations as a result of psychotherapy.

Various psychotherapies aim to improve patient's capacity for problem-solving, self-representation, and emotional control. The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, ventral ante-

rior cingulate cortex, dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, ventral and dorsal subregions of the medial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate cortex, precuneus, insular cortex, amygdala, and ventrolateral prefrontal cortex are the brain regions that contribute to these functions and it can be deduced from this correlation that psychotherapy affects these brain regions in a positive way.

For instance, the effectiveness of cognitive therapy for individuals with Major Depressive Disorder may be due to an increase in the function of prefrontal cortex, which is involved in reflective and rational thinking, whereas antidepressant medicines work more directly on the amygdala, which is involved in regulation of various emotions.

It seems that psychodynamic psychotherapy (one of the types of psychotherapy) may also work, at least partially, via similar mechanisms as is proposed regarding the impact of CBT on brain functioning and that includes a more effective ("top-down") regulation of hyperexcitable limbic regions by prefrontal control systems. This concept

is supported by the results of a study by Beutel and colleagues, which show that symptomatic patients with panic disorder have both a frontal deactivation and an amygdala-hippocampal hyperactivation. Following psychotherapy treatment, the amygdala-hippocampus hyperactivity and frontal inactivation returned to normal and their panic attacks and anxiety levels decreased.

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is characterised by affective hyperarousal, which is also the core focus of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). This would imply that DBT helps the brain regions involved in affective hyperarousal to become less active in response to emotional stimuli. In fact, Schnell and Herpertz's investigation confirmed this conclusion, indicating that DBT reduces the hemodynamic response to negative stimuli in the brain regions such as left insula, temporal and posterior cingulate cortices, and right anterior cingulate.

How psychotherapy helps to bring changes at molecular levels?

Studies were done to study the effect of psychotherapy at molecular level and they found that learning from the experience could influence gene expression by altering the strength of synaptic connections between nerve cells and thus causing morphological changes in neurons (causing neuroplasticity).

Patients with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) were randomised to receive either short-term psychodynamic psychotherapy or fluoxetine (an antidepressant) in a Finnish study. The patients underwent a PET brain scan before therapy and again four months later. In the two publications that were published, the researchers reported that, according to standard symptom ratings, the clinical outcomes in both therapy groups (i.e., psychotherapy as well as pharmacotherapy group) were comparable, implying that both the treatment approaches were almost equally potent.

In conclusion, I intend to bring it to the attention of my readers that psychotherapy as a treatment option has been tested through hard science and thus should be accepted as seriously as they accept medication as a treatment option and that combining both the treatment options together can give them better and long lasting results with lesser rates of relapse.

The author is a licensed clinical psychologist (alumni of Govt. Medical College Srinagar) and works as a consultant clinical psychologist at Centre for Mental Health Services (CMHS) at Rambagh Srinagar. He can be reached at 8825067196

SEASONAL DEPRESSION

Small Things You Can Do Every Day To Cope

Jo Adetunji

Many of us tend to feel sad or not like our usual self as autumn and winter approach. But for some, these feelings persist until spring arrives.

Known as seasonal affective disorder (or Sad), it's a type of depression that occurs only during specific seasons. Alongside persistent low mood, some people may find they feel more lethargic than usual, have difficulty getting up in the morning and crave more carbs than normal.

If you're someone who has Sad (or think you might), here are a few things you can do to improve your mood during the colder months.

What to do every day

Since Sad happens during seasons when the days are shorter and we get less sunlight, it's thought to be caused by a disruption of our body clocks (also known as circadian-rhythm disturbance). We all have a "master clock" in the brain that uses daylight to control all of our body's processes - from hunger to when we feel ready for bed.

Circadian rhythm disturbance has been linked to sleep disturbances, changes in mood and our eating patterns and metabolism, all of which are affected by Sad.

This is why getting outside and into natural daylight can be so important for people who have Sad.

In the morning, aim to get outside for at



least a few minutes. Since light sends direct signals to your master body clock to tell it's time to wake up, morning light will help you feel more alert throughout the day. It may also help you fall asleep earlier in the evening.

At lunch, try again to get outside and get more natural light exposure. But if you can't get outside or it's overcast, you may want to try bright-light therapy. This exposes people to bright fluorescent light using a special lamp or mask. Research shows that 30 minutes of bright light therapy daily can help reduce symptoms of Sad.

If you find it difficult to convince yourself to get away from your desk at lunchtime, try to organise some activities to do that may

help you get outside. For example, try to organise a daily lunchtime group walk with your colleagues or neighbours. Alongside getting you out into the daylight, exercising in a group can also boost positive emotions and connectedness, which is good for wellbeing and mental health.

Another activity you could try during your lunchtime walk is the "three good things in nature" task. The aim of this activity is to boost mindfulness and appreciation of nature by taking note of at least three things from the natural environment while you're on your daily walk. Not only will this get you outside, it may also help improve your mood and wellbeing.

In the evenings, aim to set aside time to do things you enjoy. This may help to improve your mood and may ease some symptoms of Sad.

Other things you can do during winter months to improve your mood include:

Practise humour

Introducing more humour into your life may help balance out your negative emotions and could even improve sleep quality, mood and reduce symptoms of depression.

In the evening, take ten minutes to think of some funny things that happened during the day. Or think of a challenging situation you faced and instead try to think about how you'd deal with it in a funny way in the future. Making the time to watch something funny on TV three or four times a week may also help to boost your mood.

Find a hobby

Start a new hobby or pick up one you haven't practised for a while. Engaging in a hobby will keep your mind less idle and more engaged, leaving you with less time to ruminate, if that's something you tend to do. Perhaps try learning to knit. This is associated with increased mindfulness, calmness and a boost of positive emotions. Mastering new recipes may also be a great way of boosting wellbeing.

It doesn't matter what hobby you choose, as long as it stretches your skills and helps

you get into a state of flow. This is the feeling of "losing yourself" in what you're doing and is a major component in experiencing subjective happiness. You might not feel better while you are doing your hobby (as it requires concentration), but as soon as you complete your task, you will experience a sense of accomplishment and a boost of positive emotions.

Keep your body clock in rhythm

Since Sad is thought to be caused by circadian-rhythm disturbance, keeping your circadian rhythm in time may help to reduce symptoms of Sad.

Sleep plays a big role in keeping your body clock in check. So in the evenings, try to avoid too much bright light as this will delay your sleep. You should also try to keep similar times for going to sleep and waking up both during the week and on weekends. Alongside proper sleep, eating your meals at regular times may also help to keep your body clock in time.

While it may be normal to feel a dip in your mood after the clocks first change, if you're finding that symptoms are lingering for many weeks or are having a big effect on your life, you may want to speak to your doctor. In the meantime, remember that even just a few small changes every day may help keep Sad symptoms at bay.

By arrangements with The Conversation

The Gaping Problem At The Heart Of Scientific Research

360info.org

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed many flaws in the way our societies function.

Among the less obvious is the gaping problem at the heart of scientific research. In March 2020, scientists were scrambling to understand what the new virus was, how it affected patients, and how it could be treated.

Scientists usually publish research findings in scholarly journals many of which charge high subscription fees.

As hospitals in Italy were overwhelmed and the world looked on in fear, vital new information about the virus was locked away behind paywalls.

National science agencies from nations including the UK, Australia, Italy, the United States and Brazil called for publishers to make coronavirus research immediately and freely accessible, which in the most part they did.

But the very need for these groups to call for research to be made available in the middle of a global emergency demonstrates the failure of the current publishing system. Making research immediately free to read, which, when combined with the use of an open publishing licence, is known as open access' is a hot topic in science.

Global health bodies know how important open research is, especially in times of emergency, which is why they have repeatedly called for research to be made open.

The latest plaintive request came in August 2022 from the US White House Office of Science and Technology Policy for mpox research to be made open. Previous global calls were in 2016 for Zika and in 2018 for Ebola.

The consequences of lack of access to research can be dire.

In 2015 a group of African researchers claimed that an earlier Ebola outbreak could have been prevented if research on it had been published openly.

The past 12 months have seen a flurry of changes in open access globally and from January 2023, the high profile journal Science will allow published research to be immediately placed in publicly-accessible repositories at no cost to scientists.

In August 2022, the Office of Science and



Technology Policy issued a memorandum to all US research funding agencies that by 1 January 2026 they must make all the research they fund immediately publicly available, along with the data behind that research.

Though the language of the memorandum has been criticised for not specifying how the research is to be made open, it clearly articulates the why and when.

And make no mistake: this memorandum has teeth, coming as it does from the White House. How each federal agency interprets the memorandum will be watched

not just in the US but elsewhere, especially as it will provide examples of a diversity of approaches to open access.

In the accompanying press release, the White House lays out why open access is important: This policy will likely yield significant benefits on a number of key priorities for the American people, from environmental justice to cancer breakthroughs, and from game-changing clean energy technologies to protecting civil liberties in an automated world.

The benefits of open research extend be-

yond simply increasing the readership and use of research among academics.

Open access is just one part of a global movement of open science that in 2021 led to UNESCO, the United Nations education, science and cultural organisation, to issue the Open Science Recommendation.

This is a world-leading initiative that sets international standards for open science built on values such as equity, diversity, collective benefit, quality and integrity.

The recommendation lays out why open science is important, including increasing

return on investment, improving the effectiveness and productivity of scientific systems, pushing back against misinformation and disinformation, and addressing existing systemic inequalities to produce and access research.

Crucially, the recommendation is not just a piece of text to be written and forgotten, but rather it has been accompanied by a programme of implementation actions and will include a monitoring process to hold signatories to account.

The UNESCO recommendation, like the Office of Science and Technology Policy memorandum, does not prescribe any particular pathway to open access and we will therefore see a diversity of routes to open access.

Such proliferation has advantages.

Provided some core principles are adhered to (such as the use of open licences), allowing experimentation to flourish will allow each country, or even each funder, publisher or individual institution, to determine what open initiatives align with their values.

Allowing a diversity of approaches also recognises the reality that open access and open science are not static concepts and that they will evolve over time as culture and technology change.

A diversity of approaches also guards against a small number of commercial publishing houses dominating.

Some examples of open science initiatives announced recently illustrate this diversity: Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council will now require immediate open access published under a Creative Commons CC-BY licence; New Zealand's Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment will require open access within six months of publishing.

Many publishers are now negotiating nation-wide deals that bundle reading and open access publishing together.

The Confederation of Open Access Repositories has made the case for more diversity in publishing, including through university repositories.

As 2023 unfolds, it seems that the benefits of open access have been proved beyond doubt.

The next emergency in front of us, climate change, is much more complex, and there too are calls for open access.

Smoking Raises Risk Of Midlife Memory Loss, Confusion

ANI

According to a new study, middle-aged smokers are considerably more likely than nonsmokers to experience memory loss and confusion, and the chance of cognitive decline is lower for those who have quit smoking recently.

The research by The Ohio State University is the first to examine the relationship between smoking and cognitive decline using a one-question self-assessment asking people if they've experienced worsening or more frequent memory loss and/or confusion.

The findings build on previous research that established relationships between smoking and Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia, and could point to an opportunity to identify signs of trouble earlier in life, said Jenna Rajczyk, lead author of the study, which appears in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease.

It's also one more piece of evidence that quitting smoking is good not just for respiratory and cardiovascular reasons - but to preserve neurological health, said Rajczyk, a PhD student in Ohio State's College of Public Health, and senior author Jeffrey Wing, assistant professor of epidemiology.

"The association we saw was most significant in the 45-59 age group, suggesting that quitting at that stage of life may have a benefit for cognitive health," Wing said. A similar difference wasn't found in the oldest group in the study, which could mean that quitting earlier affords people greater benefits, he said.

Data for the study came from the national 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey and allowed the research team to compare subjective cognitive decline (SCD) measures for current smokers,

recent former smokers, and those who had quit years earlier. The analysis included 136,018 people 45 and older, and about 11% reported SCD.

The prevalence of SCD among smokers in the study was almost 1.9 times that of nonsmokers. The prevalence among those who had quit less than 10 years ago was 1.5 times that of nonsmokers. Those who quit more than a decade before the survey had an SCD prevalence just slightly above the nonsmoking group.

"These findings could imply that the time since smoking cessation does matter, and may be linked to cognitive outcomes," Rajczyk said.

The simplicity of SCD, a relatively new measure, could lend itself to wider applications, she said.

"This is a simple assessment that could be easily done routinely, and at younger ages than we typically start to see cognitive declines that rise to the level of a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease or dementia," Rajczyk said, adding, "It's not an intensive battery of questions. It's more a personal reflection of your cognitive status to determine if you're feeling like you're not as sharp as you once were."

Many people don't have access to more in-depth screenings, or to specialists - making potential applications for measuring SCD even greater, she said.

Wing said it's important to note that these self-reported experiences don't amount to a diagnosis, nor do they confirm independently that a person is experiencing decline out of the normal aging process. But, he said, they could be a low-cost, simple tool to consider employing more broadly.

Amy Ferketich, a professor of epidemiology at Ohio State, also worked on the study.

Study Finds How Long Covid Causes Smell Loss For Months, Even Years

Press Trust of India

Scientists have uncovered details about the reason behind loss of smell continuing as part of long Covid symptoms, according to a new study.

The reason some people fail to recover their sense of smell after COVID-19 is linked to an ongoing immune assault on olfactory nerve cells and an associated decline in the number of those cells, a team of scientists from Duke University, US, report.

Olfactory nerve cells are associated with our ability to distinguish scents and smells.

The findings, published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, provide an important insight into a vexing problem that has plagued millions who have not fully recovered their sense of smell after COVID-19, the study said.

While focusing on the loss smell, the findings also shed light on the possible underlying causes of other long COVID-19 symptoms - including generalized fatigue, shortness of breath, and brain fog - that might be trig-

gered by similar biological mechanisms.

"One of the first symptoms that has typically been associated with COVID-19 infection is loss of smell," said senior author Bradley Goldstein, Duke University.

"Fortunately, many people who have an altered sense of smell during the acute phase of viral infection will recover smell within the next one to two weeks, but some do not," said Goldstein.

"We need to better understand why this subset of people will go on to have persistent smell loss for months to years after being infected with SARS-CoV-2," said Goldstein.

In the study, Goldstein and colleagues at Duke, Harvard and the University of California-San Diego analyzed olfactory epithelial samples collected from 24 biopsies, including nine patients suffering from long-term smell loss following COVID-19.

This biopsy-based approach revealed widespread infiltration of T-cells engaged in an inflammatory response in the olfactory epithelium, the tissue in the nose where smell nerve cells are located. This unique inflammation process persisted despite the

absence of detectable SARS-CoV-2 levels, the study said.

Additionally, the number of olfactory sensory neurons were diminished, possibly due to damage of the delicate tissue from the ongoing inflammation, the study said.

"The findings are striking," said Goldstein. "It's almost resembling a sort of autoimmune-like process in the nose."

Goldstein said learning what sites are damaged and what cell types are involved is a key step toward beginning to design treatments. He said the researchers were encouraged that neurons appeared to maintain some ability to repair even after the long-term immune onslaught.

"We are hopeful that modulating the abnormal immune response or repair processes within the nose of these patients could help to at least partially restore a sense of smell," said Goldstein, noting that this work was currently underway in his lab.

He said the findings from this study could also inform additional research into other long-COVID-19 symptoms that might be undergoing similar inflammatory processes.

Scientists Find Hearing Loss Connection In Autism Spectrum Study

Press Trust Of India

Scientists have discovered hearing impairment in a pre-clinical model of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), according to a new study. The researchers observed mild hearing loss and defects in auditory nerve function. Closer examination of the nerve tissue revealed abnormal supportive cells called glia, aging-like degeneration, and inflammation, it said.

Many patients with ASD show increased sensitivity to sound. While many scientists in the past have looked to the brain for an underlying cause, the team at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), the US, took a different approach by studying the peripheral hearing system.

The findings from this study, published in the Journal of Neuroscience, highlight the importance of considering sensory organs and their interactions with the brain in understanding ASD, said the study. "Hearing impairment may



have an impact on the higher-level auditory system and, eventually, cognitive function," said Hainan Lang, senior author of the study.

Previous studies of aging-related hearing loss showed that the brain can increase its response to make up for reduced auditory signals from the inner ear. Lang wanted to find out if this increase, called central gain, could contribute to abnormal brain response to sound in ASD. However, a significant obstacle lay in her path.

"We didn't have a clinically relevant model to directly test this important fundamental question," said Lang.

The preclinical model that would allow Lang to test her hypothesis was developed in the lab of Christopher Cowan, Ph.D., chair of Neuroscience at MUSC. Mice in this model have only one working copy of a gene called MEF2C.

Cowan's group had studied MEF2C in the past for its role in brain development and found

that it was important for regulating circuit formation in the brain. They became especially interested in creating a preclinical model when a group of patients with ASD-like symptoms were identified with MEF2C mutations.

Cowan's models also show ASD-like behaviours, including increased activity, repetitive behaviour, and communication deficits.

Lang and team first measured the response of the brain to auditory signals, using a modified version of a test that is commonly used to screen newborn infants for hearing loss. Mild hearing loss was observed in the mice with only one working copy of MEF2C while hearing remained normal in those with two working copies.

To investigate this loss further, the researchers measured the activity of the auditory nerve, which carries signals from the inner ear to the brain. They found reduced activity in this nerve in mice with only one copy of MEF2C.

Budget 2023: Widen Tax Base, Do Away With Cess, Surcharges, Say Experts



Press Trust Of India
NEW DELHI: Widening of the tax base, doing away with cess and surcharge, improvement in compliance and moderation in tax for emerging sectors are some of the suggestions submitted to the Finance Ministry ahead of the Budget by Think Change Forum (TCF).

Experts are of the opinion that there is a need to grow tax revenues for the government to drive economic growth and make investments in developmental activities. TCF, the think tank said in a statement. Towards this end, poor compliance was identified as a weak link in achieving targeted collections leading to complex issues like overtaxing, complicated tax structures, rising litigation, among others.

Experts during the deliberation stressed on better compliance processes to be put in place backed by technological support which in turn will enable tax widening and need for strategies to strengthen tax collections from Tier 2 towns and cities to widen the tax net.

Participating in the debate, former chairman of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) PC Jha said "enforcement agencies are working hard to check the illicit trade, but tax evaders are ahead of curve and using innovative techniques to smuggle goods into our country. There is a need to deploy modern technology, install more scanners at ports and use artificial intelligence to address the counterfeit issue." "Goods with higher profit margins like gold, tobacco and alcohol which are highly taxed, lead to tax evasion and smuggling.

As per a recent study, the estimated tax loss to the government in two highly regulated and taxed industries, tobacco products, and alcoholic beverages is over ₹28,500 crore, he said.

Capacity enhancement programmes of enforcement agencies and the use of cutting-edge technologies will certainly create a sense of fear amongst those who wish to indulge in smuggling and tax evasion activities and curb the illicit trade, he added.

DoT Forms 4 Task Forces To Boost Domestic Telecom Mfg, Remove Hurdles

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The Department of Telecom (DoT) has formed four task forces to recommend to the government measures that will boost the domestic telecom manufacturing ecosystem and remove the bottlenecks, an official memorandum said.

The development follows a round table between Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and 42 chiefs of telecom gear makers early this month where he identified the need for creating a task force to resolve issues that the companies raised before him.

Under one of the task forces, the DoT has sought recommendation for a phased manufacturing programme for telecom gear manufacturing to boost domestic component supply chain ecosystem as well as attract global players. This task force will be co-chaired by state-run research arm C-DoT CEO RK Upadhyay, the memorandum dated December 20 said.

In 2016, the government notified a phased manufacturing programme for developing the mobile phone manufacturing ecosystem in the country.

The task force under chairmanship of Tejas Networks CEO San-



jay Nayak will study the present ecosystem and recommend to the government potential 4-5 chip developments under scheme like Telecom Technology Development Fund, Semicon Policy and policy intervention required for reducing dependence on imports.

The third task force will do a study on the time taken in custom clearance and air cargo movement, infrastructure available and suggest measures for improving lead time and reduce inventory in production and sales, setting up Free Trade Warehousing Zones at key airports etc to resolve logistics issues.

Another task force set up under chairmanship of telecom gear makers body VOICE director general RK Bhatnagar will identify new opportunities for development and manufacturing of 5G products in the country that will be required under Digital India, data centres, railway modernisation etc.

Govt Examining SC Order On Employees' Pension Scheme: Union Minister

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The government on Thursday said it is examining a Supreme Court judgement which upheld Employees' Pension (Amendment) Scheme, 2014 and allowed employees to opt for enhanced pension coverage alongside their employers in four months' time.

"Yes, sir. The directions of the Supreme Court in the judgment are under examination," Minister of State for Labour & Employment Rameswar Teli said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha.

Teli was replying to a question on whether the government is aware about the Supreme Court verdict of November 4 on EPF pension scheme and by when it will implement the verdict and instruct the EPFO (Employees Provident Fund Organisation) to take actions for giving higher pension.

In another written reply, Teli said the court judgement has legal, financial, actuarial and logistical implications.

The scheme has provided for an extension of four months' time for eligible employees to opt for enhanced pension.



The apex court order provides that employees who were existing EPS-95 members as on September 1, 2014 can contribute up to 8.33 per cent of their actual salaries, as against 8.33 per cent of the pensionable salary capped at Rs 15,000 a month, towards pension.

It had also struck down the requirement in the 2014 amendments mandating employer contribution of 1.16 per cent of the salary exceeding Rs 15,000 per month.

This will facilitate the subscribers to contribute higher to the scheme and get enhanced benefits accordingly.

There are more than six crore subscribers of the retirement fund body. A large number of contributing members of the pension scheme would benefit from opting for contribution on wages higher than threshold of Rs 15,000 per month.

The minister also said EPFO has a corpus of Rs 18,64,136 crore. This amount consists of Rs 11,37,096.72 crore in Employees' Provident Fund Scheme, 1952; Rs 6,89,210.72 crore in Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995 and Rs 37,828.56 crore in Employees' Deposit-Linked Insurance Scheme, 1976, as on March 31, 2022.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism Of E-Commerce Players Not Up To Mark: Govt

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The grievance redressal mechanism of many big e-commerce players is not up to the mark as the number of complaints received by the National Consumer Helpline has risen sharply over the last four years, Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said on Thursday.

Addressing an event organised by the Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI), Singh said the number of complaints registered on the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has gone up to 90,000 in November compared to 40,000 in the same month last year.

"Four years back, the number of complaints pertaining to e-commerce transactions was 8 per cent of the total complaints. Last month, it was 48 per cent of the total complaints," he said.

"That means that grievance redressal system of many of the big e-commerce companies is not working up to the mark," he added.

Singh noted that the power equation between the consumer and seller has suddenly changed. "Consumer is



getting weaker and weaker, that's where the role of this ministry becomes important," he added.

The Secretary shared that in his various interactions with corporates across the sector, including edutech, cab aggregators, food delivery platforms, online gaming platforms and e-commerce companies, he has conveyed that they cannot "take consumers for a ride." The corporates have been asked to self-regulate, he added.

The NCH provides services in 10 languages at present, which will increase to 22 in the future, he said.

Singh, however, acknowledged that the regulation and enforcement framework has

not kept pace with the advancements of the economy.

Talking about other initiatives of the ministry, the Secretary said the government will soon come out with guidelines for social media influencers, making it mandatory for them to disclose if they have taken money to endorse products.

He also said the consumer interest watchdog CCPA is investigating complaints relating to pricing by cab aggregators like Ola and Uber.

Expressing concern over 5.27 lakh cases pending in consumer courts at district, state and national levels, Singh said the government is making efforts to address this problem.



Advisor Bhatnagar Reviews Performance Of SIDCO/SICOP

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar today chaired a meeting to review the performance of SICOP and SIDCO at Civil Secretariat here.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Industries and Commerce, Prashant Goyal; Secretary in Industries and Commerce, Smita Sethi; Raman Kumar Kesari; General Managers and other senior representatives of both Corporations.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on operational and financial aspects of both these corporations besides the ways and means were also discussed by which an ecosystem for accelerated development of the industrial sector can be established across Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking during the meeting, Advisor Bhatnagar impressed upon the management of the both Corporations that modern and effective methods should be employed to make the units of corporation more vibrant and financially viable so that they can effectively contribute to the economy of J&K as well as gen-

erate employment opportunities for budding entrepreneurs.

The Advisor asked the officers to devise a comprehensive mechanism for promotion of industrial sector in the Union Territory so that the new entrepreneurs are given a well established ecosystem for establishing new units. He impressed upon the officers that the process of establishing new industrial estates should be expedited and funds for the same should be properly utilised.

Advisor Bhatnagar further emphasized upon the officers that the Roads and other utilities in the existing industrial estates should be upgraded. He called upon them that the roads and other facilities in the newly designated industrial estates should be developed on priority so that the new allotments to industrial unit holders are operationalised early. The Advisor further directed the officers to appoint Nodal Officers for each Industrial Estate who will work in tandem with essential departments like PDD, PHE, R&B and others for providing necessary services. He also called upon the officers that a Plan of Action for each Industrial Estate should be prepared.

Principal Secy SDD Chairs Meeting On Promotion Of Start Ups Through SBDUs

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Principal Secretary, Skill Development Department (SDD), Dr Asgar Hassan Samoon, today chaired a meeting regarding promotion of startups by SDD through establishment of Small Business Development Units (SBDUs) and incubation centers in Polytechnics and ITIs of J&K.

Professor B S Sahai, Director, IIM Jammu, Director, Skill Development Department, Sudershan Kumar, Mission Director, Leena Padha, Principals/ Superinten-

and infrastructure for the office and incubation centers and funds amounting Rs 10 lakh shall be provided to each SBDU under Skill Development Mission, J&K.

Principal Secretary said that SBDUs in each district will deliver professional, high quality and technical assistance to budding entrepreneurs and existing small businesses. Dr Samoon added that SBDUs stakeholders meet shall be organised by the department in January.

Prof Sahai, while speaking on the occasion, said that these SB-



dents of Polytechnics and ITIs from Jammu and Srinagar besides faculty of IIM Jammu attended the meeting.

Dr Samoon, while addressing the meeting, said that Skill Development Department shall provide requisite space in 20 Polytechnics and ITIs for setting up of SBDUs and incubation centers. Besides, IIM Jammu team will help in designing the space

DUs will provide one-stop business solutions and help small businesses access capital, develop and exchange new technologies, improve business planning, financial management, marketing and increased productivity and innovation. He said that selected SBDUs will provide the hand holding and capacity building training to faculty to create an ecosystem of startups in J&K.

SHORT TAKES

Organic Certification Program For Saffron Growers Held

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO) today organised a National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) awareness drive for organic certification of Saffron, GI tagged and OPOP products of Pulwama district in collaboration with Invest India (One District One Product) team, DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry at Sanat Ghar Bemina, here.

The workshop was organised with a vision to provide training and certification to farmers who are already pursuing organic farming but do not have the necessary certification for their products' authenticity. JKTPO has taken many initiatives for promotion of OPOP in Jammu and Kashmir. This includes conduction of Buyer-Seller meets, participation in national and international trade fairs/ Exhibitions and Capacity building programs. This drive will increase the export potential of saffron as organic certified products have a huge international market.

As part of the capacity building initiative by OPOP team, Invest India, DPIIT, Govt, organised Organic Certification training and workshop for Saffron farmers, as many such workshops are to be conducted across the country where the farmers will be provided the training for organic certification and eligible farmers will be registered under National Programme on Organic Production. **ONS**

PNB Official Booked For Rs 168 Cr Fraud

NEW DELHI: The CBI has registered an FIR against an officer of Punjab National Bank (PNB), now suspended, for allegedly cheating the state-run lender to the tune of Rs 168.59 crore through 34 fake bank guarantees, officials said Thursday.

Nearly four years after LoU (letter of undertaking) scam allegedly perpetrated by uncle-nephew duo of Mehul Choksi and Nirav Modi bled the PNB to the tune of about Rs 13,000 crore, bank official Priya Ranjan Kumar followed similar modus operandi to issue 34 fake bank guarantees without making any entries in its core banking system Finacle, according to the CBI FIR.

"As per the interim investigation report dated November 27, 2022, it emerges that the fraud has been perpetrated by the bank staff in collusion with some unknown persons through illegal and unauthorized usage of the bank's systems. Further, the aforesaid fake bank guarantee has no record in the Finacle system of the bank," the FIR alleged.

The new scam came to light when Kohima branch of Canara Bank sent intimation to Parliament Street branch of the PNB on November 18 for the invocation of Rs 5.70 crore bank guarantee purportedly issued by the latter.

The guarantee was signed by two PNB employees, including the then branch manager Priya Ranjan Kumar, now suspended, and A Venkatesan who had already resigned from service when scam came to light, the CBI said. **PTI**

Principal Secy I&C Chairs 2nd, 3rd AGM Of JKTPPO

JAMMU: Principal Secretary, Industries and Commerce (I&C), Prashant Goyal, Thursday chaired 2nd and 3rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO) for the financial year ended 31st March, 2020 and 2021 respectively here.

General Manager, India Trade Promotion Organisation, S R Sahoo, Executive Director, Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts, R K Verma and Pawan on behalf of Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) being shareholders of the company attended the meeting online besides Directors of the company also participated.

Managing Director, JKTPPO, Khalid Jahangir, presented 2nd and 3rd annual reports for the financial year ended 31st March, 2020 and 2021 including the Audited Annual Accounts for financial year ended 31st March, 2020 and 2021 of the company before the shareholders for adoption. The 2nd and 3rd Annual Reports for the financial year ended 31st March, 2020 and 2021 were unanimously adopted by the shareholders of the company.

In addition, Principal Secretary also directed the JKTPPO to work on the revenue model of the organization besides exerting on the proposal of establishing a Trade Centre in Jammu and Kashmir in consultation with the Stakeholders of JKTPPO viz. ITPO, EPCH and CEPC. **ONS**

Sebi Tweaks Buyback Rules Of Companies

MUMBAI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India has tweaked its SEBI Regulations 2018 rules on buyback of shares by companies.

Among the amendments, companies can now use 75 per cent of the proceeds of the buyback undertaken through the stock exchange route from the existing minimum of 50 per cent.

The Sebi has said the regulator has brought amendments to SEBI (Buy-back of Securities) Regulations, 2018, after considering the various suggestions received from stakeholders.

Some of the amendments brought in were buyback done through stock exchanges route to be phased out in a gradual manner and increasing minimum utilisation of the amount earmarked for buyback through stock exchange route from existing 50 per cent to 75 per cent, according to a the regulator's statement released on Tuesday.

Other two amendments are creation of a separate window on stock exchanges for undertaking buyback till the time buyback through stock exchange is permitted and buy-back through tender offer route.

The timeline for completion of buybacks through tender offers has been reduced by 18 days, Sebi said. Sebi has also accepted the recommendations of the working group on improving governance standards at exchanges - new rules include increased accountability of directors, stricter investment policy and data sharing. **ANI**

Jio Acquires 100% Stake In Reliance Infratel

NEW DELHI: Reliance Projects and Property Management Services, a subsidiary of telecom major Jio, has completed 100 per cent stake acquisition in Reliance Infratel for about Rs 3,725 crore, Reliance Industries Limited said on Thursday.

Billionaire Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani-led Jio placed a bid of Rs 3,720 crore in November 2019 to acquire the tower and fibre assets of the debt-ridden subsidiary of his younger brother Anil Ambani-managed firm Reliance Communications.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) gave approval to Reliance Projects and Property Management Services (RPPMSL) for the acquisition of Reliance Infratel (RITL) in November.

RIL, in a regulatory filing, said RITL on Thursday allotted to RPPMSL 50 lakh equity shares of Rs 10 each for cash aggregating to Rs 5 crore; and 372 crore zero coupon optionally fully convertible debentures of Rs 10 each, for cash aggregating to Rs 3,720 crore.

"The existing paid-up equity share capital of RITL has been cancelled. Upon such cancellation RPPMSL holds 100 per cent equity share capital of RITL," the filing said.

Reliance had deposited Rs 3,720 crore in an SBI escrow account to acquire the mobile tower and fibre assets of Reliance Infratel. **PTI**

J&K On Anvil Of Historic Economic Resurgence: Rana

Observer News Service

Jammu: Senior BJP leader Devender Singh Rana Thursday expressed happiness over growing realization among the intending entrepreneurs about massive industrialization in Jammu and Kashmir, saying this cannot be a distant dream anymore with the roll out of New Industrial Policy and strategies put in place for investment in the Union Territory.



"It really sounds soothing to know about the urge among startups to grow and make their contribution in the growth story of their place and the country", Rana said while interacting with the functionaries of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries at the Chamber House.

Rana, who is also the BJP Prabhari Cooperative, Transport and Traders & Industries Cell of the BJP, visited the Chamber House on the invitation of the President Chamber of Commerce & Industry along with the Conveners and Co-Conveners of the Cells and had a healthy discourse over the schemes rolled out by the Centre and the UT administration for giving fillip to industry and promoting the avenues for trade and commerce. He said Jammu is the most thronged destination of pilgrims and tourists and has immense potential to grow in different vocations. Inclination and urge among enterprising people to diversify and intensify their

commercial activities will go a long way in their economic emancipation and empowerment, he said, adding that such initiatives can also help in generating employment.

Referring to the New Industrial Policy, Rana said it takes care of the existing industrialists and startups. Industrialization holds promise for growth and employment generation. He hoped that the stakeholders will avail of all benefits from the schemes available under one-roof.

He said the BJP is committed to holistic development of Jammu and Kashmir, adding that several path breaking measures have been taken in this regard in the recent past. Similarly, every sector of the economy is getting priority attention with focus on enabling youth to be job providers rather than job seekers.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industries raised several issues and called for addressing these at the apex level.

Rana said that all the points raised during the interaction will be taken up at appropriate levels for earnest appropriate action.

PM-KUSUM, ROOFTOP SOLAR SCHEMES

Saurabh Bhagat Inaugurates Awareness Program At Kulgam

Observer News Service

Kulgam: The Jammu and Kashmir Energy Development Agency (JAKEDA), Department of Science & Technology, conducted an awareness programme to sensitize the farmers regarding use of solar energy for powering of irrigation pumps under PM-KUSUM scheme and Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Power Plants for residential sector.

Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology, Saurabh Bhagat, inaugurated the event.

Deputy Commissioner, Kulgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, Chief Executive Officer, JAKEDA, Dr. P.R.Dhar, officers from Horticulture, JAKEDA, Agriculture, J&K Bank and other line departments attended the programme.

Commissioner Secretary apprised the officers and the farmers of various benefits/incentives being extended by the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy under PM-KUSUM and Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Power Plant scheme. He said the scheme allows the farmers to install subsidized Solar Powered Pumps up to 10 HP capacity for irrigation purpose with a choice of AC/DC Surface and Submersible Pumps. The Ministry provides a subsidy of 50% of the cost of the pump, 30% of the cost is being provided by the UT government

and the beneficiary/farmer has to bear only 20% cost of the pump, he informed.

Saurabh Bhagat informed about the Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Scheme under which a collective subsidy of 65% shall be provided to the Domestic Consumers of DISCOMs for installation of Rooftop Solar Plants for offsetting their electricity bills under Net-Metering mechanism.

Commissioner Secretary asked the District Development Commissioner to identify a village which could be developed as a Model Village with most of its energy needs to be met from Solar Energy.

He exhorted upon the Jammu and Kashmir Bank officers to make easy financing available



to the prospective beneficiaries through Kissan Credit Cards.

Pertinently, the farmers can also set up Grid Connected Solar Power Plants in the capacity range of 0.5 MW to 2.0 MW on Barron Land banks for sale of power to DISCOMs and make an average annual earning of Rs 40 lakh per MW. For development of 1 MW Solar Plant Project, 4 acre of land are required approximately.

Later, pamphlets containing all the related information of Solar Pumps under PM-KUSUM scheme and Rooftop Solar Scheme like prices, subsidy amount, beneficiary share, contact numbers of district nodal persons were distributed among the farmers and the officers.

DC Ganderbal Chairs DMC Meeting; Reviews Progress Of FPOs

Observer News Service

Ganderbal: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Shyambir Thursday chaired 8th DMC meeting to review the progress of Center Sector scheme for formation and promotion of FPOs.

At the outset, brief discussion was held on various aspects including deliberation on submission on ground level progress report of FPOs by implementing agencies viz NABARD, NAFED and SFAC, cold storage, market linkages, farmer mobilization and progress on new FPOs.

The CBBOs presented the process to the DC and also informed about the future course of action through a powerpoint presentation.

It was informed that the membership of the Zazna Farmer Producer Company Limited has increased to 220 members from 160 members and membership of Kirmaniya Fed Fruit Producer Company Limited Batwina has also mobilized 40 more members increasing the membership to 140.

It was also informed that the Kirmaniya Fed Fruit Producer Company Batwina has adopted digital payment by a UPI for business transactions. The said FPO is also planning to start value addition to the products through a packaging for which they are planning to get new machinery.

It was also proposed by the committee members that

FPO members shall be given mushroom units on priority and stalls within the rural haats shall be provided to FPO.

Regarding the new FPO in Lar and Shairpathri blocks, the DMC was informed that farmers are being mobilized and 20 farmers have agreed and paid the membership fee for the same. On the occasion, the baseline study, diagnostic study and SWOT analysis was presented to the DMC by CBBO for the FPOs of both the blocks.

The DC directed the Chief Horticulture Officer to provide the list of intervention the department has done for increasing the production of the crop to the implementing agency and CBBO. It was also recommended to form the new FPOs under J&K Cooperatives Act 1999.

Regarding the cold storages, it was decided that the district level committee shall be framed to identify the location and capacity needed.

The DC directed experts of all CBBOs to provide consultation services to the FPO members on a regular basis and also provide the training to the board of directors of FPOs regarding the general business and equity grant. He also directed them to diversify the market linkages and sell the FPO products on e-commerce platforms. The meeting was attended by DDM, NABARD; CAO, CHO, Deputy Registrar Cooperative, representatives of CBBOs and other members of the Committee.

IndusInd Bank Inaugurates New Branch In Srinagar

Agencess

Srinagar: IndusInd Bank has set up a branch in Karan Nagar Srinagar. IndusInd Bank now has seven branches in Srinagar and overall twenty-nine branches in Jammu and Kashmir.

The new branch was inaugurated by PK Pole, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir in the presence of Branch Banking Head, Zonal Head and Regional Head of IndusInd Bank. The new branch is located on Ground Floor, Municipality road, Nar Singh Garh, Karan Nagar, Srinagar.

Commenting on the recent branch expansion in Srinagar, Soumitra Sen, Head - Consumer Banking & Marketing, IndusInd Bank, said "We are happy to inaugurate one more branch in Kashmir which is a constantly evolving market. This would be a step ahead to support Bank's focus to aid financial acceleration that the country presently is on. The new branch aims to deepen relationships and attract new customers, thus strengthening IndusInd Bank's client base across the region. As we expand our reach to serve the local populace, we look forward

to bringing a whole new world of convenience and flexibility to customers."

The increase in the number of new branches will allow more number of customers to avail IndusInd Bank's unique customer propositions along with full range of services from Saving & Current Accounts, Wealth Management solutions and Credit cards. Additionally, Bank's innovative facilities such as "My Account, My Number", "Choice Money ATM" and "Cash on Mobile" among others would also be available to the customers from day one.

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CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

'Till Death Do Us

calling the trend encouraging and overwhelming.

Senior Journalist Yusuf Jameel commented "Real 'made-for-each-other' couples. May they continue to sing to each other and make each other laugh"

Cardiologist Dr Upendra Koul commented "Very good news. Made for each other"

Professor A H Shera wrote "This is a healthy trend. It appears organ donation is becoming a mass movement and people are going to support it more and more in future"

A twitter user Narinder Happa wrote "An extremely healthy trend, needs to be encouraged on all forums and media platforms. And also a comprehensive record of donors as well as recipients should be kept available for the concerned researchers for investigations and time to time modifications, if needed."

Govt Warns

J&K Government Employee, as mandated under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Servants Declaration of Assets Act and Rules made thereunder and also as per the provisions of the Employees Conduct Rules, every year ending 31st December, by or before 31st January of the next calendar year," the circular said.

The PRS-Portal is accessible on <http://prs.jk.gov.in> and the employees can file their annual property returns on the portal from 1st of January and the facility automatically gets closed on 31st of January every year. "The non-submission of property returns by the employees shall invite action against them under the Prevention of Corruption Act, besides, shall result in denial of their Vigilance Clearance." Accordingly, government advised the employees working under the Jammu and Kashmir

Government to file their property returns for the year 2022, on the PRS-Portal, from 1st of January upto 31st of January, 2023.

"Further, it is enjoined upon all the DDOS to ensure registration of those employees, who have not yet registered on the PRS Portal," it said, adding, "Besides, ensuring filing of property details by their cent percent employees, within the specified time. The portal will automatically."

Srinagar Shivers

The minimum in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at minus 5.1 degrees Celsius, while Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, recorded minus 4.4 degrees Celsius, and

Kokernag recorded a low of minus 3.3 degrees Celsius.

The meteorological department has forecast mostly dry weather in Jammu and Kashmir till December 24.

There is possibility of rain or light snowfall in some parts of Kashmir around Christmas, it said.

The 'Chilla-i-Kalan' is the 40-day harshest winter period when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to freezing of water bodies 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 snowfall.

While 'Chillai-Kalan' begins on December 21, it will end on January 30. The cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day-long 'Chillai-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day-long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold).

Azad Expels 3

required in party as they were involved in anti-party activities," Chib told PTI.

DAP chairman Azad has made several appointments in the party over the past two days nearly three months after its launch in Jammu.

Chand Hits Back

with his workers. He said they were expelled from the group at the time when they were thinking of rejoining the party.

"Most of the people would leave the party. Where is the party? It is almost non-existent and only a few people are calling shots in it," he said.

He said that Ghulam Nabi Azad-led DAP is only dividing the secular vote.

Tara Chand and two leaders were expelled by the DAP on Thursday for their involvement in anti-party activities.

This is a serious setback to Azad-led DAP which has failed to rope in leaders from parties other than Congress.

Former MLA Surankote Choudhary Muhammad Akram has already distanced himself from Azad-led DAP--(KNO)

Dogra Employees

she said he as a constitutional head violated the law to frame the committee to give recommendations on transfer policy in a time-bound manner, but now he is saying that they are

employees of Kashmir valley.

The Dogras and Kashmiri Pandits employees returned to Jammu following the killing of their colleague Rajni Bala. A resident of Samba district, Bala was shot dead by terrorists at a school in south Kashmir's Kulgam district on May 31.

Lashing at BJP, the protestors said that they should come out of their rooms and join our struggle as they had promised us that a transfer policy will be put in place to address their demand.

Sinha on Wednesday asserted all necessary measures have been taken for the safety of minority community employees including Kashmiri Pandits serving in the Valley and sent out a "loud and clear" message to those protesting for transfer -- no salary for sitting at home.

"We have cleared their (protesting employees) salaries till August 31, but it cannot be done that they will be paid their salaries by sitting at their homes. This is a loud and clear message to them and they should listen and understand it," LG told reporters at a press conference here.

The PM package employees who have also been on a strike in the valley for the past seven months following the killing of their colleague Rahul Bhat on May 12 have intensified the agitation by holding protests.

Bhat, a clerk, was shot dead inside the tehsildar's office in Chadoora tehsil of Budgam district.

Chanting slogans and carrying placards, the protestors said the government should accede to the demands of the protesting PM package employees and temporarily transfer them to Jammu till the security situation in the Valley improves.

The protestors said the spate of targeted killings in Kashmir has created fear and uncertainty among the minorities serving in the Valley. "We are demanding relocation in wake of threats to our lives. Hit-lists are issued every week. On the other side, the government is stopping salaries in a bid to force us to join duties in absence of security and get killed. We will not join," a protestor said.

The spate of targeted killings in Kashmir started in May this year. Scores of Kashmiri Pandits, who were employed under the prime minister's package in 2012, have been staging protests since the killing of Rahul Bhat.

Any Person From Jammu

transfer policy will be framed. We will make

it happen or else will leave," senior BJP leader Devender Rana told protesting employees outside the BJP headquarters here.

Referring to the protesting reserved category employees who are also camping in Jammu and demanding their relocation, Lt Governor Sinha on Wednesday said, "They should also keep in mind that they are Kashmir division employees and cannot be transferred to Jammu."

Flanked by BJP leaders including former deputy chief minister and Jammu Mayor, Kavinder Gupta, Rana said, "We promise you (Kashmiri Pandits) that transfer policy will be framed. BJP stands with you. Don't think you are weak".

In a strong remark, BJP leaders said that no person from Jammu will be made "guinea pigs."

"Any person from Jammu will not be a guinea pig. It is not a matter of policy, but it is a matter of responsibility. We cannot step back on this responsibility," Rana said.

Former deputy chief minister Kavinder Gupta also said that the demand of the protesting employees will be fulfilled.

Lt Governor Sinha on Wednesday asserted all necessary measures have been taken for the safety of minority community employees including Kashmiri Pandits serving in the Valley, and sent out a "loud and clear" message to those protesting for transfer - no salary for sitting at home.

Sinha had made the remark amid the ongoing protest by migrant Kashmiri Pandit employees and Jammu-based reserved category employees who left the Valley for Jammu in May following the targeted killings of their two colleagues Rahul Bhat and Rajni Bhalha. The protesting employees have been seeking relocation outside Kashmir.

He said the J & K administration has full sympathy with them and is ready to provide them security or any other assistance.

He also said that the chief secretary has framed a committee to look into their demand. "And I assure them that if there is any chance, we will frame a policy accordingly."

Five OGWs Held

associates namely Ab Rouf Malik Son of Gh Mohammad Malik and Altaf Ahmad Payer Son of Gh Qadir Payer both residents of Dardson Kralpora and Riyaz Ahmad Lone Son of Mohammad Yousuf Lone of Kralpora", reads the statement adding "During questioning the trio disclosed about two hideouts constructed for militants of HM outfit on the instructions of a Pakistan based handler Farooq Ahmad Pir

DC Kupwara Inaugurates SNTBFC Drive

Observer News Service

Kupwara: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Doifode Sagar Dattatray Thursday inaugurated the Sub National TB Free Certification (SNTBFC) drive at D.C.Office, here.

Chief Medical Officer Kupwara, Bashir Ahmad; Block Medical Officers besides, paramedical staff and ASHA workers were present at the occasion.

On the occasion, it was informed that under Sub National TB Free Certification,

a door to door household survey shall be conducted in all 10 medical blocks of the district to identify the patients with symptoms of Tuberculosis.

It was also informed that the survey shall be carried out by the volunteers with the help of GPS based mobile app. The survey will start today and will last for 25 days.

It was further informed that the district Kupwara has applied for TB Free status through the Central Tuberculosis Division.

@Nadeem Usmani of Kakroosa Kupwara presently based in POK where some arms and ammunition has also been concealed."

"Both the two hideouts have been unearthed on the disclosure and identification of arrested trio. 01 AK rifle, 02 AK Magazines, 119 AK Ammunition, 01 Pistol, 01 Pistol Mag, 04 Pistol Rounds, 06 Hand Grenades, 01 IED, 02 Detonators, 02 wire bundles and one water tank of approximately 100 liters capacity has been recovered from the hideouts."

The trio, the statement reads, also received cash amounting to rupees 6 lacs in June 2022 which was meant to procure material for construction of hideouts and procuring of arms and ammunition with rupees 64000 out of this 6 lacs also been recovered."

"Two more militant associates including Ab Majeed Beigh Son of Ghulam Mohammad Beigh resident of Humhama Budgam and another from Bandipora who have been actively supporting the trio in their activities have also been detained for investigation", the statement reads.

"The militant associates were also being handled by one more militant handler Fayaz Geelani of Budgam presently based in POK."

"The arrested group in addition to providing logistic support, arms and ammunition and other facilities for the commission of militant activities was also tasked to select targets for militants in the valley and also radicalize more youth to join militant ranks."

"Case FIR No. 98/2022 under relevant sections of UA(P) Act has been registered in Police Station Kralpora and investigation taken up", the statement reads adding "more arrests and recoveries cannot be ruled out in the case."

Truck Crushed

under relevant sections of laws has been registered by the concerned police station and investigation has been taken up.

10 Day Winter

"Any default on part of the Head of the Schools and Teaching staff in observance of the above schedule shall attract action under Rules," it reads.

Drug Peddler

commission of crime has also been seized," a police spokesman said.

Subsequently, police said that a case under relevant sections of law has been registered at Police Station Kreeri and investigation has been initiated.

Real Kashmir Suffer 3rd Successive Loss In I-League

Agencies

MUMBAI: Mumbai Kenkre FC recorded a remarkable 2-1 victory against Real Kashmir FC in their I-League 2022-23 fixture here at the Cooperage Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday.

Justin George gave away side the lead early in the first half but it was short-lived as Aman Gaikwad levelled the score quickly. In the dying moments, Ahmed Faiz Khan scored from the spot for the Mumbaikars as they recorded their first home win of the sea-

the ground as it looped over the keeper and nestled in the net.

A moment of brilliance from Gaikwad gave them the equalizer in the 24th minute. Real Kashmir goalkeeper Subhasish Roy Chowdhury was forced into a hasty clearance and as the ball was won high up the field, it fell to Gaikwad and he thundered it into the roof of the net with a powerful half-volley.

Clear-cut chances were hard to come by, but Real Kashmir looked likelier to score. Substitute Samuel Kynshi fired wide from the



son and lifted themselves out of the relegation zone ahead of the winter break.

The start of the first half was one-sided as Real Kashmir dominated proceedings and created a number of scoring chances. Their Ghanaian forward Nuhu Seidu was in the thick of things, having a header saved in the 11th minute and testing keeper Padam Chhetri again a minute later with a powerful volley.

Fellow Ghanaian Ibrahim Nurudeen was inches away from scoring the opener as he hit the post from 15 yards. However, the pressure paid off three minutes later as the Snow Leopards finally took the lead. George opened the scoring from Girik Khosla's corner kick, heading the ball into

edge of the penalty area in the 76th minute and Nuhu could only find the side netting from close range two minutes after.

Outtara was clumsily brought down in the penalty area by George and the referee duly pointed to the spot. Khan stepped up to take the spot-kick and made no mistake in dispatching it home, giving the hosts the lead for the first time in the game.

Despite Real Kashmir putting pressure during the lengthy eight minutes of stoppage time, Mumbai Kenkre managed to see the game out without a hitch, ensuring that they bag three crucial points while condemning the visitors to their third successive defeat. (ANI)



India In Driver's Seat As Bangladesh Bowled Out For 227

Press Trust of India

MIRPUR: Umesh Yadav's incisive spells with the old ball and Ravichandran Ashwin's controlled effort put India in complete command as Bangladesh were bowled out for a below-par 227 on the opening day of the second Test here on Thursday.

At stumps, India reached 19 for no loss with skipper KL Rahul batting on 3 off 30 balls in company of Shubman Gill (14 batting, 20 balls). Some of the balls bowled by Bangladeshi spinners were turning square and the decision to drop last Test's player of the match

Kuldeep Yadav is looking a controversial one.

When Bangladesh batted, Umesh (4/25 in 15 overs) led the Indian pace attack manfully while Ashwin (4/71 in 21.5 overs) closed in on a career-haul of 450 wickets (447 currently) on a day when Jaydev Unadkat's (2/50 in 16 overs) return to Test fold after 12 long years did stir up fair amount of debate about some selection calls taken by this team management.

However, Unadkat could term himself lucky as last game's hero Kuldeep (8 wickets and 40 runs) was unceremoniously dumped by the team management

comprising the two Rahul -- head coach Dravid and skipper Kannaiah Lokesh (KL).

The pitch was termed to be a confusing one by skipper Rahul at the toss which prompted them to pick an extra seam bowler in Unadkat.

The decision didn't backfire because of the inferior quality of Bangladesh batting line-up more than anything else.

Former skipper Mominul Haque (84, 157 balls) was the only batter who showed admirable patience for more than four hours but he hardly enjoyed any support from the other end.

J&K Lose Ranji Trophy Match Against Gujarat

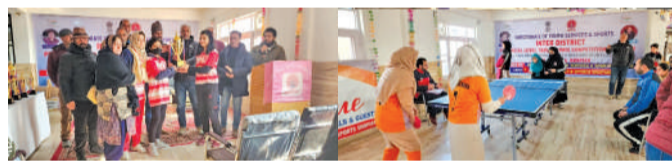
Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu & Kashmir men's cricket team was completely outclassed by Gujarat in their Ranji Trophy match at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

After scoring just 135 runs in the first innings, the J&K side was bundled out for 183 on Thursday, leaving Gujarat with 11 runs to win the match in three days. Gujarat's Siddharth Desai, who took 6 wickets in the first innings, helped himself to another 8 in the second to decimate J&K's hopes of a comeback. Henan Nazir 43 (91) and Vivrant Sharma 41



(50) were the top scorers for J&K. Gujarat, who scored 307 in the first innings, reached the 11-run target in 2.5 overs, losing 1 wicket in the process. This is J&K's second consecutive loss in the Ranji Trophy. They will next face Vidarbha on December 27.



Srinagar Girls Lift U-19 Inter-District Table Tennis C'ship

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: The Provincial Level Inter-District Table Tennis Competitions for Girls U-17 and U-19 organised by the DYSSO Shopian concluded on Thursday at Bismillah Hotel Shirmal. District Srinagar clinched the Under-19 Table Tennis Provincial level Championship, the 2nd and the 3rd position was grabbed by the Anantnag and Pulwama districts respectively.

Similarly, in the Under-17

Provincial Level Table Tennis Championship, first position was secured by the District Pulwama; the 2nd position was sealed by Anantnag and the 3rd by Kupwara.

The function was attended by the District Youth Services & Sports Officer Shopian, Syed Noor Ul Haq and the Activity Incharge DYSSO Shopian Riyaz Ahmad Wachkoo.

The DYSSO Shopian distributed the trophies and medals among the student players.

3-Day Volleyball C'ship Concludes At Kulgam

Observer News Service

KULGAM: The three-day long Volleyball Championship organised by Volleyball Association J&K in collaboration with J&K Sports Council as part of Good Governance week initiative concluded on Thursday at Badroo, Kulgam.

A total of 12 teams including four girls teams of South Kashmir participated in the tournament during which 22 matches were played.

During the culmination ceremony, the Deputy Commissioner Kulgam Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat along with SSP Kulgam Dr. G. V. Sandeep felicitated the players.



IPL Auction: Curran, Stokes, Green Set For Windfall

Press Trust of India

KOCHI: Intense bidding is expected to be the order of the day when 10 teams jostle to grab their preferred players from a limited pool of cricketers, including the likes of Ben Stokes, Sam Curran and Mayank Agarwal, in the mini IPL auction here on Friday.

The player pool for the auction has been pruned to 405 with a maximum of 87 slots, including 30 overseas, to be filled by the teams. Former South Africa all-rounder Chris Morris has been the biggest beneficiary of the mini IPL auction till date. In 2021, he became the most expensive player in auction history when Rajasthan Royals shelled out Rs 16.25 crore for his services. Morris is now happily retired.

All-rounder Curran, who was named the Player of the 2022 T20 World Cup, is expected to attract intense bid-



ding and end up with a million dollar deal.

He is only 24 and teams will look at him as a long-term investment. Back in 2019, Punjab Kings made him an IPL millionaire before he moved to Chennai Super Kings who would be looking to buy him back. Curran, who missed the 2022 season as he was recovering from a back injury, has set his base price at Rs 2 crore.

The all-rounders have been listed in the second set to come up for bidding. The venue of the auction is not the usual Bengaluru as Kochi gets to host the keenly followed event.

Curran's English teammates including Test skipper Stokes and Harry Brook are also likely to land fat pay cheques. Stokes has set his base price at Rs 2 crore and Brook at Rs 1.5 crore.

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson will be another big name with a base price of Rs 2 crore.

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Argentina Only No. 2 In New FIFA Rankings Led By Brazil



Press Trust of India

ZURICH: Winning the World Cup was not enough to lift Argentina atop the FIFA world rankings with Brazil keeping the No. 1 position on Thursday. Brazil was eliminated in the quarterfinals by Croatia but built enough ranking points from results over recent years that feed into FIFA's calculation.

Argentina moved up one place to No. 2 and beaten finalist France also rose one to No. 3. Belgium is still at No. 4, a fall of

two places, despite winning only one game in Qatar and failing to advance from the group stage.

England and the Netherlands, both beaten quarterfinalists, stay at Nos. 5 and 6 respectively. Croatia climbed five places to No. 7.

European champion Italy is at No. 8 despite failing to qualify for the World Cup.

Morocco is the best-placed African nation at No. 11, up 11 places, for its historic run to the semifinals. The United States at No. 13 is

the best of the CONCACAF region teams, rising three places after advancing to the round of 16. Mexico is No. 15.

Japan leads the Asian confederation teams at No. 20, up four places, and Australia rises 11 places to No. 27. Both reached the round of 16.

Cameroon, which beat Brazil in the group stage, rose 10 places to No. 33.

Qatar dropped 10 places to No. 60 after losing all three games as the home team at the World Cup.

Ramiz Raja Sacked As PCB Chairman, Replaced By Sethi

Reuters

Former Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja has been sacked as chairman of the country's cricket board (PCB) after the 3-0 test series white-wash by England, his interim replacement Najam Sethi said on Thursday. Raja, who played more than 250 international matches from 1984 to 1997, had taken over from Ehsan Mani who stepped down from the role in 2021.



for the first time since 1998 after New Zealand and England cancelled tours in 2021, citing security concerns. But England returned to Pakistan this year and sealed their first series win in the Asian nation since 2000-2001, winning tests in Rawalpindi, Multan and Karachi.

"The cricket regime headed by Ramiz Raja is no more. The 2014 PCB constitution stands restored," Sethi, who previously served as the head of the PCB, said on Twitter. The Dawn newspaper said on Wednesday that Sethi will head a new 14-member committee that includes former Pakistan cricketers Shahid Afridi and Sana Mir for the next four months until elections are held.

"The Management Committee will work tirelessly to revive first-class cricket. Thousands of cricketers will be employed again. The famine in cricket will come to an end," Sethi said.

"Thank you all cricket enthusiasts for welcoming change in PCB affairs. Please wish our team good luck going forward. There is a lot of work to be done and some undone."

Raja enjoyed a fairly successful stint, convincing Australia to tour Pakistan earlier this year

Major international teams had been reluctant to travel to Pakistan due to security concerns since six policemen and two civilians were killed in a 2009 attack on a bus which was carrying the Sri Lanka cricket team in Lahore. Raja's exit was only a matter of time after former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, who had appointed him last year, was ousted in April after losing a confidence vote in parliament.

The Pakistan PM is the patron of the PCB. After his retirement, Raja became a cricket commentator. The 60-year-old was also PCB chief executive from 2003 to 2004.

Pakistan reached the final of the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia this year, where they lost to England. They will play a home test series against New Zealand starting on Dec. 26 in Karachi.

Dubai Capitals Sign England's Joe Root For ILT20

Agencies

Former England Test captain Joe Root has been signed by the Dubai Capitals team to play in the International League T20, the franchise announced on Thursday. Root will be making his only second appearance in the international league.

Root, England's leading Test batter, has not played in a T20I since 2019, but he has made no secret of his desire to continue developing his game in the shortest format. He is on the list for Friday's Indian Premier League (IPL) auction.

Root is still an important part of England's ODI squad, but he has been given some time off before the Test team's tour of New Zealand in February.

Root fell out of contention due to the rise of Dawid Malan, who plays a similar anchor role in the top order and helped England reach the World T20 final in 2016, scoring an audacious 83 off 44 in a record run chase against South Africa during the group stage. His most recent T20I was against Pakistan in Cardiff ahead of the 2019 50-over World Cup.



The Dubai Capitals announced earlier this week that they had signed former India internationals Robin Uthappa and Yusuf Pathan, as well as current players Rovman Powell, Fabian Allen, and Sikandar Raza, as well as another Englishman in Dan Lawrence.

Making its debut in January 2023, the inaugural ILT20, which has received multi-year ICC approval, will be played in a 34-match format across the UAE's exemplary, world-class Cricket facilities in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

Franchise teams, comprising 84 international and 24 UAE-based players, include Abu Dhabi Knight Riders (Kolkata Knight Riders), Desert Vipers (Lancaster Capital), Dubai Capitals (GMR), Gulf Giants (Adani Sportsline), MI Emirates (Reliance Industries), and Sharjah Warriors (Capri Global). (ANI)

Rashford Can Become Manchester United's New Talisman

Reuters

MANCHESTER: In Manchester United's first competitive match since their acrimonious split with Cristiano Ronaldo, Marcus Rashford delivered a thrilling performance and sensational goal against Burnley to show he can be their top striker for years to come.

Fresh from scoring three times for England at the World Cup, Rashford put in a tireless display on the right of United's attack and sealed their passage into the League Cup quarter-finals with one of his finest goals on Wednesday. Picking the ball up deep in United's half, Rashford burst down the right wing and took two defenders before firing into the far bottom corner in another demonstration that the 25-year-old is back to his best after a miserable previous campaign.

The striker's confidence appeared to be badly knocked after he missed a penalty in England's shootout defeat by Italy in last year's European Championship final and Ronaldo's surprise return to United also had an impact on Rashford's form. He started only 18 of United's 49 matches in all competitions while scoring only five goals as they ended the season without a trophy and their lowest points total since the Premier League began in 1992. He was also dropped by England.

But as Ronaldo became marginalised this term under new



boss Erik ten Hag, leading to his contract being terminated last month, Rashford rediscovered his former influence, starting 16 of 22 matches in all competitions and scoring nine goals. He was recalled by England manager Gareth Southgate for the World Cup and scored against Iran and twice versus Wales, although was only a late substitute in the quarter-final defeat by France.

Rashford said he had already put England's exit behind him, saying after the win over Burnley: "There is no time to feel sorry for yourself. You need to pick up results and thankfully we did that." Ten Hag, meanwhile, praised Rashford for his performance.

"I think he invested a lot with runs behind the defending line and he scored a great goal on the dribble; a great finish. I think he is in great form and I hope he can keep his focus," said the Dutchman. "His performances are improving a lot from game to game, he's a continued threat and does a lot of defending work. I hope and expect him to keep going with his performance level."

"No Request Received": Centre On Use Of Ganga Water In Covid Treatment

Agenceis

New Delhi: The Central government today clarified that it has not received any request from National Mission for Clean Ganga to conduct research on the use of Ganga river water as a cure for the COVID-19 virus.

According to the Ministry of Jal Shakti, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Prahlad Singh Patel said, "Government has not received any request from National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) to conduct research on the use of Ganga river water as a cure to the Covid-19 virus."

"However, NMCG had sent two proposals viz., 'Ganga Sediments could immunize against COVID-19' and 'Treatment of COVID-19 by Ganga Jal' on April 28, 2020, to the Indian Council of Medical Research for examination at their end," the Ministry said in a statement.

The Ministry said that the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has informed that based on water quality monitoring of river Ganga being carried out during the Covid-19 period and studies conducted by them, State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and other agencies to assess the impact of lockdown on the water quality of river Ganga and its tributaries, it has been observed that no definite trend exists in different water quality parameters observed for various stretches of river Ganga and its tributaries.

"However, varying degrees of improvement in a few water quality parameters have been observed as per CPCB and SPCB reports which may be attributed to various factors such as increased availability of fresh water due to rainfall in the river catchment, no industrial effluent discharge and reduced human activity such as restriction on bathing, ritual disposal, restricted tourism, solid waste, mass washing of clothes etc during the lockdown period," it said. During the lockdown, it was



ensured that all the sewage treatment plants (STPs) continue to function without any interruption. Guidelines were issued to follow all safety precautions while continuing the operation of STPs.

The various interventions for the abatement of pollution of rivers have been continued.

"Financial assistance is being provided to States for setting up of sewage infrastructure and other pollution abatement activities under Namami Gange and National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) of Ministry of Jal Shakti as well as AMRUT & Smart Cities Mission of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs."

It further said that the state governments have formulated river action plans to restore the water quality of polluted river stretches for intercepting, diverting and treatment of municipal wastewater from urban centres.

"Regulation of Industrial Pollution is implemented through various provisions of Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 under Consent mechanism by the respective State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) and Pollution Control Committees (PCC)," it said.

Online Continuous Effluent Monitoring Systems (OCEMS) are installed by 17- categories of industries and Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) being established on industrial units in the country through the directives issued by CPCB for getting real-time information on the effluent quality and non-complying units were identified and actions were taken against these units," it added.

Create Hand Washing Facilities, Impart Hygiene Education: Centre To States Over Covid



Agenceis

New Delhi: Centre has asked the states and UTs to create hand washing facilities with the provision of soap, and train teachers to impart hygiene education to students in all the schools across the country.

Ministry of Education in a statement said that States/UTs have been asked to fast-track the provision of stand-alone piped water supply solutions and simple, sustainable solar solutions

"In a joint advisory issued by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education; Ministry of Jal Shakti; NITI Aayog; Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, it is mentioned that the rejuvenation of basic infrastructure including improved sanitation facilities and provision of safe drinking water and maintaining the overall cleanliness in the Government schools has long been a priority of the Government. Some of the programmes being implemented in mission modes like Swachh Bharat Mission- Grameen (SBM-G) and Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) are going a long way in improving the living standards of the people," Ministry said.

Ministry further added that

the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) has transformed rural India by manifesting into a Jan Andolan for sanitation. Under Phase -II of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), the focus is on Open Defecation Free (ODF) sustainability and solid and liquid waste management. Following the saturation approach, the objective is to ensure that no one is left behind from access to improved including the Schools.

It is further mentioned that under ODF Plus, it is also to be ensured that all schools in villages have arrangements for the management of bio-degradable waste and grey water. It is important to ensure that all the toilets in the schools are in proper functioning condition. However, some of them may require retrofitting from single pits to twin pits. This may be done as part of the ongoing campaign of retrofitting from single pits to twin pits.

The Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) Report 2021-22 suggests some gaps in toilets and hand washing facilities. The Centre has asked states that all these gaps need to be filled by following the saturation approach.

Further, hand washing facilities with the provision of soap

may be created in all the schools. It is also essential that hygiene education is imparted to the children on all aspects of hygiene. For this purpose, at least one teacher in each school must be trained in hygiene education who in turn should train the children through interesting activities and community projects that emphasize hygienic behaviour. A chapter on Swachhhta has been included in supplementary material at the primary level developed by NCERT to inculcate good hygiene practices in the schools.

The advisory also mentioned that under Jal Jeevan Mission, making provision for safe tap water supply in schools, Anganwadi centres, and Ashram Shalas is a top priority of the Government for ensuring the good health and well-being of our children. This critical intervention was launched in a campaign mode on October 2, 2020, aimed at bringing focus to the public health dimension of young children through the assured supply of safe drinking water, especially during times of pandemic. So far, as per UDISE+ 2021-22 data, out of around 10.22 lakh Government schools, a functional drinking water facility has been provided in 9.83 lakh [96% approx.] government schools.

People Made To Deposit Black Clothes Before Meeting Odisha Chief Minister

Agenceis

Balasure: People who attended Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's public meeting in Odisha's Balasure on Thursday were asked by the police to deposit their black clothes before entering the venue.

The women had to leave behind their black shawls, sweaters and even dupattas at designated counters set up at different entry points to the meeting venue. Men had to deposit their black coats, sweaters and helmets.

When asked about the reason, a state armed police official said that according to Intelligence reports there was possibility of black flag demonstration at the venue.

The order was resented by many who attended the meeting. "It is shocking and insulting to be asked to deposit black clothes worn by women outside the meeting venue. We are all supporters of Naveen Patnaik," said Sabita Behera, a resident of Balasure town.

Sixty-year-old Raghunath Sahu expressed unhappiness when the security personnel asked him to remove his black coloured coat



before entering the venue.

Meanwhile, the local police took several BJP leaders including Balasure town president Umakanta Mohapatra was detained as preventive measure before Patnaik's arrival to the town.

In another incident, a physically challenged youth jumped in front of the chief minister's carcade during his visit to Balasure.

The youth had suddenly rushed towards Mr Patnaik's motorcade breaking the security cordon soon after Mr Patnaik reached the city. Security personnel deployed at the site swiftly moved in and whisked him away.

While the youth's motive is yet to be ascertained, he was heard demanding a house under the state government's housing scheme and a job.

Delhi HC restrains sale of Dil Afza on lawsuit by Rooh Afza

Agenceis

The Delhi High Court has restrained the manufacture and sale of sweet beverage concentrate 'Sharbat Dil Afza' during the pendency of a lawsuit for alleged trademark infringement by Hamdard Dawakhana which sells 'Rooh Afza'.

A bench of justices Vibhu Bakhru and Amit Mahajan said that prima facie, 'Rooh Afza' served as the source identifier for Hamdard for over a century and has acquired immense goodwill and it was essential to ensure that the competitors keep a safe distance from the mark.

The court's order came on an appeal by Hamdard (appellant) against a single judge's order refusing to pass an interim order to restrain 'Dil Afza' manufacture Sadar Laboratories (respondent) from allegedly indulging in trademark infringement.

"It is not difficult to conceive that a person who looks at the label of 'DIL AFZA' may recall the label of 'ROOH AFZA' as the word 'AFZA' is common and the meaning of the words 'ROOH' and 'DIL', when translated in English, are commonly used in conjunction," said the court in its order dated December 21.

Bun Maska



Chai Ka Chaska With Bun Maska



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6 Boulevard, Srinagar