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CORONA RESURGENCE Modelling Data Foresee Low Circulation Of Virus In J&K: Director SKIMS

Press Trust Of India

odelling data from credible agencies do I not foresee any major Covid wave in Jammu and Kashmir, a leading pulmonologist said, but advised people to take precautionary measures as models "can go horribly wrong". In a series of tweets, SKIMS

Director Dr Parvaiz Koul said, "Modelling data from credible agencies (like from University of Washington) predict a low circulation of the virus for coming weeks in JK (Jammu and Kashmir), but models can go horribly wrong.

"So stay calm, observe routine precautions and vaccinate if you haven't, as per the advisories. NO PANIC PLEASE. Safety saves. Better safe than sorry." Koul added that he had been

receiving many calls from people about COVID-19 alerts in Ĵammu and Kashmir.

"Receiving many calls for the COVID alerts. Please note that J&K (Jammu and Kashmir) and India as a whole are not experiencing an unusual surge as yet. However since it is winter, the time for circulation of respiratory pathogens in Kashmir, it is in one's interest to be alert and cautious," he said.



Koul said the situation in China, which is believed to be going through a massive resurgence of Covid infections, was

different on various counts. "But kindly do not panic. The situation in China is different. They resorted to strict lockdowns

BUT KINDLY DO NOT PANIC. The situation in China is different. They resorted to strict lockdowns which resulted in lower exposure to the virus and a lower immunity by natural infection."

which resulted in lower exposure to the virus and a lower immunity by natural infection. "Also the vaccine used pre-

dominantly in China is the

inactivated Sinopharm/Sinovac vaccine which is inferior in evoking a robust immune response as compared to the adenovirus vectored vaccine used predomi-nantly in India," he added. Dr Koul said as there was no

data on the percentage of the Chinese population that had been immunised, China might have opened up "abruptly". "And we do not know the

percentage immunized among those vulnerable to severe illness (like the old or those with comorbidities) in China, specifically about booster doses. Possibly they opened abruptly without | More on P10

Kashmir Reels Under Intense Cold

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The minimum temperature in Kashmir rose by a couple of degrees but stayed below the freezing point offering little respite from cold conditions, officials said on Monday.

The valley is going through a dry spell with no major precipitation forecast till the end of December. However, there is a possibility of a brief wet spell this week, the MET department said.

The minimum temperature on Sunday night rose two to three degrees from the previous night but stayed below the freezing point.

The intense cold conditions led to freezing of water supply lines in many areas as well as the freezing of the interiors of the Dal Lake, they said.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar settled at minus 3.5 degrees Celsius -- up from minus 5.8 degrees Celsius on Saturday night, the officials said.

They said Pahalgam, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a low of minus 5.7 degrees Celsius, up from minus 7 degrees Celsius.

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded a low of minus 5.0 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature in frontier Kupwara district settled at the season's lowest of minus 3.5 degrees Celsius, while Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, also recorded the season's lowest of minus of 4.2 degrees Celsius, the officials said. Kokernag recorded a low of

minus 2.5 degrees Celsius.

The MeT Office has forecast mostly dry weather in Jammu and Kashmir till Monday, after which it is likely to remain generally cloudy till December 30 in the UT with a possibility of light to moderate snowfall over the higher reaches. Kashmir is | More on P10

G20 MEETING IN J&K Govt Sets Up **16-Member** Panel **To Oversee Preps**



Press Trust Of India

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Monday constituted a 16-member committee to oversee the preparations for a G20 meeting in the union territory next year.

Commissioner Financial (Additional chief secretary), home department, Raj Kumar Goyal was nominated as the chairman of the panel, which also included Director General of Police Dilbag Singh as one of the members, according to an order issued by Secretary

Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, two Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officers and one J-K Administrative Service (JKAS) officer were included in the committee, which was constituted in view of the visit of officials from G20 participating countries to the union territory. Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha had said the planned G20 meeting in Srinagar will be held in a secured and peaceful atmosphere and showcase Jammu and Kashmir in a right perspective. The Jammu and Kashmir ad



A woman walks over a wooden bridge on a cold Monday morning in the interiors of Dal Lake in Srinagar. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

ROW OVER RELOCATION

LG Hails Contribution Of

Administration General Department, Piyush Singla. Ten Indian Administrative

ministration had also requested a Service (IAS) officers, three

similar event for Jammu. The other members of the committee include | More on P10

JAMMU AND KASHMIR LT GOVERNOR **MANOJ SINHA HAD SAID THE PLANNED G20** meeting in Srinagar will be held in a secured and peaceful atmosphere and showcase Jammu and Kashmir in a right perspective.

BHARAT JODO YATRA

Cong Leaders Call On LG, **Discuss Security Arrangements**

Jammu: Senior Congress leaders met lammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday to discuss security arrangements for the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra which will enter the

Union territory next month. Congress general secretary organisation K C Venugopal AICC in-charge for Jammu and Kashmir Rajani Patil, and party leaders Vikar Rasool Wani and Ghulam Ahmad Mir | More on P10

Mehbooba Salutes Rahul For Bharat Jodo Yatra

eoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Monday said she salutes Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for undertaking the Bharat Jodo Yatra to strengthen secularism and More on P10

J&K Parties Come Out In **Support Of Dogra, KP Employees**

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: All major parties in Jammu and Kashmir, including the BJP, have come out openly in support of Kashmiri Pandit and Dogra employees and backed their demands for "relocation" from Kashmir in view of targeted killings by militants and a transfer policy.

The National Conference, PDP, AAP, Apni Party and others criticised the Union territory administration over the "step-motherly treatment and bureaucratic indifference" to the employees sitting on protests for the past eight months. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's recent remarks that reserved

> ormer Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad on Tuesday said Kashmiri Pandit employees posted in the valley should be temporarily transferred to Jammu to save their lives in the wake of targeted attacks by terrorists.

S H O R TAKES Т

Man Held With Arms In Kupwara

ecurity forces have arrested a suspected arms and narcotics smuggler in the Karnah area of Kupwara district in Jammu and Kashmir and recovered arms and ammunition from his possession. officials said on Tuesday. The security forces arrested Mohammed Azam Daniyal, a resident of Dhani in Karnah near the Line of Control, on Monday night and recovered arms and ammunition from his possession, the officials said. They said the accused led the law enforcement agencies to the recovery of one pistol, two pistol | More on P10

Suspect Held After IED Recovered

olice on Monday recovered an improvised explosive device (IED) in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said. IED-like material weighing around 15 kilogram and stored in a cylindrical object and 300-400 grams of RDX, seven 7.62mm cartridges, and five detonators were recovered in the Basantgarh area of the district, they said.

Additional Director General of Police, Jammu Zone, Mukesh Singh confirmed the incident.

Besides, police also recovered a sheet with coded signs and a blank page with markings of the | More on P10

2 Dead As Truck **Rolls Into Gorge**

truck driver and his helper were killed when their vehicle, loaded with empty LPG cylinders, rolled into a deep gorge along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on Monday, a police official said. The truck was on its way to Jammu to refill the cylinders when the accident occurred near Battery Cheshma in Ramban district around 4 am, he said.

The truck's two occupants -- driver Alyas Ahmad Khatana (40) and helper Sameer Ahmad Khatana (26) of Kokernag in south Kashmir's Anantnag district -- were | More on P10

BSF Shoots Down Pak Drone

drone which flew into India from Pakistan was shot down by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the international border in Punjab, an official spokesperson said on Monday. The unmanned aerial vehicle was intercepted and fired upon by the troops around 7:40 pm on Sunday in an area falling under the territorial limits of Rajatal village in Amritsar, they said. The quadcopter was recovered from a field near the border fence and a search is on to check if it dropped any consignment in the area, the BSF spokesperson said. At least three such | More on P10

Sikhs in Nation Building

'People Must Rise Above The Narrow Outlook Of Life, Tread Path Of Humanism'

Observer News Service

Jammu: The Union Territory Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Monday hailed the significant contribution of Sikh community in nation building and establishing a just and equal society and urged people to rise above the narrow outlook of life and tread the path of humanism.

"In this Amrut Kaal Khand, India stands proudly on the world stage tall, self-reliant, and full of self-confidence. We owe a debt of gratitude to Gurus and Sikh Community for their immense and unparalleled contribution in the Country's progress and prosperity. Vision of Gurus always inspires us to work to achieve greater heights," the LG said.



He made these remarks while attending 'Shabad Kirtan' organized by All J&K Sikh Coordination Committee to mark 'Veer Baal Diwas' at Gurdwara Sant Mela Singh Dastkari Ashram, Digiana here on Monday.

The LG paid obeisance to Sahibzades, Guru Gobind Singh Ji and Mata Gujri Ji and urged the new generation | More on P10

LAL SINGH IN DOCK

HC Pulls Up Ex- Minister, Rejects **Plea Against Eviction Notice**

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Monday pulled up former state minister Choudhary Lal Singh as it dismissed with costs his fresh petition against an eviction notice for vacating government accommodation here.

A division bench comprising

Chief Justice Justice Tashi (Acting)

Rabstan and Justice Rajesh Sekhri held that the application has been filed with the sole intention to prolong his unauthorised occupation and is an "abuse of the process of law".

On November 15, a single bench of the high court dismissed Singh's petition against the eviction notice and directed him to vacate the government bungalow at the posh | More on P10

JAMMU AND KASHMIR LT GOVERNOR MANOJ SINHA HAD SAID THE PLANNED G20 meeting in Srinagar will be held in a secured and peaceful atmosphere and showcase Jammu and Kashmir in a right perspective.



The BJP reacted angrily

party also | More on P10

"A decision has to be taken as per the situation. When the | More on P10

category (Dogra) employees cannot be transferred to Jammu and those (KP employees) sitting at home will

these employees will not be

made "sacrificial goats". The Congress will make it the main issue when its Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi reaches Jammu and Kashmir early next year. The

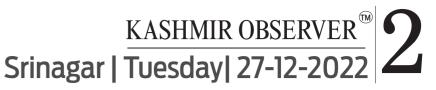
not get salaries drew sharp reactions from these parties. to Sinha's remarks and said

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'Storage Mechanism Of Fear Memories Understood, May Lead To More Effective PTSD Treatments'

Press Trust Of India

esearchers have discovered the fundamental mechanisms by which the brain consolidates remote fear memories. which may lead to the development of more effective interventions in the treatment of

PTSD, according to a study. A University of California, Riverside, US, mouse study demonstrated that remote fear memories formed in the distant past are permanently stored in connections between memory neurons in the prefrontal cortex, or the PFC.

A remote fear memory is a memory of traumatic events that occurred in the distant past - a few months to decades ago

The study is published in Nature Neuroscience.

"It is the prefrontal memory circuits that are progressively strengthened after traumatic events and this strengthening plays a critical role in how fear memories mature to stabilized forms in the cerebral cortex for permanent

storage," said lead researcher Jun-Hyeong Cho. "Using a similar mechanism, other non-fear remote memories could also be permanently stored in the PFC," said Cho.

According to the study, the brain uses distinct mechanisms to store recent versus remote fear memories. Previous studies have suggested that while the initial formation of fear memory involves the hippocampus, it progressively matures with time and becomes less dependent on the hippocampus.

Much research now explains how recent fear memory is stored, but how the brain consolidates remote fear memories is not well understood.

The researchers focused on the PFC. a part of the cerebral cortex that has been implicated in remote memory consolidation in previous studies.

"We found a small group of nerve cells or neurons within the PFC, termed memory neurons, were active during the initial traumatic event and were reactivated during the recall of remote fear memory," said Cho.



"When we selectively inhibited these memory neurons in the PFC, it prevented the mice recalling remote but not recent fear mem-

ory, suggesting the critical role of PFC memory neurons in the recall of remote fear memories, said Cho

In the experiments, the mice received an aversive stimulus in an environment called a context. They learned to associate the aversive stimulus with the context. When exposed to the same context a month later, the mice froze in response, indicating they could recall remote fear memories.

The researchers showed that connections, or synapses, between memory neurons in the PFC, termed prefrontal memory circuits, were gradually strengthened with time after fear learning, and such strengthening helped the PFC permanently store remote fear memories.

Next, to extinguish the remote fear memory in the mice, the researchers repeatedly exposed the mice to the same fear-predictive context but without the aversive stimulus. The result was a reduced fear response to the context.

"Interestingly, the extinction of remote fear memory weakened the prefrontal memory circuits that were previously strengthened to store

the remote fear memory," Cho said.

"Moreover, other manipulations that blocked the strengthening of the PFC memory circuits also prevented the recall of remote fear memory," said Cho.

Cho explained that a dysregulation of fear memory consolidation can lead to chronic maladaptive fear in PTSD, which affects about 6 per cent of the population at some point in their lives.

"Considering that PTSD patients suffer from fear memories formed in the distant past, our study provides an important insight into developing therapeutic strategies to suppress chronic fear in PTSD patients," he said.

Next, Cho's team plans to selectively weaken the prefrontal memory circuits and examine whether this manipulation suppresses the recall of remote fear memories

'We expect the results will contribute to developing a more effective intervention in PTSD and other fear-related disorders,' said Cho

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE **ENGINEER R&B DIVISION** SHOPIAN

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CORRIGENDUM

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1	Bid Submission En Date	d 29-12-2022 up to 2:00 PM	
2	Date & time of oper ing of Bids (Online)	- 30-12-2022 at 10:00 AM at Executive Engineer's office Shopian	
Instead of			
Instead	of		
Instead	of Bid Submission End Date	26-12-2022 up to 4:00 PM	

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Due to poor response, the last date of sale/download, receipt/submission and the bid-opening of below mentioned e-NIT is extended as under:

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (KPDCL)

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1	e-NIT No. STD I / 21 of 2022-23 <u>dated</u> 12/11/2022	2022_PDD_195893_ 1	Evacuation of Power from GIS Khanyar by way of carrying out miscellaneous works including provision for dual supply to Receiving Stations Lalbazar, Bagwanpora and Kathidarwaza fed from Habak, GIS Khanyar and Wanganpora Grid Stations.	31/12/2022 (3:00 PM	3/01/2023 (02:00 PM)	
The complete NIT/Tender Documents/BOQ can be downloaded from the website <u>www.jktenders.gov.in</u> . All other terms and conditions as stipulated in the original NIT shall remain same.						

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KASHMIR OBSERVER[™] Srinagar | Tuesday | 27-12-2022

Drug Peddlers Will Not be Allowed To Spoil Youth: DC

Observer News Service

Srinagar: To review the different steps taken to curb the drug abuse and narcotic trade in Srinagar, a District Level Committee of Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) was held today under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad here at Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex.

At the outset, the Depu-Commissioner discussed threadbare various issues related to menace of drug addiction, areas of concern, hot spots of drug peddling/abuse besides, measures undertaken to break the chain of drug peddling and its consumption in the District to save youth from the ill effects of the drugs.

The Deputy Commissioner also held deliberations with regard to activation of Digital Interface for faceless Consent by victims of drug abuse for Tele Counseling and Rehabilitation.

On the occasion, the DC stressed upon the Officers of all the line Departments including Enforcement agencies to ensure better coordination in enforcing greater deterrence to combat dangerous trade of drug-trafficking. He said that efforts with Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration are vital to contain the drug peddling and break the supply chain, besides taking stringent action against the culprits involved in the hazardous trade of drugs

The DC said in order to combat this rising societal problem, multi-pronged Rehabilitation, Counselling and Guidance policy is indispensable to be implemented on ground to monitor drug abuse and take remedial measures to curb the menace. He sought cooperation from the families particularly from parents to overcome the menace among the youth which also leads to other social evils and crimes.

He said Religious Heads. Influencers and Parents have an important role to keep the youngsters away from the use of drugs and also the family support for the affected people could lead them towards normal and better life.

The DC said the drug menace is a major threat to the socioeconomic structure and it has become imperative for the entire society to come together to uproot this menace and work as a strong entity to make Srinagar a healthy and drugs free District. He further underscored that Srinagar Administration has adopted a zero tolerance policy against drug suppliers and traffickers under the MISSION WAAPSI initiative.

The DC said it is a collective responsibility of all the sections of society to join this fight against drug menace and called upon all the stakeholders particularly Imams, Khateebs, Religious Heads, Public representatives to extend their cooperation to District Administration with determined efforts and proactive approach to bring the youth of Srinagar out of darkness of drugs addiction.

The DC also emphasised conducting awareness on campaigns on mass scale using popular mass media tools against drug menace to sensitize the youth about hazards and ill effects of consuming drugs. The DC also laid stress on strengthening the rehabilitation centre and their effective functioning.

In order to provide immediate guidance and counseling to affected persons, the Deputy Commissioner asked for activating Digital Interface for faceless Consent by victims of drug abuse for Tele Counseling and Rehabilitation which shall be made available soon through online mode with added features.

Under this initiative, the Citizens of the District can enroll with District Administration through a Weblink as a volunteer to help in reporting/eradicate the drug menace from their areas.



Two women donning traditional Burqas walk in downtown Srinagar on Monday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Patients Flay Nighttime Medical Attention In City Hospitals

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: Amid increase in the number of health complications during winter and threat of another covid wave looming large, patients have complained that there is nonavailability of senior and experienced medical staff at premier hospitals of the city during night shifts.

Patients say in absence of Senior Residents, the healthcare of patients is being compromised and authorities need to come to the rescue of ailing patients.

"I went to the SMHS hospital at around 11: 45 p.m. and unfortunately no doctor was available at the OPD, when I asked the staff to check the health status of the patient, they told me to go to the emergency room." Irfan Ahmed a patient said.

concern was Similar raised by other patients visiting the SMHS hospital. "At first, we could not locate

doctors, later we found there were only juniors around." Said an attendant on anonymity.

However, brushing aside these claims Medical Superintendent SMHS Hospital Dr Muzaffar Zargar said that there is always a team of senior and junior doctors available during the night shifts.

"OPD does not operate during the night. However, during night time, those in need of critical care need to go to the emergency Unit. A medical team and a surgical team are always at the rescue of the patients." Dr Muzaffar said.

He further said that there is no question of non-availability of senior doctors.

"Surgeries and complicated procedures are performed during the night. How is that possible without senior consultants." He said.

Director, Sher-I-Kashmir

Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Dr Parvaiz Koul also refuted these allegations saying in the Emergency unit of the Hospital adequate number of junior and senior doctors are available for consultations.

"In government hospitals there is a huge influx of patients and the ratio of doctors attending the patients is less. A junior doctor and a consultant cannot be made available for a single patient at the same time, it is not possible" Dr Parvaiz said.

However, Dr Parvaiz said that in a private setup, things are quite different.

'In a private setup the patient doctor ratio is less. At SKIMS, a doctor single handedly monitors scores of patients, if he spends only one minute with a single patient, he will end up spending two to three hours.

"That is how things are on the ground level" he added.

GSPFP To Hold Sufi Conference At SKICC

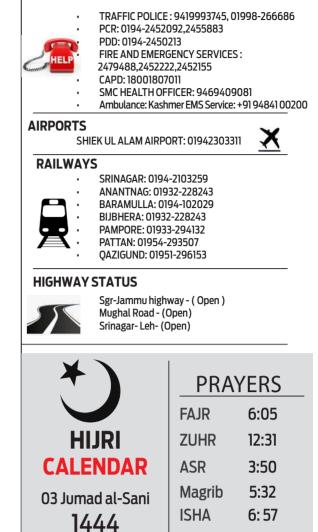
Srinagar: With an aim to reley, Global strategic policy foundation Pune has decided to hold a grand Sufi conference at SKICC on December 31th to spread the message of the mystical form of the Islam.

Dr Anant Bhagwat while accompanied by J&K chief of GSPFP Firdous Baba said that Kashmir is incomplete without Sufism as the valley has history of being the hub for different religions.

Bhagwat added

He said that through this conference, a message should be sent to the world that respect for humanity is essential in today's era and all human beings should live with mu-

tual love and respect. He said that today there is



This Day In History

- 537 Hagia Sophia inaugurated by the Emperor Justinian I as an Eastern Orthodox cathedral 1512 - Spanish Crown issues the Laws of Burgos,
- governing the conduct of settlers with regards to native Indians in the New World - Dutch troops capture Madurees prince 1679
- Trunudjojo in Java
- 1703 England & Portugal sign Methuen-Asientotrade agreement
- 1741 Prussian forces took Olmutz, Czechoslovakia 1862 - Battle of Chickasaw Bluffs, MS (Chickasaw Bayou)
- 1862 Battle of Elizabethtown, Kentucky
- 1918 The Great Poland Uprising against the Germans begins.
- Assassination Attempt
- 1923 Emperor Hirohito of Japan narrowly evades an assassination attempt by a Korean independence activist, Lee Bong-chang
- Albania is declared a dictatorship under 1924 Ahmed Beg Zofu
- 1924 The US signs a treaty with the Dominican Republic, which supersedes that of 1907: in July, the Us had withdrawn its Marines and ended its occupation

From KO Archives Fidayeen Strike Kills

Observer News Service

SMC Kick-Starts Weeklong

Anti-Encroachment Drive

The drive started from Je-

Agencies vive Sufism in Kashmir val-

Srinagar: Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) on Monday kick-started a week-long massive anti encroachment drive in various areas of the city.

The drive was held under the supervision of Chief Antiencroachment Officer and Anti-encroachment Officer along with other officers of the Corporation.

in the areas of Maharaja Bazar, Maisuma, Residency Road, Lal Chowk, Dalgate, Nishat, Shalimar, Foreshore Road, Hazratbal, Saida Kadal, Rainawari and Khanyar.

During the drive three trucks of encroached goods were seized including hand carts from roadside vendors etc.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar office, the chairman /founder of GSPFP, Dr Anant Bhagwat said that Sufism advocates the peaceful co-existence of all faiths and needs to be revived here. There is a need to take Sufism to every household in the Valley.

ernor Kerala, Arif Mohammad khan will be the chief Guest on the occasion and LG Manoj Sinha has also been requested by GSPFP to grace the occasion. He added that their organization has been working from the last two years to address the issues of those related with the revival of Sufism in the valley.

a greater need to save humanity and this message should be given to the coming generations. He said that the Sufism message is a message of peace, security, love, tolerance, tolerance and service and by following these teachings, a solution to the problems and sufferings of today's magical era can be found.

10 In BB Cant

26 Wounded, Fire In Batwara Bazaar, Area Sealed Off

Observer News Service

RINAGAR- In yet another daring strike on an army installation, a Fidayee militant today drove an explosive laden vehicle into the high security Badami Bagh cantonment area and blew it up just outside the army headquarters here killing himself and nine others including six security personnel.26 others were wounded.

The fidayee bomber drove a Maruti car bearing Delhi registration number DL4C 5009, stuffed with explosives, to the headquarters of 15 Corps this afternoon and blew it up outside its main gate in the first attack of its kind since the Ramadhan cease-fire came into force on November 28 and second in eight months.

Security sources said six security men, three civilians and the Fidayeen bomber were killed and 26 were injured in the attack. A Tata Sumo vehicle (JK01 3355) which was on way to Srinagar from Jammu was also hit killing three of its passengers. NAFA news agency said the irate troops opened fire and some of the civilian casualties were result of that. However there was no independent confirmation available as all the entry and exit points to the area were immediately sealed off by the army and no one including the journalists were not allowed in.

Jaishe Muhammed claimed responsibility for the attack saying group's activist Abu Abdullah, a resident of Birmingham, England, died in action.

An official spokesman said the blast triggered fire in neighbouring Batwara bazar, the main market in cantonment area on Srinagar - Jammu highway and damaged seven vehicles.

The sources said the Fidayee, who tried to storm the army headquarter, was stopped by the military police personnel at check point near the maingate. But ignoring the signal, the bomber went ahead and blew his vehicle up.

Over 26 people, mostly securitymen, were injured of whom five soldiers were declared dead in the army base hospital, the sources said, adding condition of some of the wounded was stated to be serious.

Soon after the explosion, army sealed the entire area, particularly the exit points at Sonawar and Pandrethan. Personnel from local police and media persons were not allowed near the army headquarters.

It may be recalled that earlier this year on April 19 one Aafaq Ahamad Shah of Khanyar locality drove an explosive laden car to the same spot where todays explosion took place and blew himself up when he was stopped by soldiers

Lashkar-e-Tayba militants first stormed the heavily guarded headquarters of 15 corps last year in which one militant and six soldiers including defence spokesman Major P Purshotam were killed.

(Kashmir Observer, 27 December, 2000)

Meet Interior Designer Who Provides **Designing Solutions At Affordable Prices**

Agencies

Srinagar: To do something unique was his passion since childhood. He would dream about doing something not just for himself and his family, but for the masses of his home land—Kashmir. Todav his dream came true.

A young Entrepreneur from summer capital Srinagar is providing designing solutions to people by adding a taste of tradition in interior designing. Faizan Nehvi, a resident of Srinagar. Faizan Nehvi said that he has done his schooling from Tyndale Biscoe after that he pursued civil engineering.

"The idea of starting interior designing in Kashmir was on his mind since few years. He trayelled to different parts of India and saw how people seek help from designers to help them with the interior designing. His idea of setting up something like this in Kashmir transformed into reality and he entered into interior designing fully by starting interior designing studio, FNG group to provide designing solutions to people.

"Everyone their homes to be the best but they have very less time to look into every minute details and that is where the need of a professional designer arises and since years we have been designing hotels,

restaurants, cafes and residences," Nehvi said. Despite having a very

good market for interior designing, designers are very less, he said, adding, though at some places traditional designing is being adapted but scenario is changing and this industry has started to pick up.

"If you have a professional designer available, everything is possible. With the help of the latest techniques like computerized graphic paint and 3D wallpaper designing, we give homes a new and trendy look,' he said. "As the winters in Kashmir are very cold, people prefer wood

which is a better idea and

designers can be creative in designing the interiors with wood as well.' He said that people

wants have understood the ill impacts of concrete houses and houses with more height on health, that is why the interior designing with wood has increased in Kashmir in the past few years.

He said that fabric based wallpapers, papier-machie designs incorporated into wooden panelling are also being preferred in Kashmir currently and to keep traditional and cultural aspects of Kashmir alive, we are hiring local artisans so as to make contemporary designs.

He while giving credit for this whole work to technicians said that they are the ones who are shaping ideas of designers into reality and everything is being judged on their work.

Nehvi said that the youth of J&K are very talented but they must follow their dreams with passion and hardwork.

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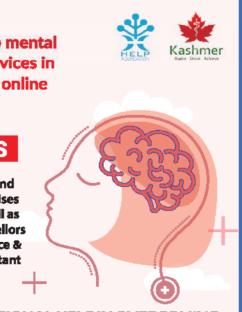
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NEWS

UN Says 2022 Among Deadliest Years For Rohingya At Sea



Several hundred are feared

dead or missing at sea this year

already, before the latest inci-

dent. "One of the worst years

for dead and missing after 2013

and 2014," Baloch said of 2022,

adding the number of people

trying to flee had returned to

levels seen before the COV-

reaching back to 2020, when over

2,400 people attempted the risky

sea crossings, with more than

The number of Rohingya

leaving Bangladesh in boats

this year has jumped more than

fivefold this year from a year

earlier, rights groups estimate.

where exactly the boat with 180 on

board went missing, nor whether

the lifting of COVID restrictions in

Southeast Asia, a favoured destina-

tion for the Rohingya, was leading

Sayedur Rahman, 38, who

fled to Malaysia in 2012 from

Myanmar, said his wife, two

sons aged 17 and 13, and a

daughter aged 12 were among

Bangladesh to save their lives,"

Rahman said, referring to that

year's exodus of Rohingya from

"But they are now all gone ...

Now I'm devastated," Rahman

said. "We Rohingya are left to

die ... on the land, at sea. Ev-

"In 2017, my family came to

to the rush of people.

the missing.

Myanmar.

ervwhere.

Baloch said it was not clear

200 people dead or missing."

"Trends show the numbers

ID-19 pandemic.

Agencies

The possible sinking of a boat with 180 Muslimmajority Rohingya on board will make 2022 one of the worst years for the community as refugees try to flee desperate conditions in camps in Bangladesh, according to the United Nations refugee agency. Nearly one million Rohingya

from Myanmar are living in crowded facilities in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, including tens of thousands who fled their home country after its military conducted a deadly crackdown in 2017.

In Buddhist-majority Myanmar, most Rohingya are denied citizenship and are seen as illegal immigrants from South Asia.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said over the weekend it feared that a boat, which started its journey from Bangladesh at the end of November was missing at sea, with all 180 on board presumed dead.

The UNHCR said the vessel, which was not seaworthy, may have started to crack in early December before losing contact. "We hope against hope that the 180 missing are still alive somewhere out there," UNHCR spokesman Babar Baloch told Reuters news agency.

The UNHCR estimates nearly 900 Rohingya died or went missing in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal in 2013

Pak Drone Shot Down

In Punjab, Is 4th To Be

Intercepted In 10 Days

'Concocted Narratives' Were Taught In Name Of History: PM Modi

Says new India correcting mistakes of bygone decades

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: In the name of history,"concocted narratives' were taught to infuse inferiority and there is a need to break free from the "narrow views" of the past to move forward, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said today, underlining that new India is correcting the mistakes of the bygone decades by restoring its long-lost legacy.

Speaking at the first 'Veer Bal Diwas' event, PM Modi paid tributes to Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, Guru Gobind Singh's sons who laid down their lives while defending their faith.

"On the one hand there was terrorism and on the other spiritualism. On one hand, there was communal violence and on the other there was liberalism. On one hand, there were forces of lakhs while on the other there were just 'Veer Sahibzaade' who did not budge at all," he said referring to the two martyred children of the Guru.

"Aurangzeb and his people wanted to convert the religion of Guru Gobind Singh's children with the force of a sword and that is why he decided to kill the two innocent children. Imagine that era when against the terror of Aurangzeb, against his plans to change In-

dia, Guru Gobind Singh ji stood like a mountain," he said. Modi said in the name of



history, people were being taught versions that promoted an inferiority complex among them. To move forward in the 'Amrit Kaal' and to take India to the heights of success in the future, "we have to break free from narrow views of the past", he added.

"Any country with such a glorious history must be full of self-confidence and selfrespect, however, concocted narratives are taught to infuse inferiority. There is a need to get free from the narrow interpretation of the past to move forward," he stressed.

The Prime Minister said the new India is correcting the mistakes of the bygone decades by restoring its long-lost legacy.

On the occasion of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary on January 9 this year, Modi had announced that December 26 will be observed as 'Veer

Bal Diwas'. The day reminds us that age does not matter when it comes to displaying extreme valour and sacrifice.

"Veer Bal Diwas tells us what is India, and what is its identity and every year, Veer Bal Diwas will inspire us to recognise our past and make our future. This will also remind everyone about the strength of our young generation," he said.

Modi said what happened in the wars of Chamkaur and Sirhind can never be forgotten while noting that these incidents occurred only three centuries ago on the soil of this land.

"On one hand there was the mighty Mughal sultanate blinded by religious fanaticism and on the other hand there were our Gurus gleaming in the knowledge and living by the ancient principles of India", the Prime Minister said.

"There were heights of terror and religious fanaticism on one hand and the other, there was the pinnacle of spirituality and kindness to see God in every human being," he said, add-ing, while the Mughals were backed by an army of millions, the Veer Sahibzades of the Guru had their courage.

"They did not bow down to the Mughals even though they were alone. This is when the Mughals walled them alive. Their bravery has been a source of inspiration for centuries," he said.

Sheezan Khan Tells Police Broke Up With Tunisha Sharma After Shraddha Walkar Murder Case

Agencies

MUMBAI: In a major reveal by the main accused in TV actor Tunisha Sharma's death case, her former boyfriend Sheezan Khan reportedly told police that he was "so disturbed by the atmosphere in the coun-try that emerged after the gruesome murder of Shraddha Walkar" allegedly by her live-in partner, that Khan de-



to commit suicide a few days before her death, but at that time I saved her and told Tunisha's mother to take special care of her," police sources

the case for abetment to suicide. The case was registered against him under Section 306 of the Indian Penal Code.

Tunisha was found dead on the sets of a TV serial on December 24, according to Waliv Police. They received information that after a tea break, the actress went to the toilet and when she did not come back, the police broke the door open and found her hanging.

No suicide note was recovred at the spot by police.

Mock Drills In States On Tuesday **To Prep For Covid Emergency**



Press Trust of India

Union Health Minister Man-

sukh Mandaviya will visit

Safdarjung Hospital on Tuesday

to take stock of the mock drill to be conducted there.

from the Indian Medical Asso-

ciation (IMA) on Monday, the minister said, "Based on our

previous experience of manag-

ing this pandemic, we are un-

dertaking several exercises, one

such being the mock drill that

will happen across the coun-

try tomorrow. Such exercises

would help our operational

readiness, help in filling gaps

if any and will consequently

strengthen our public health

response." The exercise will

focus on parameters such as

availability of health facilities

At a meeting with doctors

lation beds, oxygen-supported NEW DELHI: A mock drill will beds, ICU beds and ventilatorbe held on Tuesday across a supported beds, and optimal number of health facilities in availability of doctors, nurses, several states and Union terriparamedics, AYUSH doctors, tories to ensure their readiness and other frontline workers, into deal with any eventuality recluding ASHA and Anganwadi lated to COVID-19, following an workers. advisory by the Centre.

It will also focus on human resource capacity in terms of healthcare professionals trained on COVID-19 management, healthcare professionals trained in ventilatory management protocol for severe cases, healthcare workers trained in operation of PSA plants, etc. and availability of Advanced and Basic Life Support (ALS/BLS) ambulances, testing equipment and reagents and that of essential drugs among others.

in all districts, capacity of iso-

Referring to the surge in COVID-19 trajectory in many countries around the world, the Union Health Ministry on Saturday underlined that it was necessary that in all states and UTs requisite public health measures are put in place to meet any exigencies.

Congress Invites Akhilesh Yadav, Mayawati To Join Bharat Jodo Yatra In UP



Press Trust of India LUCKNOW: The Congress has

invited several leaders of non-

BJP parties, including Sama-

jwadi Party president Akhilesh

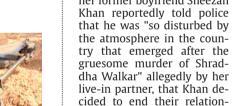
Yadav, BSP supremo Mayawati

and RLD's Jayant Chaudhary, to

Congress spokesperson Ashok Singh told PTI that the party has extended invitations to prominent opposition leaders in the state to attend the yatra.

In the present times when people are not allowed to raise reir views, this vatra is the only option to know people's minds, the spokesperson said. The entire opposition has almost the same view about this government so they have been invited to participate in the yatra, the party spokesman said. In addition to Yadav, Mayawati and Chaudhary, the Congress has invited SP MLA Shivpal Singh Yadav, BSP general secretary Satish Mishra, Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief Omprakash Rajbhar and Com-

Press Trust of India NEW DELHI: A drone which flew into India from Pakistan was shot down by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the



international border in Punial an official spokesperson said on Monday.

The unmanned aerial vehicle was intercepted and fired upon by the troops around 7:40 pm on Sunday in an area falling under the territorial limits of Rajatal village in Amritsar, they said.

The quadcopter was recovered from a field near the border fence and a search is on to check if it dropped any consignment in the area, the BSF spokesperson said.



At least three such Pakistani drones were shot down by the border force last week in Punjab.

During his first day in police custody, Sheezan told Waliv police that he ended the relationship with Tunisha after seeing repercussions emerging from the Shraddha Walkar case and told his former paramour that belonging to a different community stands in their way as did their age gap. During interrogation, Sheezan further revealed that Tunisha had earlier also attempted suicide after they broke up.

in sources said on Monday

"Tunisha had recently tried

quoted Sheezan as saying. Tunisha and Sheezan broke up a fortnight before she was found dead inside a toilet in a TV shoot set on December 24. On Sunday, a court in Vasai, Maharashtra, sent actor Sheezan Khan to police custody for four days in connection with Tunisha Sharma's alleged suicide case.

Waliv police produced Khan in the court after his arrest in

take part in the Uttar Pradesh The police have said the rea-

son behind Tunisha's alleged extreme step that ended her life could be her breakup with Sheezan over a fortnight back. The First Information Report, or FIR, of the case, revealed that the two actors were in a relationship, and had broken up 15 days ago. Tunisha Sharma was reportedly under stress, and it is suspected that's what drove her to the edge, said the

leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

An exception is former deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma who has been invited to the yatra in his capacity as a professor of Lucknow University. Another professor of the university, Ravikant, has also

been invited. The Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra will enter Uttar Pradesh on January 3 through Loni in Ghaziabad. It will then pass through Baghpat and Shamli to enter Haryana.

NEWS MAKERS

"Keep Knives At Homes For...": BJP MP Pragya Thakur's Shocker

Press Trust of India

SHIVAMOGGA: BJP Member of Parliament Pragya Singh Thakur has said that Hindus have the right to respond to those who attack them and their dignity, as she spoke about the killing of Hindu activists.

The MP representing Bho-pal Parliamentary segment in Madhya Pradesh, also called on the community to at least keep the knives in their homes sharp, as everyone has the right to protect themselves.

"Love jihad, they have a tradition of jihad, if nothing they do love jihad. Even if they love they do jihad in that. We (Hindus) too love, love the god, a sanyasi loves his god," Thakur said.

Speaking at the Hindu Jagarana Vedike's South Region annual convention here on Sunday, she said, "Sanyasi says in this world created by god, end all the oppressors and sinful, if not the true definition of love will not survive here. So answer



those involved in Love Jihad the same way. Protect your girls, teach them the right values." Further, pointing at the killing of Hindus activists including Harsha of Shivamogga, she asked people to keep knives at home sharp for the sake of self protection.

"Keep weapons in your

homes, if nothing else, at

know what situation will

arise when....Everyone has

the right to self protection.

If someone infiltrates our

house and attacks us, giving

a befitting replay is our right

," she said.

Advising parents against educating their children in missionary institutions, Thakur said, "by doing it you will open the doors of old age homes for yourselves." ...(by educating in missionary institutions), the children won't be yours and of your culture. They grow in the culture of old age homes and least knives used to cut vegetables, sharp...Don't

become selfish," she said. "Do pujas at your home, read about your dharma and shastra, teach your children about it, so that children know about our culture and values," she added.

Paragliding Tourist, 30, Falls Hundreds Of Feet To Death As Harness Fails

Mumbai police.

Press Trust of India

MANALI: A 30-year-old tourist from Maharashtra fell to his death during paragliding in the Dobhi area of Kullu district on Saturday. According to eyewitnesses, the victim fell hundreds of feet possibly due to harness failure during a tandem flight. While the tourist died on the spot, the pilot of the paraglider was safe.

The victim was identified as Suraj Sanjay Shah (30) of Shirval village in Maharashtra's Satara district. He was visiting Manali with his friends.

Superintendent of Police, Kullu, Gurdev Sharma said on Sunday that police received information that a person had fallen from a paraglider that was flying at a very high altitude in the Dobhi area.

"The pilot is safe but the passenger (tourist) succumbed to injuries on the spot," he said "A case of negligence act has been registered under sections 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 304A (causing death by negligence) of the IPC Act," the SP said.

A number of people have either died or sustained injuries during tandem paragliding in Himachal Pradesh. Paragliding and all other adventure sports activities in the state were banned by



the Himachal Pradesh High court in January this year after taking strict note of the death of a 12-year-old boy from Bengaluru due to an accident near Bir Billing paragliding site.

The court had ordered the setting up of a technical committee to inspect the adventure activity sites. Most of the equipment was found to be not approved by the technical committee and the registration of many operators was faulty. Only those operators were allowed in April who could fulfil the required parameters.

2 Rsussian Tourists Found Dead Inside Hotel

Press Trust of India

RAYAGADA: A Russian tourist died after falling from the third floor of a hotel in Odisha's Rayagada district, two days after his fellow traveller was found dead there, police said on Sunday.

Pavel Anthom, 65, was found lying in a pool of blood outside the hotel on Saturday, they said.

Vladimir Bidenov, Pavel's co-traveller, was found dead at the same hotel on December 22. He was found lying unconscious in his room on the first floor of the hotel with a few empty wine bottles around him.

When rushed to the district hospital, doctors declared him dead.

Vladimir and Pavel were part of a four-member group of Russian tourists who along with their guide Jitendra Singh had checked into the hotel in Rayagada town on Wednesday.

On Pavel's death, a senior police officer said that it seemed to be a case of suicide.

"Pavel was in depression due to the death of his friend," he said.

Police said they are investigating Pavel's death from all angles, including the possibility that he has fallen from the terrace accidentally.

Two other members of the group were asked to stay back and coordinate with the investigation, the officer said.

STATE

Tarigami Suggests Dialogue To Resolve Issues Of KP Employees



ernor in May over the targeted killings and told him to ensure adequate security to them so that they can feel secure.

PAGD, an amalgam of five political parties -- National Conference, PDP, CPI(M), CPM and Awami National Conference -- is campaigning for restoration of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir ended by the Centre on August 5, 2019.

JAMMU: Asserting that warnings only complicate issues rather than solving them, Senior Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader M Y Tarigami on Monday suggested dialogue with the protesting employees who are seeking their relocation outside Kashmir in the wake of targeted killings.

Press Trust Of India

Hundreds of Kashmiri migrant Pandits and Jammu-based reserved category employees are camping in Jammu after leaving their places of postings in the Valley following the killing of their colleagues -- Rahul Bhat and Rajni Bala -- by terrorists in May.

Last week, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha asserted that all necessary measures had been taken to ensure the safety of minority community employees, including Kashmiri Pandits, in Kashmir and sent out a "loud and clear" message to those demanding a transfer that no salary will be given for sitting at home.

'They are caught in a hapless situation and need a sympathetic and humanitarian approach to address their demands. The warnings are not given to our own people, it further complicates the situation," Tarigami, who is also convener and spokesperson of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), told PTI here.

He said the minority employees are feeling insecure and "they (administration) is saying that they are not going to listen to them". "...Learn to conduct business with your own people by holding dialogue and made them satisfy if you think the situation is normal in the valley, though it is otherwise".

The former legislator said the PAGD delegation met the Lt Gov-



every citizen is protection of their life and property. We stand with the protesting employees and want the government to ensure a safe environment for them to perform their duties normally," Taragami said.

Asked about the statement of Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Kashmiri Pandits that it is better to save precious human life even if it means closing down a dozen offices, he said the remark is absolutely in contradiction with the statement of the Lt Governor.

"Let them sit together and reach a consensus about what to speak or not," the CPI(M) leader said.

He also dismissed the administration's claims about restoration of normalcy in the valley. "There are no indicators suggesting expression of normalcy."

"If there is normalcy, what is stopping them from holding Assembly elections, why are the Pandit employees forced to flee en masse and why are they being threatened to return to their duties?" he asked.

Tarigami said the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other central government agencies are going house-to-house and the people are being booked under the draconian Public Safety Act (PSA) and shifted to jails outside the valley.

"If the situation is normal, why do they not go for removal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)? Journalists are not free to work or make critical analyses of the situation," he said.

He also expressed concern over the recent killing of two civilians outside an Army camp in Rajouri district and demanded an impartial probe into the incident.

DC Bandipora Holds Meeting On Ring Road Project





UNFAZED BY THE SWEEPING COLD WAVE, a tailor master busy with his work at his shop in the old city of Srinagar on Monday. KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

RAJOURI KILLINGS

Families Of Victims Given Ex-Gratia Of Rs 5L Each

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Rajouri district authorities in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday handed over an ex-gratia relief of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of two persons who died in a firing incident outside an Army camp earlier this month, an official said.

Rajouri Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal visited the families of the firing victims in Phalyana village and handed

over the ex-gratia relief sanctioned by Lt Governor Manoj Sinha in their favour, an official spokesman said

Kamal Kumar and Surinder Kumar, both residents of Pah-While the Army said the civilians were killed in firing by

shot dead by Army personnel. Police have registered a case and formed a special investiga-

deputy commissioner expressed solidarity with the bereaved family members and assured them of every possible support and assistance from

victim families.

NHM Releases Ranking Of Public Health Facilities On JK w-Sahai

Observer News Service

IAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir National Health Mission today releases ranking of Public Health facilities on Hospital Management Information System (JK e Sahaj) for the month

of November, 2022. In first phase of implementation, 578 facilities have been covered under this initiative and will be further extended to other facilities in a phased

Nagar, Jammu ; DH Poonch and DH Samba. Bottom five in this category included DH Shopian, DH Handwara, DH Kishtwar, DH Kulgam & DH Budgam. In the category of Commu-

nity Health Centres (CHCs). first rank has been clinched by EH Qazigund followed by CHC Seer, CHC Yaripora, CHC Kokernag and CHC

HEALTH Ramgarh. Bottom five in this catego

4th November 2022 as part of Iashn-e-Sehat. by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, J&K, for different types of facilities i.e. Tertiary care, District Hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres and some New Type PHCs. JK e-Sahaj has been integrated with Rapid Assessment System (RAS), 104 Centralised Health Helpline for

outbound calling and RCH por-

India.

tal of MoHFW.

Government of



AVGC Task Force Report Calls For National AVGC-XR Mission With Budgetary Outlay

Observer News Service

NEW DELHI: The Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comic (AVGC) Task Force has called for a National AVGC-XR Mission with a budget outlay to be created for integrated promotion & growth of the AVGC sector. In a detailed report submitted to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Task Force headed by Secretary I&B has also recommended launching a 'Create in India' campaign with exclusive focus on content creation, In India, For India & For World.

The main recommendations of the Task Force categorized broadly under 4 categories.

Domestic Industry Development for Global Access A National AVGC-XR Mission with a budget outlay to be created

PLI scheme to incentivize AVGC hardware manufacturers.

Enhanced Ease of Doing Business in AVGC sector i.e tax benefits, import duties, curbing piracy, etc. Leverage Start-Up India to provide technical, financial and market access assistance to AVGC entrepreneurs to promote culture of R&D and local IP Creation.

Raising India's soft power through an Inclusive growth

Establish a dedicated Production Fund for domestic content creation from across India to promote Indian culture & heritage globally. Evaluate Reservation for high-quality indigenous content by broadcasters.

For an Inclusive India, target skilling and industry outreach for youth in Tier 2 & 3 towns and villages in India. Establish Special in-



for integrated promotion & growth

campaign with exclusive focus on content creation, In India, For India & For World!

With a goal to make India the global hub for AVGC, institute an International AVGC Platform, along with a Gaming Expo) with focus on FDI, Co-production treaties and Innovation.

Establish a National Centre of Excellence (COE) for the AVGC sector to become an international reference point across Skilling, Education, Industry Development and Research & Innovation for the AVGC sector. Regional COEs will be instituted in collaboration with the State Governments to provide access to local industries and to promote local talent and content.

Developing Talent ecosystem to realize Demographic Dividends Leverage NEP to develop creative thinking with dedicated AVGC course content at school levels, to build foundational skills and to create awareness about AVGC as

a career choice. Launch AVGC focused UG/ PG courses with standard curriculum and globally recognized degrees. Standardize admission tests for AVGC related courses (viz, MECAT global demand. by MESC).

on the demand of With an eve 20 Lakh skilled professionals in AVGC sector in this decade, augment skilling initiatives for AVGC sector under MESC. Enhance Industry participation to ensure employment opportunities and absorption for students from nonmetro cities and NE states. Establish AVGC Accelerators and Innovation hubs in academic institutions, on lines of Atal Tinkering Labs. Enhancing Technology & Financial Viability for Indian AVGC Industry

in AVGC sector. Promote local Children's channels for raising awareness on rich

centives for women entrepreneurs

culture and history of India among children and youth Establish framework to ensure Child Rights Protection in the digital world

AVGC Task Force was constituted under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of I & B, Apurva Chandra, to help realize the full potential of the AVGC sector in India, with key stakeholders from the Industry and the Government.

Four Sub-Task Forces were constituted for devising strategies of growth through targeted interventions in their respective areas, a) Industry & Policy headed by Apurva Chandra, Secretary MOIB; b) Education headed by Anil Shahashrabudhe, then Chairperson AICTE; c) Skilling headed by Rajesh Aggarwal, then Secretary MoSDE, and; d) Gaming headed by Vikram Sahay, IS MOIB. Their recommendations have formed the basis of the con-

solidated report of the Task Force. The Union Budget had announced the constitution of a Task force on AVGC to identify interventions to build domestic capacity for serving our markets and the

The Task Force is an effort to realise the Prime Minister's y

lyana, were killed and another person, Anil Kumar of Uttarakhand, was injured in the firing incident outside the Army camp in Rajouri town on December 16.

terrorists, villagers contested it and alleged that the duo were

tion team to probe the incident. The spokesman said the

the administration. On the day of the incident,

Kundal had provided immediate relief of Rs 1 lakh to the

of the AVGC sector. Launch of a 'Create in India'

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Dr. Owais Ahmed Monday convened a meeting of concerned officers regarding the ambitious ring road project.

The meeting discussed in detail various objectives and benefits of the ring road project.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC asked the concerned authorities to conduct demarcation of the land involved keeping in consideration less

damage to property. He assured all possible support from District Administration in implementing the ring road project and asked the concerned to remove bottlenecks without delay.

Dr. Owais asked Tehsildar Sumbal to constitute a team in coordination with NHAI authorities for final demarcation of the ring road project besides examining the genuineness of objections filed. The meeting was attended by ADC Bandipora, Tehsildars and other concerned.

manner.

In the category of Associated Hospitals of Government Medical Colleges the first rank has been clinched by Chest Disease Hospital Jammu followed by AH GMC Baramulla, Government Dental College Srinagar, Psychiatric Disease Hospital, Jammu and AH GMC Rajouri. Bottom five in this category included Kashmir Nursing Home, Srinagar; Children Hospital Bemina, Super Speciality Hospital Jammu; GMC Kathua and AH GMC Doda. In the category of District

Hospitals, first rank has been secured by DH Bandipora followed by DH JLNM, Srinagar, Government Hospital Gandhi

MISS NO ry included CHC CHC Bani, CHC Khour, CHC Khan Sahib In the category राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य मिशन

Hospital Ranking has been assigned for different cat-Jammu Kashmir egories of facilities

i.e. Associated Hospitals of Government Medical Colleges, District Hospitals, CHCs and PHCs. The ranking has been done on the basis of registration, conversion of EMR (Electronic Medical Record) and Patient feedback uploaded on the portal of JK e Sahai for the month of November 2022, on real time basis. The detailed list of facilities has shared on NHM website.

Azadi Ka

Democratize AVGC technologies by promoting subscription-based pricing models for MSME, Start-Ups and institutions.

Made in India for AVGC technologies through incentive schemes for R&D and IP creation. Evaluate

that the AVCG-XR sector can provide immense employment opportunities to the youth who can serve the global market and the Indian talent can lead the way in this sector. Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Singh

Thakur has identified that the AVGC sector can serve as a major growth driver for the M&E industry in India and emphasized that beyond the high economic impact of the growth of this sector, the sector also has the potential to better disseminate and promote the Indian culture to the world, connect the Indian diaspora more strongly to India, generate direct and indirect quality employment and benefit tourism and other allied industries.

G2.

Meeting On R-Day **Arrangements Held At Shopian**

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: In order to discuss and make proper arrangements for the smooth celebrations of forthcoming Republic Day, 2023 at Shopian, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Shopian, Yar Ali Khan Monday convened a meeting of sectoral, district officers of various departments at Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex, here.

Detailed deliberations were held on various aspects including seating arrangement, barricading, security, traffic regulation, drinking water and power supply, sanitation, first-aid, PAS, deployment of magistrates, etc.

The meeting decided that the main function will be held at District Police Lines Shopian and shall start with the Shehnai Vadan programme in the morning. It was further decided that contingents from Police, CRPF, Fire & Emergency, Home guards, NCC, and different schools would participate in the march past.

The ADC directed the Execu-

tive Engineers of PHE, PDD and R&B to ensure water, electricity and seating, barricading arrangements at the function site. The Executive Officer, Municipal Council was instructed to maintain cleanliness in the

town as well as at the venue. Regarding First aid arrange ments, the Chief Medical Officer was directed to ensure the deployment of one ambulance along with a team of Doctors and necessary medicine till the culmination of function.

MVD and Traffic Police would ensure security and traffic management in the town.

The ADC asked the officers to put in place all the necessary arrangements for the smooth celebrations of the National event. He stressed upon the officers to participate in the function with zeal and enthusiasm and work in close coordination to make the National function a grand success. He called upon the officers and employees of all departments to remain present at the venue, on the day of function.

BF.7 Variant Unlikely To Cause New Wave Of Covid-19: DAK

Machil.

Marwah,

& CHC Thathri.

of Primary Health

Centres (PHCs) and

UPHCs, first rank has

been bagged by PHC Kakapora

followed by PHC Aishmuqam,

PHC Hakura. PHC Dhanni and

NTPHC Kalaban. Bottom five

in this category included UPHC

Sangam, PHC Thakrakote, PHC

Teetwal, PHC Massu and PHC

JK e-sahaj (Electronic Sys-

tem for Automation of Hospi-

tal Administration J&K) initia-

tive was formally launched on

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Monday said BF.7 variant is unlikely to cause a new wave of Covid-19 in our population.

"BF.7 is not a cause of concern for us and there is no need to worry about it." said DAK President and Influenza expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

Dr Hassan said BF.7, the variant driving China's Covid surge is a sublineage of the BA.5 subvariant of omicron.

First detected in February 2021, BF.7 has been in circulation for last 22 months across 91 countries without much impact. The prevalence of the variant in sequenced samples has remained below 0.5% worldwide.

"India detected its first case of BF.7 in July this year and it has not contributed significantly to Covid cases compared to other simultaneously circulating Omicron sublineages," he said.

The DAK President said with high vaccination rates and natural immunity, the possibility of having a wave due to this variant is less.

"Most of us have gone through the omicron wave this year in January. So

we don't need to worry about it. Essentially BF.7 is the same virus." he said.

"The fact that there has been no significant increase in the incidence of the BF.7 variant since its detection 5 months ago shows that it is not something to be bothered about," he added. Dr Nisar said the transmission rate

and severity of a variant are not uniform everywhere. It varies depending on the susceptibility of the local population.

"China followed restrictive zero Covid policy, most people there are not exposed to the variant and hence have no immunity. Now with sudden reopening, the country saw a massive surge in cases in the susceptible population," he said.

General Secretary DAK Dr Arshad Ali said we need to realize that Covid-19 has entered into an endemic stage. It has become yet another infection joining many other diseases that we have learned to live.

Cases will wax and wane. Outbreaks will pop up here and there.

"Frequent changes in genome structure are part of the natural life course of viruses and there is no need to panic," he said.

E-Tender Notice Sr.DEN-II/FZR acting for and on behalf of The Pr ders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders an Sr.DEN-II/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 16.01.2023 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised

bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tenders, and any such manual offer received shal be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only hrough only payment modes available on **www.ireps.gov.in** portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments hrough Demand draft Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information logon to www.ireps.gov.in Tender Type Tendering Section Bidding System Date of Uploading Tenders Bid Starting Date Bid Closing Date/Time

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Open Works Single Bid System 22.12.2022 02.01.2023 16.01.2023/15:00 Hrs. Details of Tender S.N. Tender No Repair and Maintenance of bridges Top Parapet, Wingwall, Pier and Abutment & Strengthening of bridges unde 354-2022-ADEN-I/PTK 23-PTK-DRM Advertised Value (Rs.) Earnest money Validity of Offer Period of Completion -FZR 60 Days 69,99,834.39/-1,40,000/-08 Months Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work' 355-2022- Provision of Rest House Building, rail level platform, approach road & water supply arrangements at PTK0 23-PTK-DRM ations in connection with RGM/TTM siding in the section of ADEN-I/PTK. Advertised Value (Rs.) Earnest money Validity of Offer Period of Completio FZR 52,76,803.12/-1,05,500/-60 Days 08 Months Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work" Provision of Rest House Building, rail level platform, approach road & water supply arrangements at DZA, MEX & TDO stations in connection with RGM/TTM siding in the section of ADEN-I/PTK. 356-2022-23-PTK-DRM-FZF Advertised Value (Rs.) Validity of Offer Earnest money Period of Completio 2,05,89,490.87/-2,53,000/-60 Days 10 Months Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work" Provision of Rest House Building, rail level platform, approach road & water supply arrangements and othe 357-2022isc. work at BPRS & JRC stations in connection with RGM/TTM siding in the section of ADEN/JRC. 23-JRC-DRM-FZR Earnest money Advertised Value (Rs.) Validity of Offer Period of Completion 1.13.91.846.09/-2.07.000/-60 Days 08 Months Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work" Provision of Rest House Building, rail level platform, approach road & water supply arrangements and othe misc. work at KRE stations in connection with RGM/TTM siding in the section of ADEN/JRC. 358-2022-

23-JRC-DRM-FZR Advertised Value (Rs.) Earnest money Validity of Offer Period of Completion 66,80,687.12/-1,33,600/ 60 Days 08 Months Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work" Note1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued ag Tender Notice No:- 770-W/169/WA/FZR/2022-2023 Date: 26.12.2022 ued against tende 3435/2022 Serving Customers With A Smile

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KASHMIR OBSERVER

Tuesday | 27-12-2022

Tourism Capital

he national general secretary of the BJP Tarun Chug said on Saturday that his organisation has transformed Kashmir from a centre of terrorism into a tourist destination. New Delhi, he said at a press conference in Srinagar, was making every effort to bring prosperity, peace, and development to Jammu and Kashmir. Chug was referring to the boom in tourism in the union territory over the last year. More than 20 lakh tourists, including 3.65 lakh Amarnath yatris and over ten thousand foreigners, have visited Kashmir during 2022. The final figure, however, will be known by the end of this month.

According to the tourist officials, this is the highest number of tourists Kashmir has received so far, beating by far even the pre-turmoil period record. The occupancy rate for houseboats has been over 80 percent. Up to 10,000 people, most of them from the other areas of India have been visiting Kashmir in over 100 flights per day. Also thousands of people are visiting the Valley by road. Most hotels were booked through the summer with tourist resorts like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Dal lake attracting the most tourists.

A combination of factors has made the tourism boom possible: One, the decline in the violence and public unrest over the last three years has drawn more and people from the rest of the country to the Valley. Second, Covid-19 fallout which severely reduced the options to go abroad and third the sweltering summer in mainland India which forced people to escape to colder places like Kashmir. And now winter and the snow, a novelty in mainland India, is attracting more tourists.

The Tourism department has said that an advertising campaign across major Indian cities and the opening of new destinations also helped. The UT government has also increased the options for tourists by developing more resorts. For example, Aharbal, Yusmarg, Tosamaidan, Gurez, historic old city in Srinagar are finding a prominent place on the tourist map of Kashmir. These places need further development of tourist infrastructure and also wider publicity for people to visit. And in the Jammu division, the government is promoting Patnitop, Sanasar and Bhaderwah to be the go-to places for the Vaishno Devi pilgrims. Besides this, the government is also trying to bolster the tourism infrastructure in the UT. There is a plan to set up three five star hotels in the Valley and the government is in the process of identifying land for them.

The overall effect of the boom in tourism on the Valley's situation has been salutary, as highlighted by Chug. On a positive note, he has indicated that Assembly elections are most likely to be held in the UT by April-May next year. The exercise should hopefully consolidate the gains in recent years. Here's looking forward to the more prosperous Jammu and Kashmir in 2023.

Will RTI Go Digital by Jan 15th?

Recent circular on RTI and statement of CS to make all services Online is a positive development towards Digital India programme

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

wo important developments have taken place recently with regard to better governance and responsive administration in Jammu & Kashmir. Firstly, the J&K Government directed all the Public Authorities to ensure strict adherence to the provisions of the Right to Information Act 2005 (RTI Act) and facilitate speedy dissemination of information to the information seekers. Through its circular no. 50 JK (GAD) of 2022 dated 16.12.2022, the General Administration Department (GAD) instructed all Administrative Secretaries. Heads of Departments and Managing Directors to conduct fortnightly reviews to ascertain the status of disposal of RTI applications received in their offices. In addition, they were also directed to furnish the compliance report on RTI implementation to the GAD.

"The objective of the Right to Information Act, 2005 is to empower citizens by way of promoting transparency and accountability in the working of the government and eradicating corruption to make democracy work for the people in real sense. An informed citizen is well equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable towards the citizens," reads the circular issued by Secretary GAD Dr Piyush Singla

Making all services online by Jan 15th

In addition to the issuance of the aforementioned circular, the Chief Secretary of J&K Dr A K Mehta recently impressed upon all the Govt offices to make all the services online provided by them by January 15, 2023. As per the Govt statement which was also issued on December 16th 2022 while Chief Secretary was reviewing the performance of the Information Technology (IT) Department in a meeting in Srinagar, A K Mehta directed the officers to prepare a list of all the services provided by the departments.

The Chief Secretary directed the officers to separate the services still offered through offline mode and prepare a roadmap for offering the same through an online platform with endto-end digitisation by January 15. Chief Secretary Dr A K Mehta during the meeting asked the officers of the IT department to issue advisories to different Govt departments for conducting security audits of their official websites as well without any delay.

"The IT Department must extend handholding to these departments to comply with the direction and to frame a list of offices that fail to conduct this audit so that action is initiated against those responsible. We need to synchronise the public services with auto appeal as per the provisions of Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA) " Chief Secretary said



Government websites have not been updated for years and that is why the Chief Secretary has to ask the IT Department officers to audit different Govt websites

January 20th.

When the Government talks about the speedy dissemination of Information and ensuring all offline services are provided through online mode, that is only possible when the Govt receives and provides information through a digital platform. I am sure by January 15th Govt offices and all the public authorities in J&K will be receiving the RTI applications through an online mode & information will also be provided to RTI applicants through the same mode as well. In addition to it RTI application fees and additional fees (xerox charges) will also be received digitally. secretariat in Srinagar or Jammu or any other office located in their district or any other place. To seek information through an offline mode, an RTI applicant has to travel to Govt offices , pay bus fare and then spend the whole day in the town. If he or she has to get a postal order (in case of non BPL applicants) then more money is needed to travel to district headquarters. On an average an RTI applicant from remote areas has to spend at least Rs 400 to 500 to file an RTI application even if he belongs to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. Once we have online RTI service available the same RTI application can be filed in 5 minutes from a cell phone.

The Circular issued on RTI implementation by Govt has directed that all Public Authorities to sensitize their Central Public Information Officers (CPIOs) on the important provisions of the RTI law like voluntary disclosure of information, adherence to the prescribed timelines for disposal of RTI applications, prompt transfer of applications and appropriate disposal of appeals by the appellate authorities. To implement all the aforementioned provisions of RTI law are difficult to be implemented through an offline mode except RTI workshops and training for CPIOs that have to be held mostly physically. When it comes to making voluntary disclosure of information especially as mandated under Section 4 of RTI Act 2005, the Govt websites must have all the information available so that people won't have to even use RTI to access the same

Conclusion

Unfortunately, most of our Government

OTHER OPINON

Wage crisis

he International Labour Organization has come out with the latest Global Wage Report 2022. Over the past two years, labour markets have witnessed significant changes globally. These changes have been triggered by a slow economic recovery from the pandemic, high and persistent inflation rates, and new uncertainties brought about by the war in Ukraine. Global growth rates slowed down in 2022 and are expected to do so in 2023. The International Monetary Fund had predicted a global growth rate of 3.6% in April 2022, which was revised downwards to 3.2% in July 2022. In October 2022, the IMF's prediction for economic growth in 2023 was in the range of 2% to 2.7%. Inflation was expected as an outcome of the pandemic; the policymakers' response to it was presumed to be the loosening of money supply and reduction in interest rates. However, central banks across the world tightened money supply and hiked interest rates in an effort to control high inflation rates. In 2022, the global average inflation rate is expected to be 8.8%, falling to 6.5% in 2023 and to 4.1% in 2024. Weak recovery and high inflation have led to a slow adjustment in nominal wages and rapid rise in prices. Hence real earnings, particularly among low-income households, have fallen sharply.

Globally, real monthly wages fell by 0.9% during the first six months of 2022. For the G20 countries, which account for 60% of the world's wage-earners, real wages fell by 2.2% in the half year of 2022. The labour market has in some economies been characterised by greater wage inequality. On the other hand, almost all nations, particularly India, have witnessed a large informalisation of the labour market which implies greater uncertainty in job security and earnings. From the policy perspective, there is a need to switch from average targeting to focussed targeting of income support schemes. Since high inflation has raised housing, food and transport prices, lower income households require special attention, with more than average adjustments required in their nominal wages. Central banks have to realise the need to ensure that cheap and assured credit lines are available for the small and medium sectors of the economy while tightening money supply and hiking interest rates. The economic scars of Covid will not go away in a hurry. Interventions must be suitably designed to ensure that the scars do not leave lasting marks on the economy.

Telegraph India

during the meeting

Chief Secretary Dr Mehta also asked the IT officials to put all the Govt services on e-UNNAT and Service Plus for their availability from a common platform so that it would help the citizens across Jammu & Kashmir.

RTI Online

The Government has come up with a detailed circular on RTI implementation for the first time since the central RTI law (RTI Act 2005) was extended to Jammu & Kashmir post article 370 abrogation. As a long-time campaigner of RTI Act, I see this as a very positive development and I congratulate the Government particularly Lt Governor Mr Manoj Sinha, Chief Secretary Dr A K Mehta and Secretary GAD Dr Piyush Singla. In addition to it, the clear direction given by the Chief Secretary to the officers of the IT department to prepare a roadmap for making all the offline services online by Jan 15th is also a great decision provided all the offline services are provided digitally to people as soon as possible. By making Govt departments conduct security audits of their websites is also a great decision and I am sure the Chief Secretary will take a follow-up meeting on this by

Challenges faced by RTI applicants

As there is no digital platform available in J&K to file an application under the Right to Information Act (RTI), the information seekers have to face lots of challenges to deposit RTI application fees in the shape of Indian Postal Order (IPO) or to send the RTI application. As I have mentioned in one of my columns in the past also, to buy an Indian Postal Order (IPO) is an arduous task in J&K. I have not come across a single post office in any urban or rural area of J&K where Rs 10 Indian Postal Orders (IPOs) are freely available. In some urban areas if one gets hold of one or two IPOs from a post office this is impossible in a rural area of a town. If a person from a remote village in Rafiabad Baramulla wants to file an RTI application , he or she will have to travel all the way from Rafiabad village to Sopore or Baramulla town to get the Indian postal order. This has happened with me personally and I always buy IPOs from General Post Office (GPO) Srinagar. How can we call this citizen friendly ? Had online RTI service been available in J&K like central Govt offices, people living in remote areas like Padar in Kishtwar, Loran in Poonch or Tulail in Bandipora could also access information from civil

websites have not been updated for years and that is why the Chief Secretary has to ask the IT Department officers to audit different Govt websites. On the platform of digital adoption, India ranks amongst the top 2 countries globally and the digital economy of India is likely to cross 1 trillion US dollars by the year 2023. PM Modi launched the Digital India campaign on July 1st 2015 to make government services available to citizens electronically by online infrastructure improvement and also by enhancing internet connectivity. It also aims to empower the country digitally in the domain of technology. J&K Govt offices have to provide the information electronically under RTI Act 2005 now so as to realize the dream of Digital India programme.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat is an Acumen Fellow. He is Founder & Chairman of Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement



All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, spaceand accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

Simple Pleasures

ESPITE living in the digital age, there are some habits which many of us simply cannot give up. Preferring to read a printed book over the online version is one such. There are multiple reasons why a large swathe of Indian readers always prefer hard copy of books to online reading. Psychologically, the 'ownership' factor could be a key reason, besides the nice feeling you get while touching a new book, its fragrance, pleasure of turning the pages, easy portability, leisure reading – all make a physical book comfortably win over an e-book. However splendid the cover image of an e-book may look on screen, it is still an image rather than a physical thing. Another major disadvantage with an e-book is that you cannot look at more than one page at once. In fact, a study from West Chester University of Pennsylvania reveals that students who read on iPads had lower reading comprehension than when they read traditional printed books. A good physical book is like a full course of a sumptuous meal,

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whereas an e-book is just fast food. Said the noted American novelist Harper Lee: "The book to read is not the one that thinks for you, but the one which makes you think."

Ranganathan Sivakumar siva19kumar@gmail.com

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Should Kashmir Worry About Covid Surge in China?

Dr. Parvaiz Koul

This is a thread of tweets posted by Director SKIMS, Parvaiz Koul, on his twitter.

J&K and India as a whole are not experiencing an unusual surge as yet. However since it is winter, the time for circulation of respiratory pathogens in Kashmir, it is in one's interest to be alert and cautious. But kindly do not panic. The situation in China is different. They resorted to strict lockdowns which resulted in lower exposure to the virus and a lower immunity by natural infection.

Also the vaccine used predominantly in China is the inactivated Sinopharm/ Sinovac vaccine which is inferior in evoking a robust immune response as compared to the adenovirus vectored vaccine used predominantly in India.

And we do not know the percentage immunized among those vulnerable to severe illness (like the old or those with comorbidities) in China, specifically about booster doses. Possibly they opened abruptly without adequate immunization of the vulnerable.

The variant(s) of Omicron circulating there has(ve) a high transmissibility. These BF.7 and XBB have been reported



from India for a while but haven't caused any outbreaks so far. For any variant to mune escape. Which is why these sub-

variants of Omicron have survived. However, as a group, Omicron does not cause severe illness and most of the symptoms are those of the upper respiratory tract rather than the lower RT and the lungs. However, new and more virulent variants can emerge anytime which emphasizes genomic surveillance to stay on the lookout for emerging variants. This is the reason for the advisory from MOHFW. India has a clear advantage of higher vaccinations and more natural infections during the Omicron surge.

Currently there is no surge in India or particularly in Kashmir. Hence no need to panic. CAB will help. Masks would help in settings with potential for spread of any virus, like crowded settings etc.

Those who were advised the precautionary dose and did not receive it yet, would be helped by boosting their immunity. International travel to countries with high COVID activity must be undertaken with caution and only if absolutely necessary.

Modelling data from credible agencies (like from University of Washington) predict a low circulation of the virus for coming weeks in JK, but models can go horribly wrong.

So stay calm, observe routine precautions and vaccinate if you haven't, as per the advisories. No panic please. Safety saves. Better safe than sorry.

THE VARIANT(S) OF OMICRON CIRCULATING THERE HAS(VE) A HIGH TRANSMISSIBILITY. These BF.7 and XBB have been reported from India for a while but haven't caused any outbreaks so far. For any variant to survive it has to demonstrate some immune escape. Which is why these sub-variants of Omicron have survived. However, as a group, Omicron does not cause severe illness and most of the symptoms are those of the upper respiratory tract rather than the lower RT and the lungs."

Covid Response And 11 Ways To Stop Repeating Mistakes

Jo Adetunji

A global report released today highlights massive global failures in the response to

includi produc vaccine

nying finance, to ensure all WHO regions, including the world's poorer regions, can produce, distribute, research and develop vaccines treatments and other critical pan-

COVID-19.

The report, which was convened by The Lancet journal and to which we contributed, highlights widespread global failures of prevention and basic public health.

This resulted in an estimated 17.7 million excess deaths due to COVID-19 (including those not reported) to September 15.

The report also highlights that the pandemic has reversed progress made towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in many countries further impacting on health and wellbeing. The report, from The Lancet COVID-19

The report, from The Lancet COVID-19 Commission, found most governments were ill-prepared, too slow to act, paid too little attention to the most vulnerable in their societies, and were hampered by low public trust and an epidemic of misinformation.

However, countries of the Western Pacific – including East Asia, Australia and New Zealand – adopted more successful control strategies than most.

This had resulted in an estimated 300 deaths per million in the region (around 558 per million in Australia and 382 per million in New Zealand to September 12). This is compared with more than 3,000 per million in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The report also sets out 11 key recommendations for ending the pandemic and preparing for the next one.

Co-operation lacking

The report is the result of two years' work from global experts in public policy, health, economics, social sciences and finance. We contributed to the public health component.

One of the report's major criticisms is the failure of global cooperation for the financing and distribution of vaccines, medicines and personal protective equipment for lowincome countries.

This is not only inequitable but has raised the risk of more dangerous variants.

The report highlighted the critical role of strong and equitable public health systems. These need to have: strong relationships with local communities; investment in behavioural and social science research to develop more effective interventions and health communication strategies; and continuously updated evidence.

11 recommendations



The report made 11 recommendations to end the pandemic and prepare for future ones.

1. Vaccines plus other measures – establishing global and national "vaccination plus" strategies. This would combine mass immunisation in all countries, ensure availability of testing and treatment for new infections and long COVID, coupled with public health measures such as face masks, promotion of safe workplaces, and social and financial support for self-isolation.

2. Viral origins – an unbiased, independent and rigorous investigation is needed to investigate the origins of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including from a natural spillover from animals or a possible laboratory-related spillover. This is needed to prevent future pandemics and strengthen public trust in science and public authorities. 3. Bolster the World Health Organization and maintain it as the lead organisation for responding to emerging infectious diseases. Give WHO new regulatory authority, more backing by national political leaders, more contact with the global scientific community and a larger core budget.

4. Establish a global pandemic agreement and strengthen international health regulations. New pandemic arrangements should include bolstering WHO's authority, creating a global surveillance and monitoring system for infectious disease outbreaks. It would also include regulations for processing international travellers and freight under global pandemic conditions, and the publication of an annual WHO report on global pandemic preparedness and response.

5. Create a new WHO Global Health Board

to support WHO decision-making especially on controversial matters. This would be composed of heads of government representing each of the six WHO regions and elected by the member states of those regions.

6. New regulations to prevent pandemics from natural spillovers and researchrelated activities and for investigating their origins. Prevention of natural spillovers would require better regulation of domestic and wild-animal trade and enhancement of surveillance systems for pathogens (disease-causing micro-organisms) in domestic animals and humans. The World Health Assembly should also adopt new global regulations on biosafety to regulate international research programs dealing with dangerous pathogens.

7. A ten-year global strategy by G20 (Group of Twenty) nations, with accompa-

demic control tools.

8. Strengthen national health systems based on the foundations of public health and universal health coverage and grounded in human rights and gender equality.

9. Adopt national pandemic preparedness plans, which include scaling up communitybased public health systems, investment in a skilled workforce, investment in public health and scientific literacy to "immunise" the public against dis-information, investment in behavioural and social sciences research to develop more effective interventions, protection of vulnerable groups, establishment of safe schools and workplaces, and actions to improve coordinated surveillance and monitoring for new variants.

10. Establishment of a new Global Health Fund where – with the support of WHO – there is increased and effective investment for both pandemic preparedness and health systems in developing countries, with a focus on primary care.

11. Sustainable development and green recovery plans. The pandemic has been a setback for sustainable development so bolstering funding to meet sustainability goals is needed.

Unlock a new approach

To improve the world's ability to respond to pandemics we need to unlock a new approach. The key component to any meaningful transformation is to collaborate and work towards a new era of multilateral cooperation.

Governments in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere have talked about "building back better". We need to take the lessons learnt from the failures of the past few years and build a stronger framework. This will not only help reduce the dangers of COVID-19 but also forestall the next pandemic and any future global crisis.

By reassessing and strengthening global institutions and co-operation, we can build and define a more resilient future.

By arrangements with The Conversation

LIFE & TIMES

Not Everything We Call AI Is Actually 'Artificial Intelligence' Here's What You Need To Know

The Conversation

n August 1955, a group of scientists made a funding request for USD 13,500 to host a summer workshop at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire. The field they proposed to explore was artificial intelligence (AI).

While the funding request was humble, the conjecture of the researchers was not: "every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it"

Since these humble beginnings, movies and media have romanticised AI or cast it as a villain. Yet for most people, AI has remained as a point of discussion and not part of a conscious lived experience.

AI has arrived in our lives

Late last month, AI, in the form of Chat-GPT, broke free from the sci-fi speculations and research labs and onto the desktops and phones of the general public. It's what's known as a "generative AI" – suddenly, a cleverly worded prompt can produce an essay or put together a recipe and shopping list, or create a poem in the style of Elvis Presley.

While ChatGPT has been the most dramatic entrant in a year of generative AI success, similar systems have shown even wider potential to create new content, with text-to-image prompts used to create vibrant images that have even won art competitions

AI may not yet have a living conscious-

ness or a theory of mind popular in sci-fi movies and novels, but it is getting closer to at least disrupting what we think artificial intelligence systems can do.

Researchers working closely with these systems have swooned under the prospect of sentience, as in the case with Google's large language model (LLM) LaMDA. An LLM is a model that has been trained to process and generate natural language.

Generative AI has also produced worries about plagiarism, exploitation of original content used to create models, ethics of information manipulation and abuse of trust, and even "the end of programming".

At the centre of all this is the question that has been growing in urgency since the Dartmouth summer workshop: does AI differ from human intelligence?

What does 'AI' actually mean?

To qualify as AI, a system must exhibit some level of learning and adapting. For this reason, decision-making systems, automation, and statistics are not AI.

AI is broadly defined in two categories: Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). To date. AGI does not exist.

The key challenge for creating a general AI is to adequately model the world with all the entirety of knowledge, in a consistent and useful manner. That's a massive undertaking, to say the least.

Most of what we know as AI today has narrow intelligence - where a particular



system addresses a particular problem. Unlike human intelligence, such narrow AI intelligence is effective only in the area in which it has been trained: fraud detection, facial recognition or social recommendations, for example.

AGI, however, would function as humans do. For now, the most notable example of trying to achieve this is the use of neural networks and "deep learning" trained on vast amounts of data

Neural networks are inspired by the way human brains work. Unlike most machine learning models that run calculations on the training data, neural networks work by feeding each data point one by one through an interconnected network, each time adjusting the parameters.

As more and more data are fed through

the network, the parameters stabilise; the final outcome is the "trained" neural network, which can then produce the desired output on new data - for example, recognising whether an image contains a cat or a dog.

The significant leap forward in AI today is driven by technological improvements in the way we can train large neural networks, readjusting vast numbers of parameters in each run thanks to the capabilities of large cloud-computing infrastructures. For example, GPT-3 (the AI system that powers ChatGPT) is a large neural network with 175 billion parameters.

What does AI need to work?

AI needs three things to be successful. First, it needs high-quality, unbiased data. and lots of it. Researchers building neural networks use the large data sets that have come about as society has digitised.

Co-Pilot, for augmenting human programmers, draws its data from billions of lines of code shared on GitHub. ChatGPT and other large language models use the billions of websites and text documents stored online.

Text-to-image tools, such as Stable Diffusion, DALLE-2, and Midjourney, use image-text pairs from data sets such as LAION-5B. AI models will continue to evolve in sophistication and impact as we digitise more of our lives, and provide them with alternative data sources, such as simulated data or data from game settings like Minecraft.

AI also needs computational infrastructure for effective training. As computers become more powerful, models that now require intensive efforts and large-scale computing may in the near future be handled locally. Stable Diffusion, for example, can already be run on local computers rather than cloud environments.

The third need for AI is improved models and algorithms. Data-driven systems continue to make rapid progress in domain after domain once thought to be the territory of human cognition.

However, as the world around us constantly changes, AI systems need to be constantly retrained using new data. Without this crucial step, AI systems will produce answers that are factually incorrect, or do not take into account new information that's emerged since they were trained.

DIY Air Filter Can Effectively Filter Out Viruses, Air Pollutants: Study

Press Trust Of India

simple, easy-to-construct air filter can protect against illness caused not only by viruses but also by chemical pollutants, according to a study.

The filter named Corsi-Rosenthal boxes, or cubes, can be constructed from materials found at hardware stores: four MERV-13 filters, duct tape, a 20-inch box fan and a cardboard box.

"The findings show that an inexpensive, easy-to-construct air filter can protect against illness caused not only by viruses but also by chemical pollutants," said study lead author Joseph Braun, an associate professor at Brown Universitv in the US.

"This type of highly-accessible blic health intervention can empower community groups to take steps to improve their air quality and therefore, their health," Braun said in a statement. As part of a project, boxes were assembled by students and campus community members and installed in the School of Public Health as well as other buildings on the Brown University campus.

a room's concentrations of semivolatile organic compounds before and during the box's operation.

The results, published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology, showed that Corsi-Rosenthal boxes significantly decreased the concentrations of several PFAS and phthalates in 17 rooms during the period they were used (February to March 2022).

PFAS, a type of synthetic chemical found in a range of products including cleaners, textiles and wire insulation, decreased by 40 to 60 per cent. Phthalates, commonly found in building materials and personal care products, were reduced by 30 to 60 per cent, the researchers found.

PFAS and phthalates have been linked to various health problems. including asthma, reduced vaccine response, decreased birth weight. altered brain development in children, altered metabolism and some cancers, said Braun. They are also considered to be endocrine-disrupting chemicals that may mimic or interfere with the body's hormones. PFAS have been associated with reduced vaccine response in children and also may increase the severity of and susceptibility to COVID-19 in adults, according to the researchers. "The reduction of PFAS and phthalate levels is a wonderful

co-benefit to the Corsi-Rosenthal boxes," said study co-author Robin Dodson, a research scientist at USbased NGO Silent Spring Institute.

"These boxes are accessible. easy to make and relatively inexpensive, and they're currently being used in universities and homes across the country," he added.

The researchers said Corsi-Rosenthal box was designed to be a simple, cost-effective tool to promote accessible and effective air cleaning during the CO-VID-19 pandemic.

"The fact that the boxes are also effective at filtering out air pollutants is a fantastic discovery," said Richard Corsi, one of the inventors of the boxes from the University of California, Davis.

The researchers also found that the Corsi-Rosenthal boxes increase sound levels by an average of 5 decibels during the day and 10 decibels at night, which could be considered distracting in certain settings, such as classrooms.

Jammu And Kashmir Public Service Commission **RESHAM GHAR COLONY, BAKSHI NAGAR, JAMMU - 180001**

website:http://jkpsc.nic.in email;jkpscsecretary@gmail.com Jammu: 0191-2566528 (f)2566530 Srinagar:0194-2312629(f) 2312631

Subject-Filling up of posts of Veterinary Assistant Surgeon in the Animal Husbandry Department, J&K.



The J&K Public Service Commission has advertised 23 posts of Veterinary Assistant Surgeon in Animal Husbandry Department vide Notification No. 26-PSC (DR-P) of 2022 dated 20.12.2022. The notification/details are available on the J&K PSC website http//www.jkpsc.nic.in.

DIPK-15645/22 DATED: 26-12-2022

(Bashir Ahmad Dar) JKAS Secretary J&K Public Service Commission Jammu.

Jammu And Kashmir Public Service Commission

RESHAM GHAR COLONY, BAKSHI NAGAR, JAMMU - 180001

To assess the cubes' efficacy at removing chemicals from the air, Braun and his team compared

However, Braun said, the health benefits of the box likely outweigh the audio side effects.

"The box filters do make some noise. But you can construct them quickly for about USD 100 per unit, with materials from the hardware store. They are not only highly effective but also scalable, Braun added.

website:http://jkpsc.nic.in email;jkpscsecretary@gmail.com Jammu: 0191-2566528 (f)2566530 Srinagar:0194-2312629(f) 2312631

Subject-Filling up of post of Assistant Commissioner Food Safety and Assistant Controller Drugs, J&K in Drug & Food Control Organization, Health & Medical Education Department.

NOTICE Dated: 26.12.2022

The J&K Public Service Commission has advertised 07 posts, i.e 05 of Assistant Commissioner Food Safety and 02 posts of Assistant Controller Drugs, in J&K Drugs & Food Control Organization, in Health & Medical Education Department vide Notification No. 27-PSC (DR-P) of 2022 dated 21.12.2022. The notification/details are available on the J&K PSC website http://www.jkpsc.nic.in.

DIPK-15646/22 DATED: 26-12-2022

Bashir Ahmad Dar JKAS Secretary J&K Public Service Commission Jammu

Office Of The Executive Engineer Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla

Short Term e-Tender NIT No: E-50of 2022-23

For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, sealed e-tenders In two covers are invited from experienced, reputed and registered firms/ genuine manufacturers/authorized distributors/dealers/workshop holders / SSI Unit holders for the following work:

Γ	S.	Name of work	Cost of	Estimated		Validity		Programme		Tender ID no.
	No.		tender	Cost	money	of offer	completion		Accorded/ Posi-	
		1		(Rs. in					tion of Funds	
L			(Rate in Rs.)	Lacs)						
h		Mechanical work at LI/dewater-	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	120 days		M&R	Yes	2022_IFC_200805_1
Ľ		ing scheme KP Bala New of MISD	50.00	0.227	454.00				AAA order no.	
L		Pattan.					07 days		01-MCO of	
6		Modification of base frame and	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.				2022-23 Dated:	2022_IFC_200805_2
۴		other mechanical works at LI/	50.00	0.30	600.00				19-04-2022	
		dewatering Scheme Mirchime-								
		rMirgundof MISD Pattan.								

The tenders consisting of qualifying/eligibility criteria, technical specifications, general and commercial terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the website https://jktenders.gov.in from 26-12-2022(05:00pm).

The bids shall be submitted in electronic format on the website https://jktenders.gov.in from 26-12-2022(06:00 pm) to 02-01-2023(6:55 pm). The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on the time and date, in the office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla in presence of the bidders who wish to attend. In case offices happen to be closed due to holiday, or any other reason, on the schedule date of opening, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the scheduled time and venue.

The complete bidding shall be online.

Prequalification bids shall be opened online in the office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla on 03-01-2023 at 12:30 pm after which the financial bids of qualifying bidders shall be opened on the same day.

No. MIDB/CC-02/3773-79

S&D Division Ist Srinagar

DIPK-15624/22 Dated: 26-12-2022

Sd/-**Executive Engineer** Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Executive Engineer Sewerage & Drainage Division No: Ist Suliman Complex Dalgate Srinagar

Notice Inviting e-Tendering e-mail: xen_sewerageueed@yahoo.com

GIST of Short Term e-NIT No: 44 of 2022-23

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K State e-tenders are invited from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt. and other State / Central Government for the following works:-

The bid should be percentage based showing clearly the percentage of appreciation or depreciation which shall be applicable to all items advertized in bill of quantities. The basic rates applicable (at par) as per SSR of 2022 / analysis stand clearly shown against each item of advertized bill of quantities

S. No	Name of work	Advertize d Slab	Earnest money	Cost of T/doc. (In rupees)	Period of Contract	Class of contract
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Stage Contract M and R for Sewer Network at Govt. Medical College Boys Hostel Bemina Srinagar	9.03	18060/=	500/=	From the date of issue of LIO	"C&D"
2	Annual Maintenance Clearance Contract for the year 2022-23 at Govt Lalla Ded Hospital Srinagar	1.73	3460/=	500/=	/Allotment up-to 31- 03-2023	"DEE"

quantities (B.O.Q), set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen / downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

	1	Date of publishing	24/12/2022
	2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	24/12/2022 to 03/01/2023 up-to 4:00 PM
	3	Bid submission Start Date	24/12/2022 from 4:00 PM
	4	Bid submission End Date	03/01/2023 up-to 4:00 PM
	5	Date & time of opening of bids (online)	04/01/2023 at 11:00 AM or any other convenient date.
Ter	nde	6	utive Engineer S&D Division I* iman Complex Dalgate Srinagar
: SDDI/	/CC/	4626-39	Sd/= Executive Engineer

DIPK-15637/22 Dated: 26/12/2022

BUSINESS

KASHMIR OBSERVER Srinagar | Tuesday | 27-12-2022

World Economy Is Headed For A Recession In 2023, Says Researcher



Philip Aldrick, Bloomberg

NEW YORK: The world faces a recession in 2023 higher borrowing costs aimed at tackling inflation cause a number of economies to contract, according to the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

The global economy surpassed \$100 trillion for the first time in 2022 but will stall in 2023 as policy makers continue their fight against soaring prices, the British consultancy said in its annual World Economic League Table.

"It's likely that the world economy will face recession next year as a result of the rises in interest rates in response to higher inflation," said Kay Daniel Neufeld, director and head of Forecasting at CEBR.

The report added that, "The battle against inflation is not won yet. We expect central bankers to stick to their guns in 2023 despite the economic costs. The cost of bringing inflation down to more comfortable levels is a poorer growth outlook for a number of years to come."

The findings are more pessimistic than the latest forecast from the International Monetary Fund. That institution warned in October that more than a third of the world economy will contract and there is a 25% chance of global GDP growing by less than 2% in 2023, which it defines as a global recession.

Even so, by 2037, world gross domestic product will have doubled as developing economies catch up with the richer ones. The shifting balance of power will see the East Asia and Pacific region account for over a third of global output by 2037, while Europe's share shrinks to less than a fifth.

The CEBR takes its base data from the IMF's World Economic Outlook and uses an internal model to forecast growth, inflation and exchange rates.

China is now not set to overtake the US as the world's largest economy until 2036 at the earliest - six years later than expected. That reflects China's zero Covid policy and rising trade tensions with the west slow, which have slowed its expansion.

CEBR had originally expected the switch in 2028, which it pushed back to 2030 in last year's league table. It now thinks the cross-over point will not happen until 2036 and may come even later if Beijing tries to take control of Taiwan and faces retaliatory trade sanctions.

"The consequences of economic warfare between China and the West would be several times more severe than what we have seen following Russia's attack on Ukraine. There would almost certainly be quite a sharp world recession and a resurgence of inflation," CEBR said.

Payment System Operators To Report Fraud On RBI's DAKSH From Jan 1

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: In order to streamline reporting, enhance efficiency and automate the payments fraud management process, the RBI on Monday said the fraud reporting module will be migrated to DAKSH -- the Reserve Bank's advanced supervisory monitoring from January The RBI operationalised the Central Payments Fraud Information Registry (CPFIR) in March 2020 with reporting of payment frauds by scheduled commercial banks and non-bank Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) issuers, "...entities shall commence reporting of payment frauds in DAKSH from this date (January 01, 2023)," the central bank said in a circular. In addition to the existing bulk upload facility to report payment frauds, DAKSH provides additional functionalities, like a maker-checker facility, online screen-based reporting, an option for requesting additional information, the facility to issue alerts/ advisories, generation of dashboards and reports.

All RBI-authorised Payment System Operators (PSOs) / providers and payment system participants operating in India are required to report all payment frauds, including attempted incidents, irrespective of value either reported by their

Missed Inflation Target, Digital Currency Pilot Mark RBI's 2022 Map; Growth Vector To Dominate Ahead

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India failed to deliver on its contracted inflation target for the first time, started fiat digital currency pilot and finally saw its efforts to improve bank balance sheets see fruition in 2022, making it a mixed year for the central bank. With inflation ebbing into

the target band, focus is likely to shift to helping economic growth in the new year, especially given the lagged impact of 2.25 per cent in rate hikes since May 2022, is likely to hamper GDP expansion.

hamper GDP expansion. The big story of 2022 happened on October 12, when official data showed that headline inflation was above the 6 per cent mark -- the upper end of the tolerance band set for the central bank -- for nine consecutive months. It triggered a letter from RBI to the government enumerating the reasons for the miss and also when it sees the price rise coming to the 4 per cent mark. A bulk of the blame for persitent inflation was

sistent inflation was placed on the deteriorating global situation following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February, which led to a huge spike in the commodity prices, especially crude which India imports.

The Indian situation on inflation was not as bad as many other countries experiencing



record price rise, which served as a consolation.

The year started off with RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) going for a prolonged status quo, till it delivered the surprise after an unscheduled meeting on May 4, by hiking the repo rate by 0.40 per cent. Many blamed RBI for being behind the curve and acting late, but the central bank defended the actions by asserting that it was not behind the curve. They followed it with three consecutive hikes of 0.50 per cent and another of 0.35 per cent in December.

For some, reducing the quantum of the rate hike to 0.35 per cent means that RBI will not be reverting to the 0.50 per cent hikes even as the world is bracing for more central banks to hike rates by 0.75 per cent.

Headline inflation cooling off to 5.8 per cent in November has led more analysts to believe it will lead RBI to pause its rate hikes, and the diver-

gent views coming out in the latest minutes of the six-member MPC only enhances the likelihood of a pause.

Helping the growth momentum in the economy will be a prime motive for a move like rate hike pause, as analysts already are pegging FY24 growth to slip to under 6 per cent.

Even RBI has revised down its GDP growth estimate to 6.8 per cent for FY23 though it is yet to come up with an estimate for FY24. Some analysts are even building-in the possibility of a rate cut as early as 2023 to help.

The currency depreciation aggravated the inflation situation as much of the commodities are imported. Unsurprisingly, it attracted a lot of RBI attention, with the overall reserves
 compared to an umbrella to protect on a rainy day -- declining by over USD 100 billion as RBI defended the rupee.

Still, the rupee touched a lifetime low of 83.29 against the dollar and the official line continued to be that market interventions are done to do away with volatilities. RBI also introduced a slew of new measures, including settling bilateral trade in rupee and incentivising diaspora deposits for banks. Given that the Narendra

Modi government has to face a general election in 2024, the pressure for addressing the growth demands are only bound to increase.

J&K Marching Towards Economic Prosperity: Advisor Bhatnagar

Inaugurates Marketing Exhibition-Cum-Mega Sale of unit holders of J&K SC, ST, BC Dev Corp



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar Monday inaugurated Marketing Exhibition-Cum-Mega Sale of products and handicrafts of entrepreneurs and unit holders sponsored by J&K SC,ST& BC Development Corporation at Jammu Haat here.

Addressing the gathering of large number of unit holders and beneficiaries, Advisor Bhatnagar said that the LG's Administration is committed towards the upliftment of weaker sections of the society and on from last three years significant initiatives have been launched for the SCs, STs and OBCs across Jammu and Kashmir. He added that more than 36 crores of assistance amount has been disbursed by the corporation this year which reflects the intentions of Administration towards their welfare. The Advisor further said that

face the corporation has also simpli-024, fied the procedure of obtaining government assistance and online mode of service delivery has

been established across UT for the benefit of common citizens. He enjoined upon the management of corporation to maintain coordination with other departments so that the aspiring entrepreneurs are facilitated and provided timely benefits.

Calling upon the officers of corporation for rigorous awareness campaigns, Advisor Bhatnagar asked them to target the locals form the grassroots level and make them aware about different government beneficiary schemes. He asked them to organise awareness camps in coordination with PRIs so that the required target group is benefitted. Highlighting about the various interventions of government for upliftment of weaker sections of society, Advisor Bhatnagar maintained that UT is marching towards the economic prosperity and development and from the last several years that development and change is reflected on the ground. "Opportunities like today were never before here and everyone should take due benefits of it", said Advisor Bhatnagar.

Awareness Among Farmers Key To Successful Implementation Of Projects: Dir Agri

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: The Director Agriculture Kashmir, Chowdhary Mohammad Iqbal Monday visited Baramulla district and convened a meeting of officers of the department to review the physical and financial progress on the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes, flagship programs and CAPEX budget at DAK Banglow Sopore. During the meeting, different centrally sponsored schemes being implemented by the de-

energize the agriculture sector but will also change the economic fortune of the farming community of the region. Director impressed upon

Director impressed upon the officers to raise awareness regarding these approved projects among the farming community so that the desired results and targets could be achieved. He asked the officers to ensure that the benefit under these projects reaches every grass root level farmer.

He asked the officers to put in all the efforts and work in



India's Agri, Allied Commodities Export Up 12% In Apr-Oct To \$30 Billion



customers or detected by the entities themselves, it added.

This reporting was earlier facilitated through Electronic Data Submission Portal (EDSP) and is being migrated to DAKSH.

After going live, payment fraud reporting in DAKSH effective January 01, 2023, entities shall not be able to report any payment frauds in EDSP, the central bank said. The responsibility to submit the reported payment fraud transactions shall be of the issuer bank/PPI issuer/credit card issuing NBFCs, whose issued payment instrument has been used in the fraud," the RBI said. Press Trust Of India NEW DELHI: India's export of agriculture and allied commodities rose 11.97 per cent to USD 30.21 billion during April-October period of current fiscal year, the agriculture ministry said on

Monday. The exports stood at USD 26.98 billion in the same period of 2021-22, it said in a statement. Wheat, basmati rice, raw cotton, castor oil, coffee, and fresh fruits were major commodities exported routes in the country.

The overall export of managri and allied commodities rose 20 per cent to USD been 50.24 billion in 2021-22, elect when compared with USD cultu 41.86 billion in the previous with

year, it added. The ministry said there was improvement in the farm produce logistics with the introduction of 'Kisan

Rail' service in July 2020. Till December this year, Kisan

routes in the country. Around 1,260 wholesale mandis in 22 states and three union territories have been integrated with the electronic-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)

with 1.72 crore farmers and 2.13 lakh traders registered on the platform till the current month, it said. Also, 4,015 farmer pro-

ducer organisations (FPOs) have been registered under a new scheme, it added.

partment including CAPEX, RKVY, MIDH, ATMA, NFSM, PM KISAN, SOIL Health Card Scheme, KISAN Credit Card Scheme etc. were discussed in detail.

Addressing the meeting, the Director said that the UT government has approved 29 projects under holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors, and implementation of these projects would not only coordination with the officers of allied sectors to address the issues related to primary as well as secondary agriculture. Director reaffirmed the

commitment to attract young educated youth towards the agriculture sector. He said the efforts at different levels under different centrally sponsored schemes are on, in this direction and in coming days we are expecting good results.

Buoyant Tax Collections Cushion Govt On Fiscal Front; ITR Reforms Likely

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Riding on the back of a 26 per cent surge in tax collections, the government is set to unveil the next set of reforms in tax administration by pruning the number of forms available for filing Income Tax Return (ITR) to improve taxpayers' experience and reduce the time taken to file returns.

Both direct and indirect tax collections have been buoyant in 2022 in clear indication of revival of the economy after the pandemic and also as a result of government efforts to plug tax leakages.

Going forward, as it seeks to tighten the noose around evaders, the government may also look at stricter tax deduction norms for e-commerce and online service providers, besides online gaming.

Taxation of the digital economy, ensuring developing countries get their fair share of taxes and global coordination for taxation of cryptocurrencies would be one of the priority areas as India is all set to host the leaders of G-20 countries next year.

Rationalisation of long-term capital gains tax structure is also expected to bring parity in holding period between similar asset classes. Currently, shares held for more than one year attract a 10 per cent tax on long-term capital gains. Gains arising from sale of immovable property and unlisted shares held for more than 2 years and debt instruments and jewellery held for over 3 years attract 20 per cent long termcapital gains tax.

Some tweaking in the new tax regime is also expected next year as the government wants to make the exemption-free tax regime more attractive to individual income taxpayers.

In the longer run, the government wants to do away with the complex old tax regime by establishing a new system, devoid of exemptions and deductions. Moving in that direction the government in Union Budget 2020-21 gave option to taxpayers to choose between the old regime with various deductions and exemptions and the new tax regime that offered lower tax rates without exemptions and deductions. Even after two years of it coming into effect, the new tax regime has not taken off and the I-T department is now considering some tinkering with it so that more taxpayers shift to it.

The gross collection of direct taxes (before adjusting for refunds) till December 17 of current fiscal year stood at Rs 13.63 lakh crore, a rise of 26 per cent over the same period of 2021-22 on robust growth in advance tax payment and TDS deductions. After adjusting for refunds, net collection of tax on corporate and individual earnings has jumped nearly 20 per cent to Rs 11.35 lakh crore, which is about 80 per cent of the full year budget target.

The tax authorities are working on a common ITR form for most taxpayers and the forms (ITR-1 and 4) for indi-

the proposed common ITR form or the existing ones. Currently, there are 7 types of income tax return (ITR) forms which are filed by different categories of taxpayers. Rising tax revenues also gives cushion to the government on fiscal front as it more than makes up for the shortfall in budgeted disinvestment



vidual taxpayers will continue. The taxpayers filing ITR-1 and ITR-4, will get an option to choose which form they want while filing their tax returns

target set for current fiscal year. Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said this budget is unique being the post-COVID-19 recovery budget and the last full-year budget from the second term of the current government ahead of the Lok Sabha elections to be held in 2024.

"As the disparity between the personal tax rates and corporate tax rates has widened over the years, it would only be fair if the grief of the common man is allayed and the overall personal taxation system for individual taxpayers is made more sparing. This would indirectly help the government widen the tax collection net by paving way for increased voluntary compliance in the country," Jhunjhunwala said.

Deloitte India Partner Rohinton Sidhwa said there is an expectation that at the G-20, India will push the agenda on areas which will yield more tax for developing countries.

"The unfinished agenda on taxing digital activities of global MNCs is high on the priority list. Also India is expected to spearhead quick headway on better reporting for crypto transactions. The crypto industry globally has attracted much attention and there is a spur to regulate the industry better, prevent misuse through money laundering and capture any tax leakages".

Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co Partner Amit Singhania said it is expected that the government will rationalise prosecution provisions under the Income-tax Act, 1961. The current monetary threshold to invoke criminal prosecution is as low as Rs 10,000 and may require rationalization.

THE YEAR THAT WAS:

On the Goods and Services Tax (GST) side, the GST Council, comprising finance ministers from states and the Centre, has set the ball rolling on rationalisation of tax rates and merging of slabs as the indirect tax regime completed 5 years.

The completion of half a decade of GST regime was significant as the compensation paid to states for revenue loss ended this year and also the term of National Anti Profiteering Authority (NAA) ended with its job getting transferred to anti-monopoly watchdog Competition Commission of India (CCI).

GST collections, which are a barometer of the economy's performance, have been showing improving signs and are stabilising around Rs 1.4 lakh crore on the back of vibrant economy.

As the government stepped up compliance checks and data sharing among departments, the tax revenues have improved over the year and this fiscal is likely to exceed the budget target of Rs 27.50 lakh crore by about Rs 4 lakh crore, helping the government to keep its fiscal deficit in 2022-23 within the budgeted level.

News

Dense Fog, Cold Wave Grip Swathes Of North, Northwest India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi: Delhi and neighbouring plains shivered under a "severe" cold on Monday and large swathes of them battled a dense to very dense fog as the Met department predicted the conditions to persist over the next few days.

A severe cold wave gripped the region with the maximum temperature plummeting 10 degrees below normal in Delhi.

Meteorologists attributed the sharp drop in day temperatures to frigid northwesterly winds barrelling through the plains and reduced sunshine due to foggy weather.

In Delhi, dense fog lowered visibility to 50 metres in some areas, affecting road and rail traffic.

Ten trains were reported running late by 1.45 to 3.30 hours, a Railway spokesperson said.

The mercury dropped to 3 degrees Celsius in the Ridge area, 4.9 degrees below normal, making it the coldest place in the national capital.

The Ridge and the Ayanagar weather stations recorded a minimum temperature of 4 degrees Celsius and 4.1 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, logged a minimum temperature of 5 degrees Celsius -- three notches below normal.

The Palam observatory recorded a minimum temperature



"An increase in the humidity

levels due to the WD resulted in

dense to very dense fog which re-

duced the sunshine, pulling down

the day temperature further," he

The higher the wind speed dur-

Delhi clocked a top wind

of 6.5 degrees Celsius and a and cold northwesterly winds maximum of 12.5 degrees are now sweeping through the Celsius, a departure of nine deplains after its retreat.

grees Celsius from normal. Jafarpur in southwest Delhi logged a minimum temperature of 4.2 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 11 degrees Celsius, 10 notches below normal.

said. Palawat said the wind chill factor -- a measure of the rate Mungeshpur in northwest Delhi recorded a minimum temof heat loss from skin that is experature of 5.3 degrees Celsius posed to the air -- is also high. and a maximum of 11.4 degrees ing cold weather, the colder it feels Celsius against the season's normal maximum temperature of on the skin if a person is outside. 21.4 degrees Celsius. speed of 15 kilometres per hour

The automatic weather stations at Ayanagar, Lodhi Road, on Monday. Biting cold conditions and dense fog were reported in sev-Ridge, Najafgarh, Pitampura, and Mayur Vihar recorded a maximum temperature of six to eral parts of Punjab and Haryana, eight notches below normal. with Narnaul being the coldest in Mahesh Palawat, vice presithe region at 2.4 degrees Celsius.

dent (meteorology and climate In Haryana, Hisar recorded a piercing cold as the minimum change), Skymet Weather, said a western disturbance led to temperature plunged to 2.5 dea fresh spell of snowfall in the grees Celsius. Ambala recorded a mountains on December 25-26 low of 7.7 degrees Celsius, Karnal

6.8 degrees Celsius, Rohtak 6.6 degrees Celsius, Bhiwani 5.5 degrees Celsius, and Sirsa 5.2 degrees Celsius.

Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, recorded a minimum temperature of 7.4 degrees Celsius.

In Punjab, Amritsar recorded a low of 6.5 degrees Celsius, Ludhiana 6 degrees Celsius, Pathankot 8.8 degrees Celsius, Bathinda 3.6 degrees Celsius, Faridkot 6 degrees Celsius, and Gurdaspur 4.5 degrees Celsius. Intense cold conditions and

fog affected normal life in parts of Rajasthan on Monday. At a minimum temperature

of minus 1.5 degrees Celsius, Fatehpur was recorded as the coldest place in the desert state followed by Churu and Pilani (Ihunjhunu) where the mercury settled at 0 degree Celsius and 0.2 degree Celsius respectively on Sunday night, according to the Met department.

Karauli and Sikar recorded a minimum of 0.5 and 1 degree Celsius while the night temperature was 2 degrees Celsius in Alwar, 2.4 in Bikaner, 2.7 in Bhilwara, 3 in Nagaur, 4.4 in Sriganganagar, Sangaria (Hanumangarh) and Vanasthali (Tonk), 4.5 in Dholpur and Anta (Baran), 4.7 in Chittorgarh, 5 in Dabok (Udaipur), 5.2 in Phalodi (Jodhpur) and 5.5 degree Celsius in Bundi.

The maximum temperature in most of the places in the state was recorded between 16 and 25 degree Celsius.

US Embassy Sounds Red Alert; Prohibits Americans From Visiting Islamabad's Marriott Hotel

KASHMIR OBSERVER

SRINAGAR | TUESDAY | 27.12.2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad: The US embassy in Pakistan has warned about a possible terror threat against American citizens at the Marriott Hotel in the country's capital and prohibited American staff from visiting the five-star facility, an official statement said.

The Saudi Arabian embassy in Islamabad also issued a security advisory on Monday, instructing its citizens in Pakistan to restrict their movement. The advisories by the two

key countries came in the wake of a suicide bombing on Friday in Islamabad that killed a policeman. It was the first such attack in the city since 2014.

In its statement issued on Sunday, the American embassy said that the US government is aware of information that unknown individuals are possibly plotting to attack Americans at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad sometime during the holidays.

"Effective immediately, the Embassy in Islamabad is prohibiting all American staff from visiting Islamabad's Marriott Hotel," the statement said.

The embassy also directed that as Islamabad has been placed on a 'Red Alert' citing security concerns while banning all public gatherings, all mission personnel have been urged to refrain from nonessential and unofficial travel



group.

in the capital throughout the holiday season.

It asked the US nationals to exercise vigilance at events and places of worship, and avoid locations with large crowds while reviewing personal security plans.

At least 54 people were killed and several others injured when a dumper truck laden with explosives was detonated in front of the Marriott hotel in Islamabad's red zone area on September 20, 2008.

Meanwhile, the Saudi security alert advised the Saudis in Pakistan to "be cautious" and not venture out except for any necessity. "Security of Islamabad has

need arises.

capital. According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and been placed at the highest level," the alert said, adding Security Studies (PICSS), an Islamabad-based think-tank, it that Saudis should contact the embassy and consulate if the was the first suicide attack in the capital since 2014.

The advisory comes after

the latest attack in Islamabad

and an uptick in countryside

attacks by the banned Tehreeke-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror

The TTP has stepped up at-

tacks on security forces since

November, when they ended

a months-long cease-fire with

suspected militants, includ-

ing a woman of the dreaded

Pakistani Taliban outfit, were

killed in the suicide attack here

on December 23, prompting

authorities in Pakistan to issue

a "red alert" across the federal

One police officer and two

the Pakistan government.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Modelling Data Foresee

adequate immunisation of the vulnerable," he said.

Dr Koul said the variants of Omicron circu-lating in China had a high transmissibility.

"These BF.7 and XBB have been reported from India for a while but haven't caused any outbreaks so far. For any variant to survive it has to demonstrate some immune escape, which is why these sub variants of Omicron have survived. However, as a group, Omicron does not cause severe illness and most of the symptoms are those of the upper respiratory tract rather than the lower RT and the lungs,' he added.

Dr Koul, however, warned that new and more virulent variants could emerge anytime. He also emphasised on genomic surveillance to stay on the lookout for emerging variants.

This is the reason for the advisory from MOHFW (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India). India has a clear advantage of higher vaccinations and more natural infections during the Omicron surge," he said.

Asked if he recommended voluntary testing. Dr Koul said, "It is always better to be with

Cong Leaders

met Sinha and sought the administration's cooperation for the yatra.

The Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir yatra, which has so far traversed more than 2,800 km through 10 states, is on a nine-day winter break and will resume on January 3. It started from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu on September 7 and is likely to conclude in Srinagar by January-end.

"Bharat Jodo Yatra is marching towards its final destination - J&K. Held a meeting today with the Lt. Governor of J&K Shri Manoj Sinha ji along with senior party leaders. Discussed the security arrangements and sought the cooperation of the administration," Venugopal tweeted after the meeting with Sinha.

He also shared a picture of the Congress leaders meeting with Sinha.

Jammu and Kashmir Congress working president Raman Bhalla was also present during the meeting.

Mehbooba Salutes

promote unity in the country.

She claimed that the foundation of secularism has taken a hit in the last seven-eight years. The former Land K chief minister also appre

deal with them. I have not said they should be forgiven. However, there are ordinary people who have no links to militancy, they should not be harassed," Azad said.

J&K Parties Come

plans to hold protests on the issue, its leader Hira Lal Pandita said.

"It is a shameful statement of LG. On the one hand the government is not in a position to provide foolproof security to these employees nor has provided accommodations to them in last over 10 years and on the other hand it is making them scapegoats by forcing them to join their duties in valley where they have no security to their lives," Pandita told PTI.

Reacting to these employees' demands, former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and national conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi must call an all-party meeting on this issue. Don't make Kashmiri Pandits sacrificial lambs if you can't provide security to them. Kashmiri Pandit employees shouldn't be forced to return and resume duties in the Valley."

Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder aina told PTL "We reiterate that we back their demands. We stand firmly by the Kashmiri Pandit and reserved category (Dogra) employees. Come what may, we are with them."

middle path taking into consideration the recent targeted killings in the Valley.

Mufti said, "The administration needs to know their problems and try to resolve them. Giving an ultimatum to join otherwise, your salaries will be stopped is wrong.'

"Everyone, including the Pandits, has suffered a lot but the government should take into consideration the recent (targeted) killings of the community members." Mufti said.

The Aam Aadmi Party asked the lieutenant governor and the BJP government at the Centre to give priority to security of Kashmiri Pandits. The AAP also extended its full support to the relocation demand of Kashmiri Pandits and special package employees, senior party leader M K Yogi said.

Panun Kashmir (PK) convener Agnishekar expressed his concern over the stand taken by the Union territory administration. He said that until the situation becomes normal in Kashmir these employees will be adjusted outside the Valley.

"It is the duty of LG to provide security and ensure safety of these employees. When administration is not safe...how can these hapless employees, who belong to a community which became the main target of terrorists since 1989, be safe," he said.

Gandhi Nagar area of Jammu within six weeks. Singh, who is president of Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan Party (DSSP), was among several politicians who have been served notices by the Estates department in October to vacate government accommodation in the Gandhi Nagar locality of Jammu.

He had moved the court against the notice, contending that he is covered under 'Z-security' and should be allowed to retain the government accommodation till the government reassesses and decides the issue of his security.

'Though the applicant has admitted that the writ petition filed by him against proceedings under the Public Premises Act was dismissed as withdrawn by the single bench, yet he has come up with the instant application with the sole intention to prolong his unauthorised occupation, when the period of six weeks granted to him for the vacation of the bungalow would expire tomorrow (December 27)," the bench said in a seven-page order.

"It is evident that security assessment and entitlement to government accommodation are two different issues and cannot be intermingled to defeat the process of law," it said

'eyes open' rather than 'closed.'

Dr Koul said those who were advised the precautionary dose but did not receive it would be helped by boosting their immunity.

"International travel to countries with high Covid activity must be undertaken with caution and only if absolutely necessary," he said. Kashmir Reels

currently under the grip of 'Chilla-i-Kalan' -- the 40-day harshest winter period when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to the 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. Most areas, especially in the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall.

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

Govt Sets Up

Special Director General of Police, criminal investigation department, Rashmi Ranjan Swain, principal secretaries of Jal Shakti department Shaleen Kabra, Housing and Urban Development Department Dheeraj Gupta, Industries and Commerce Prashant Goyal, Public Works Department Shailendra Kumar, Power Development Department H Rajesh Prasad and Higher Education Department Alok Kumar.

Additional Director General of Police (Security) Shiv Darshan Singh Jamwal, Commissioner Secretary of department of forest, ecology and environment Sanjeev Verma, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir P K Pole, administrative Secretary, tourism department Sarmad Hafeez, administrative secretary, culture department, Zubair Ahmad, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation Athur Aamir Ul Shafi and vice chairman J-K Lake Conservation and management authority, Bashir Ahmad Bhat were the other members of the committee.

India is expected to host over 200 G20 meetings during its yearlong Presidency of the influential group which will culminate with an annual summit on September 9 and 10 next year.

The G20 or Group of 20 is an intergovernmental forum of the world's major developed and developing economies.

It comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil. Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK, the US, and the European Union (EU).

ciated the gesture of Gandhi to pay tributes to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"We salute Rahu Gandhi for undertaking Bharat Jodo Yatra to unite India and strengthen and nurture secularism and brotherhood in this country," Mehbooba told reporters at the party headquarters here.

She lambasted the BJP-led central government for "weakening" and tearing apart" the secular foundation of the country.

"The foundation of secularism and brotherhood in India has been shaken and worsened in the last seven-eight years," she said.

About Gandhi paying tributes to Vajpayee, the PDP chief said, "It is a good gesture to even pay respects to your opponents. This is the beauty of this country to even pay tributes to opponents, whether dead or alive. However, this is missing now."

Mehbooba also paid tributes to Vajpayee on his birth anniversary and said he always looked above politics.

Transfer KP

situation improves, they (KP employees) should come back. But currently, there is fear in the minds of these employees. For the time being, they should be transferred to Jammu so that their lives can be saved. Why should they be killed," he questioned.

Azad was speaking to reporters after a rally in Anantnag district, 55 kilometres from here. Azad said incidents of targeted killings that have taken place in the past one year have resulted in a situation that Kashmiri Pandit employees posted here do not want to stay.

"How will the other KPs come back in such a situation," he asked.

Azad said it was during his tenure as chief minister that 6,000 posts were sanctioned under the PM's Package for KPs.

"It was in my tenure that the Jagti township came up, the accommodation at Budgam and other places was also built under the double shift work," he added.

On the impact of Bharat Jodo Yatra spearheaded by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Azad said, "Let them do what they are doing, we will do our work. We are also working to unite. We walk in the snow-clad mountains. Some people take the easier task, we take on the tough ones."

Earlier, addressing the rally, Azad said there should be a separate policy to deal with militants which should not be extended to ordinary people. He said not every Kashmiri should be viewed with suspicion.

"There are two categories of people. One is a militant who gets arms training in Pakistan or here only. Every government has a policy to

He said senior party leaders had met the protesting employees and would share their report and brief BJP national president J P Nadda and Home Minister Amit Shah.

"Let me tell you we will not allow you to become sacrificial goats. You cannot perform duties in such a situation," he told the employees. Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday came out in support of these employees.

"If there is a threat even to one life, it is better to save that life even if it means closing down a dozen offices," he said.

BJP national general secretary and incharge for Jammu and Kashmir Tarun Chugh also raised the issue of threat to the lives of Kashmiri Pandits, saying they have been targeted by terrorists from 1990 till today.

BJP leader Devender Rana promised the Dogra employees that a transfer policy will be framed and no one from Jammu be made "guinea pig". "Come what may, transfer policy will be framed. We will make it happen or else will leave," he said. 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."

He asserted that 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 remarks amid the protests by Kashmiri Pandit employees and ammu-based reserved category employees who left the valley for Jammu in May following the targeted killings of their two colleagues Rahul Bhat and Rajni Bala.

The protesting employees have been seeking relocation outside Kashmir. A resident of Samba district, Bala was shot dead by terrorists at a school in south Kashmir's Kulgam district on May 31. Bhat, a clerk, was shot dead inside the tehsildar's office in Chadoora tehsil of Budgam district.

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.

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti has said that instead of giving an ultimatum to Kashmiri Pandit employees to join their duty, the Jammu and Kashmir administration should chalk out a

LG Hails Contribution

to draw inspiration from their courage, perseverance and sacrifice.

Addressing the gathering, Sinha said people across the sections of society must be told about our Guru's influence in transforming society and enriching social values.

'Veer Baal Diwas would inspire all of us to uphold the unity and integrity of the nation and live with each other in peace and harmony. It is a day to rededicate ourselves to the ideals of equality. brotherhood, and compassion," the LG said.

"Exemplary courage and sacrifice of Sahibzades and Guru Gobind Singh ji's life and teachings would continue to guide the path of humanity for all times to come. People must rise above the narrow outlook of life and tread the path of humanism," he added.

The LG also highlighted the significant contribution of Sikh Community in nation building and establishing a just and equal society.

Reiterating the government's commitment to work for the welfare of the Sikh community, the LG assured appropriate action on the demands and needs of the community with utmost sensitivity.

He also announced that on the request of All I&K Sikh Coordination Committee, the statue of Baba Banda Singh Ji Bahadur will be installed in Bhagwati Nagar area of Jammu while Nangali Sahib Gurdwara in Poonch will be renovated.

"District Administration and Tourism Department have been directed to promote religious places of Sikh heritage in Poonch in a planned manner," Sinha said.

"We are fully committed to the promotion of Punjabi language. I have instructed the Academy of Art, Culture & Languages to educate the citizens about the sacrifices of Sahibzades & spread timeless teachings of Sikh Gurus. The administration has already established Guru Nanak Dev Ji chair at Jammu University and promoting Punjabi language in school education," he added.

The LG also appreciated the endeavour of All I&K Sikh Coordination Committee to make the people aware of the bravery, sacrifice, and ideals of Sahibzade.

Ajit Singh, Chairman, All Jammu & Kashmir Sikh Co-ordination Committee expressed gratitude to the UT administration led by LG for taking cognizance of various concerning issues of the Sikh community and moving forward towards resolving the same with alacrity.

HC Pulls Up

"The present application..., being devoid of merit, is dismissed with costs quantified at Rs 25,000 to be deposited in the Advocates' Welfare Fund within a period of two weeks, failing which, the Registry shall maintain the index," the bench said.

Singh, a two-time MP and three-time MLA, switched from Congress to BJP in 2014 and was also a minister in the previous PDP-BJP government which collapsed in June 2018 after the national party pulled out of the alliance.

Several months before the fall of the government, Singh resigned from the BJP and floated DSSP following an uproar over his participation in a rally in support of an accused in the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua in January 2018. However, he defended his participation in the rally stating that he was there to "defuse the situation".

In February late year, the J-K High Court directed the government to evict former ministers and legislators who are in "illegal occupation" of government bungalows.

The Estates department, in its status report filed in the court, named 89 former ministers and ex-legislators who continued to occupy the govt bungalows.

Man Held With

magazines and 43 pistol rounds from the lawns of his house.

The operation was launched by the security forces following specific information that Daniyal was involved in smuggling of arms, ammunition and narcotics from across the LoC, the officials said, adding a case under relevant sections of the law has been registered.

Suspect Held

banned terrorist organisation, LeT, the officials said.

They said a suspect has been detained by the police in connection with the recovery of the explosive material.

A case has been registered at police station Basantgarh and further investigation is underway, SDPO, Ramnagar, Bhishm Dubey said.

2 Dead As Truck

found dead during the rescue operation, the official added.

The bodies were pulled out from the gorge and are being handed over to the relatives of deceased for last rites after completion of legal formalities, he said.

BSF Shoots

Pakistani drones were shot down by the border force last week in Punjab.

SPORTS

J&K Defeat Bihar 2-0 In **Santosh Trophy**

Ladakh lose 7-0 to Delhi



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir senior men's football team on Monday morning defeated Bihar 2-0 to open their 76th Santosh Trophy campaign with a comprehensive win at EMS Corporation Stadium, Kozhikode, Kerala.

Faisal Maqsood Thakur gave J&K the lead in the 38th minute of the first half. J&K Bank striker Aakif Reshi then doubled the team's lead in the 58th minute to seal the tie in J&K's favour.

J&K head coach Satpal Singh Kala went into the match with a 5-4-1 formation.

J&K team: Furqan; Zahid, Hyder, Farhan, Faisal, Urfan; Furgan, Dimple, Ateeb, Akif; Adnan.

Faisal won the man of the match award.

J&K will next play Mizoram on Thursday, December 29.

LADAKH TRUMPED 7-0

Ladakh senior football team, playing its first ever national championship, were routed 7-0 by Delhi on Sunday. The Ladakh side came into the match full of confidence after drawing 2-2 against Uttarakhand in the tournament opener. However, the team failed to build on their previous result and were soundly defeated at Ambedkar Stadium in New Delhi. The job became easier for Delhi after Ladakh's central defender Skarma Lotus Tarako was shown a straight red in the 33rd minute. Delhi was leading 1-0 at the time, and added two more before the end of the first half.

Delhi forwards added four more goals in the second half to compound the misery on the rookie Ladakh footballers. Delhi striker Jaideep Singh scored a hat trick to take home the man of the match award.

Ladakh take on Karnataka today, Tuesday, December 27.

DPS Srinagar Bags 3rd In CBSE Cluster Football C'ship



Rohit, Rahul Likely To Miss SL Series

Agencies

NEW DELHI: Indian skipper Rohit Sharma and opener KL Rahul are likely to miss their side's home series against Sri Lanka in January, as per sources. Sources said that Rohit is vet to recover completely from the thumb injury he sustained during the second ODI against Bangladesh earlier in December, as per ANI sources in BCCI. KL is going to get married during the time-frame of the series, added the sources.

Sri Lanka will be touring India from January 3 to January 15 for three T20Is and three ODIs. Notably, Rohit and KL did not have a very good 2022 with the bat.

Rohit Sharma struggled to live up to his 'Hitman' tag numerous times in 2022. In two Tests this year, Rohit scored 90 runs at an average of 30, with the best score of 46. In eight ODIs, he scored 249 runs at an average of 41.50, with three half-centuries and a best of 76*.

Rohit scored 656 runs in 29 T20I innings this year at an average of 24.29 and strike rate of 134.42, with three halfcenturies and the best score of

72. Overall, in 40 innings this ternational century for an enyear, Rohit scored 995 runs, tire year. (ANI) **Decision To Send Team To India Will Be Taken At Government Level: PCB Chief**

"IF THE

go."

commentary box."

GOVERNMENT

SAYS don't go to

India, we will not

make sure we are not isolated."

had no objection if Raja decid-

ed to return to the commen-

tary box. "I have a lot of respect

for Ramiz and we would never

oppose him returning to the

Sethi also rubbished the ac-

counts of his expenditure put

up by the previous PCB man-

agement on its website, saying

that they were incorrect.

"When I go back to La

Sethi also said he or the PCB

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: The decision to send the Pakistan team for the ODI World Cup in India next year will be taken at the government level, the new Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Najam Sethi has said.

Speaking with reference to the threat made by his predecessor, Ramiz Raja, that Pakistan will consider pulling out of the mega event if India didn't come to Pakistan for the Asia Cup, Sethi said on Monday that, "if the government says don't go to India, we will not go".

"Where Pakistan and India's cricket relations are concerned, let's be clear. (The) decisions on whether to play or not play, tour or not tour are always taken at the government level," Sethi told a press conference in Karachi.

"These are decisions only taken at the government level; the PCB can only seek clarity." Sethi added that he will be

in touch with the Asian Cricket Council on the issue of the Asia Cup, which Pakistan is scheduled to host next year.

"I will see what the s



failing to cross the 1000-run mark. These runs came at an average of 27.63, with six fifties. For the first time since 2012, he did not score an in-

tion before the public. The figures given about me pertaining to expenses are not right at all," said Sethi.

Sethi also defended the decision of the present Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to remove Raja as PCB chairman.

"I was chairman in 2018. When Imran Khan's government was formed, I resigned although some people in (the) corridors of power told me, no one will remove me. I have always believed that (the) prime minister has the right to choose his candidate to run cricket affairs, so I resigned."

Sethi also said that he was in touch with Pakistan's former head coach, Mickey Arthur as he wanted him back.

"Mickey is presently contracted with Derbyshire and I have spoken to him. The situation will become clear in the next 8-10 days and we have sought his advice on the new coaching setup for the team.

'When he (Arthur) was with the team, he did a lot of good work and he was responsible for pushing Babar Azam forward. He also maintained a lot of discipline and fitness in the team. I believe he will be



KASHMIR OBSERVER

Srinagar | Tuesday | 27-12-2022

A THREE-MATCH CRICKET SERIES between the Sports Council Cricket Academy, Srinagar and MS Dhoni Cricket Academy Srinagar under My Youth My Pride began on Monday at Cricket Academy Ground, TRC Srinagar.

Ben Stokes Urges ICC To Revive Test Cricket

Press Trust of India

LONDON: England Test captain Ben Stokes has hit out at the International Cricket Council (ICC) for not paying enough attention to scheduling, adding that the rising popularity of domestic T20 leagues across the world is threatening the existence of the longest format of the game.

Stokes said that the way Test cricket was being handled and spoken about these days, especially in the backdrop of the growing popularity of league cricket, was hurting him.

"Test cricket has been spoken about in a way I don't like. It is losing the attention of the fans with all the new formats and franchise competitions. We understand there are so many opportunities for players away from Test cricket. But for me it is so important for the game," said Stokes in an interaction with the legendary Ian Botham on BBC on Monday.

Hinting that Test-playing nations should follow England's footsteps of playing ultra-at-tacking cricket, Stoke said 'en-

different," added Stokes.

Babar, Sarfaraz Lift Pakistan To 317-5 Against NZ





tertainment', more than 'result', will go a long way in popularise the five-day format.

"Taking the result away from the mindset is a great starting point. Putting focus on making every day entertaining. Not allowing people to know what is going to happen. If people turn up excited about what they are going to watch you've already won before a ball has been bowled," said Stokes.

He urged the ICC to do "something different" to popularise Test cricket. "I love playing Test cricket and felt we could do something



Observer News Service

Srinagar SRINAGAR: DPS bagged third position in the CBSE Cluster Football Championship (Boys Under-19) that was held from 8th December 2022 – 11th December 2022 in Sant Bagh Singh International School, Khaila, Punjab. The tournament consisted of 32 CBSE schools that squared against each other.

DPS Srinagar played five matches in total: the qualifying round, Pre-Quarter Finals, Quarter Finals, Semi-Finals, and third-place match, and ended the campaign with four wins and one defeat in the tourna-

ment and was awarded the third place trophy. Mudasir Bashir won the award for Best Coach of the

tournament for his tactics and commitment to football.

Congratulating the winning team, the school's principal said, "It is a matter of great pride for us that our team and our faculty have been bestowed with such accolades. We are delighted, to say the least."

Chairman Vijay Dhar also congratulated the students and the award-winning coach: "Our talent pool is next to none and the award won by Mudasir and the performance of our team is a testimony to the same."

IUST Inter-Department Cricket Tourney Concludes



Observer News Service

AWANTIPORA: The Inter-department Cricket Tournament Men Rolling Trophy 2022 concluded at Islamic University of Science and Technology on Monday.

Sixteen departmental teams participated in the tournament organized by Directorate of Physical Education & Sports, IUST.

The final match of the tournament was won by the Department of Civil Engineering against Department of Management Studies.

Prof. Manzoor Ahmad Malik Dean Academics IUST was the Chief Guest, and Prof. Naseer Iqbal was the Guest of Honour on this occasion. The event was also attended by Sameer Wazir (Chairman Sports Committee) and other university officials.

is and then move forward. Any the first thing I am going to do decision we take, we have to is (to) bring the factual posi-

good for the team again if he is available.

Ronaldo Dropped Because Of 'Political Ban', Says Erdogan

Agencies

urkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said Cristiano Ronaldo was subjected to a "political ban" at the World Cup, as he compared the Portuguese footballer to Lionel Messi.

"They have wasted Ronaldo. Unfortunately, they have imposed a political ban on him," Erdogan said on Sunday while speaking at a youth event in the eastern Erzurum province. "Sending a footballer like

Ronaldo to the pitch with just 30 minutes remaining to the match ruined his psychology and took away his energy," Erdogan said.

"Ronaldo is someone who stands for the Palestinian cause," he added. The 37-year-old came on

as a substitute in the second half of a World Cup quarterfinal game against Morocco in which Portugal lost 1-0.

The former Manchester United and Real Madrid footballer had also been on the bench when Portugal took on Switzerland in the round of 16, making an appearance as a substitute.

The loss against Morocco meant that Ronaldo, the only player to score in five separate World Cups, was eliminated from what will most likely be his last World Cup, and was unable to hold back his tears as he walked towards the changing rooms.

Ronaldo has never issued any public statements on the Israel-Palestine conflict, despite false reports and doctored photos emerging peri-

odically online.

A widely-circulated story that Ronaldo had donated 1.5m euros (\$1.59m) to Palestinians after he auctioned off a golden boot award was denied in 2019 by a sports management company representing the footballer.

An image of Ronaldo holding a sign saying "Together with the Palestinians" in Spanish that was widely shared online was also doctored and was in fact an expression of support for the victims of an earthquake in Spain in 2011. Ronaldo has been pictured with a Palestinian scarf around his shoulders, but it represented the Palestinian Football Association, and the ex-Real Madrid and Manchester United player was standing next to the head of that association, Jibril Rajoub.

Ronaldo has also met several Israeli ministers and has been photographed presenting one of his football shirts to ex-Israeli foreign minister Israel Katz. (Anadolu Agency)

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: Babar Azam hit his ninth hundred and Sarfaraz Ahmed returned to Test cricket after nearly four years with an impressive 86 as Pakistan overcame a top-order collapse to reach 317-5 against New Zealand on Monday in the first test. Babar was not out on 161 with 16 fours and a six and Sarfaraz – playing his first Test since January 2019 – grinded well in his long awaited 50th Test to give Pakistan an early advantage on a slow and dry wicket.

They shared a 196-run stand to lift Pakistan from 110-4 before Ajaz Patel (2-91) broke through late in the final session on Day 1 and had Sarfaraz caught in the slip with the second new ball.

Patel nearly ended Babar's six hours of batting in the last over, but the Pakistan captain successfully overturned an lbw ruling through TV referral.

Both Babar and Sarfaraz dominated the three spinners and were untroubled against the seam bowling of captain Tim Southee and Neil Wagner in nearly two sessions after New Zealand had made early inroads. Sarfaraz came good against the spinners with his sweeps and Babar made New Zealand pay a heavy price for letting him off the hook early with his trademark cover drives and flicks on the on-side. Daryl Mitchel dropped a regulation catch when Babar was on 12 as the Pakistan skipper raised his hundred before tea off 161 balls with a six off Michael Bracewell (2-61) over midwicket. New Zealand, playing its first test in Pakistan in 20 years, had started well after Babar won the toss and elected to bat on a wicket expected to favor spinners.

Patel and Bracewell made an early impact after Southee brought on his slow bowlers as early as the fourth over at National Stadium. (AP)

Australia's Top Test Award **Renamed In Warne's Honour**

MELBOIURNE: Late Australian spin great Shane Warne will be honoured with the Australia Men's Test Player of the Year award to be renamed in his honour as 'The Shane Warne Men's Test Player of the Year' The award will be presented annually at the Australian Cricket Awards. It is the second most prestigious award for men behind Allan Border Medal.

The announcement of the award's renaming coincided with the Boxing Day Test match between Australia and South Africa, the second match of the series at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), where tribute was paid to the 'The King' at the first Test at his favourite venue



since his shocking demise in March this year. Warne has won the award once, back in 2006, a year in which he took a record 40 Test wickets in the iconic 2005 Ashes series in England. Batter Travis Head won the award last year, while for 2023, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne and Nathan Lyon are three of the biggest contenders.



OUTPOST

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KASHMIR OBSERVER[®]

TUNISHA SHARMA'S DEATH: Long List Of Suicides Haunt Entertainment Industry

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: TV actor Tunisha Sharma was founding hanging on the sets of a serial in Mumbai last week, one more instance of a showbiz aspirant allegedly taking the extreme step.

The death of the 21-year-old "Ali Baba: Dastaan-E-Kabul" actor has led to the arrest of her costar Sheezan Khan for abetment to suicide. Here are some similar deaths in the entertainment industry that shocked us all:

Vaishali Thakkar

On October 16 this year, the "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai" actor was found dead in her Indore home. Police officials claimed they have enough evidence against Thakkar's former boyfriend Rahul Navlani and filed an abetment of suicide case.

Asif Basra

Known for starring in movies such as "Jab We Met", "Once Upon a Time in Mumbaai" and "Kai Po Che!", Basra was found hanging in a private property in November 2020 in Dharamshala. He was 53. He was last seen in "The Family Man-2" and "Sooryavanshi".

Samir Sharma

He was found hanging from the fan of his kitchen on August 6, 2020 in the Mumbai suburb Malad where he lived alone. His credits include hit TV shows "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" and "Left Right Left".



Prejsha Mehta

She was 25.

suicide.

Jiah Khan

The "Crime Patrol" actor was

found dead in her home in In-

dore. The 29-year-old, who

hanged herself, left a suicide note

The actor, who became a house-

hold name through the popular TV soap opera "Balika Vadhu",

was found hanging in her Mumbai

apartment on April 1, 2016. She

was 24. Her boyfriend Rahul Raj

Singh is accused of abetting her

The British-American actor,

best known for films such as

"Nishabd" and "Ghajini", was

found hanging at her Mumbai

residence on June 3, 2013 by her

Pratyusha Bannerjee

Sushant Singh Rajput

The death of the "Chhichhore" star, who was found hanging in his Bandra home on June 14, 2020, continues to cast long shadows over the industry. The 34-year-old former TV star's death is still the centre of debates on nepotism and powers enjoyed by big production houses in the Hindi film industry.

Kushal Punjabi

for his death.

easing.

Tuesday will be the third death anniversary of actor-model Kushal Punjabi, who was hanging in his Bandra apartment on December 27, 2019. Known for films such as "Kaal" and "Lakshya" as well as the reality show "Fear Factor", the actor left behind a suicide note in which he said nobody should be held responsible mother Rabiya Khan. She was 25. Her death was deemed suicide and reconfirmed as a suicide in 2016 following an extensive investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and a hearing at the Bombay High Court. The case is being probed by the CBI, which has charged her boyfriend, actor Sooraj Pancholi, for abetting her suicide.

Vijalakshmi/"Silk Smitha"

As Silk Smitha, Vijaylakshmi reached the iconic status of a sex symbol in Tamil cinema during the 1980s. The actor, who was said to be neck deep in controversies, died at the age of 33 in 1996 following a suspected suicide. She had over 200 films to her credit, which include "Vandichakkaram" and "Moondru Mugam".

Nafisa Joseph

The former Miss India and video jockey was found hanging at her residence in Versova in 2004 at the age of 25. Joseph, who won the Miss India title in 1997, had worked as a model and had been involved in activities related to animal rights.

Kukjeet Randhawa

In 2006, the model-turned television actor, known for starring in the high-school drama "Hip Hip Hurray!", suspense serial "Kohinoor" and crime thriller drama "Special Squad", allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself in her single room apartment in suburban Juhu. She was 25. UK To Start "Living With Covid", Not Publish Covid Infection Data In 2023

London: The UK health authorities said on Monday that they will stop publishing their regular COVID-19 infections modelling data in the new year because it is seen as "no longer necessary" as the country moves to a phase of living with the virus with the help of vaccines and medicines.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said that it will continue to monitor COVID like other common viral illnesses such as seasonal flu. Since April this year, the data on the reproductive rate, or the R value speed at which the novel coronavirus infects people, has been published fortnightly as a monitoring tool. "During the pandemic, the

R value and growth rate served as a useful and simple indicator to inform public health action and government decisions," said Dr Nick Watkins, chair of the UKHSA Epidemiology Modelling Review Group (EMRG).

"Now that vaccines and therapeutics have allowed us to move to a phase where we are living with COVID-19, with surveillance scaled down but still closely monitored through a number of different indicators, the publication of this specific data is no longer necessary," he said.

"We continue to monitor CO-VID-19 activity in a similar way to how we monitor a number of other common illnesses and diseases. All data publications are kept under constant review and this mod-



elling data can be reintroduced promptly if needed, for example, if a new variant of concern was to be identified," he added.

The EMRG said its recent detailed review concluded that the next publication of its so-called "consensus statement" on CO-VID-19 on January 6, 2023, "will be the last". The UK's COVID incidence data will continue to be accessible from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) infection survey.

The country's remaining CO-VID restrictions, including the legal requirement to self-isolate at home with symptoms, were removed earlier this year. Amid an expected rise in infections over the winter months, the health authorities had urged those with signs of respiratory illness to avoid mixing during

the festive holiday period.

"We are seeing a rise in cases and hospital admissions for both flu and COVID-19 as people continue to mix indoors this winter. Hospitalisation rates due to COVID-19 remain highest in those aged 65 and over, so it is vital that everyone who is eligible continues to come forward to accept their booster jab before the end of the year," Dr Mary Ramsay, Director of Public Health Programmes, said last week.

"Both COVID-19 and flu can cause severe illness or even death for those most vulnerable in our communities, and so it is also important to avoid contact with other people if you are unwell in order to help stop infections spreading over the Christmas and new year period," she said.

WE ARE SEEING A RISE IN CASES AND HOSPITAL admissions for both flu and COVID-19 as people continue to mix indoors this winter. Hospitalisation rates due to COVID-19 remain highest in those aged 65 and over, so it is vital that everyone who is eligible continues to come forward to accept their booster jab before the end of the year."

Brutal US Storm Kills 32, Power Outages, Cities In Crisis

Agenceis

New York, US: A brutal winter storm that brought Christmas chaos to millions of Americans will be slow to dissipate, the US National Weather Service said Monday, after intense snow and frigid cold caused power outages, travel delays and at least 32 deaths across the eastern part of the country

the eastern part of the country. "Much of the eastern United States will remain in a deep freeze through Monday before a moderating trend sets in on Tuesday."

The extreme weather sent wind chill temperatures in all 48 contiguous US states below freezing over the weekend, stranded holiday travelers with thousands of flights canceled and trapped residents in ice- and snow-encrusted

homes. weather-related Thirty-two deaths have been confirmed across nine states, including at least 13 in Erie County where Buffalo is located, with officials warning the number is sure to rise Officials described historically dangerous conditions in the snow-prone Buffalo region, with hours-long whiteouts and bodies discovered in vehicles and under snow banks as emergency workers struggled to search for those in need of rescue.



the NWS said in its latest advisory.

In Buffalo, western New York, a blizzard left the city marooned, with emergency services unable to reach the worst-hit areas.

"It is (like) going to a war zone, and the vehicles along the sides of the roads are shocking," said New York Governor Kathy Hochul, a native Buffalo, where eight-foot (2.4-meter) snow drifts and power outages made for life-threatening conditions.

Hochul told reporters Sunday evening that residents were still in the throes of a "very dangerous life-threatening situation" and warned anyone in the area to remain indoors.

More than 200,000 people across several eastern states woke up without power on Christmas morning and many more had their holiday travel plans upended, although the five-day-long storm featuring blizzard conditions and ferocious winds showed signs of The city's international airport remains closed until Tuesday and a driving ban remained in effect for all of Erie County.

"We now have what'll be talked about not just today but for generations (as) the blizzard of '22," Hochul said, adding that the brutality had surpassed the region's prior landmark snowstorm of 1977 in the "intensity, the longevity, the ferocity of the winds."

Due to frozen electric substations, some residents were not expected to regain power until Tuesday, with one substation reportedly buried under 18 feet of snow, a senior county official said.





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