

After Its Recent Revival, Hokersar Is Now Swamped With Solid Waste

Parvaiz Bhat

MONTHS after the wildlife department had managed to restore Hokersar Wetland to its earlier status following its degradation during the implementation of flood management project for the Srinagar city, the wetland is now swamped with heavy solid waste

pollution.

The solid waste pollution problem in the wetland started after the trash guard (a wire mesh gate), which was installed at the spot where water from flood spill channel flows into Hokersar for stopping trash entering into the wetland, was destroyed by flooding as a result of incessant rains a few weeks back.

Solid waste, which includes household trash, wrapping materials, plastic containers and fast-food wrappers, can be seen floating everywhere in the wetland which not only bodes ill for ecological health of the wetland, but also presents an ugly scene. Even carcasses of animals have also found their way into the wetland.

Locals said that they had

noted the restoration of the wetland with great satisfaction following its almost complete degradation until last year as its ecosystem integrity and functioning had got hugely compromised.

"In recent months, Hokersar has got a new lease of life. We were happy to see a lot of birds and their chicks in Hokersar in recent

months, something which we had missed for many years. But, the waste which is now floating in it, poses a threat to the wetland," said Arif Ahmad, a milkman.

He said that the trash gate which was installed for stopping solid waste entering into the wetland, was not allowing any trash into the wetland. "Until

the gate was functioning, the wetland was clean. But, the wetland has got much polluted now," Ahmad said adding that those responsible for fixing this problem should act swiftly so that the wetland is not damaged again. According to Ahmad, villagers around Hokersar are worried about the new threat **More on P10**



SC Lists Pleas Challenging Art-370 Abrogation On July 11

5-Judge Bench To Hear Batch Of Petitions After Four Years



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Nearly four years after the government abrogated Article 370 that bestowed special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud will take up for hearing on July 11 a batch of pleas challenging the contentious decision.

According to a notice issued on the apex court website on Monday, the five-judge bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kaul, Sanjay Khanna, BR Gavai and Surya Kant will take up the pleas, including the one filed by IAS officer Shah Faesal and others, for passing directions.

Faesal, a 2010 batch IAS officer, the first Kashmiri to have topped the all-India civil services examination, was detained for over a year after Article 370 of the Constitution was scrapped. He had resigned from service

and launched Jammu Kashmir People's Movement, a political entity in January 2019. The government didn't accept his resignation and Faesal, a doctor by profession, was later posted to the Union Culture Ministry.

He had also moved a petition in the Supreme Court against government's decision on Article 370. On August 5, 2019, the Centre decided to strip the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir of special status and bifurcate it into two Union Territories.

Several petitions challenging the Centre's decision to abrogate the provisions of Article 370 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which split J-K into two Union Territories Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh were referred to a constitution bench in 2019.

By abrogating Article 370, the Central government had revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. **More on P10**

J&K Parties Welcome Move

Major political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, including National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Monday welcomed Supreme Court decision to hear petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370. "Welcome Hon'ble SC's decision to finally hear petitions pending since 2019 challenging the illegal abrogation of Article 370. I hope justice is upheld & delivered for the people of J&K. The SC ruling on Article 370 maintained that the provision can be abrogated only on the recommendation of the J&K constituent assembly," former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti tweeted. **More on P10**



"FINALLY THE BENCH IS CONSTITUTED. I look forward to the hearings beginning in right earnest now."

J&K Govt Approves 5 Marla Land Each to Landless Families

A Historic Day For J&K, A New Beginning For Thousands Of Landless Families: LG

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In a landmark decision, the government of Jammu Kashmir has approved a proposal for allotment of 5 marla land each to landless families for construction of houses under the Prime Minister Awas Yojna (PMAY) "It is a historic day for Jammu Kashmir and a new beginning for thousands of landless families," Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said Monday.

The "historic decision," he said, will prove to be a golden chapter in his administration's effort for social justice, equality, respect, and equal opportunities to all citizens.

"This path-breaking decision will not only entitle the landless poor to own a piece of land and have a house but it will also provide them means of livelihood, raise



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

their living standards and realize their dreams and aspirations," Sinha added.

Pertinently, the decision to provide land to poor families in J&K was taken by the Administrative Council in its meeting last month on June 21. The LG said that the poor section of the society is at the

centre of government policies and a substantial population that was devoid of basic facilities and rights even after seven decades of independence is being brought to the mainstream of development.

"Jammu Kashmir government is committed to inclusive development. This move will open up endless opportunities to the poor and downtrodden and with this landmark decision the administration is acknowledging their immense contribution in the task of nation building," he said.

"A few years ago the Prime Minister decided that every poor person should have a roof over their head. The main obstacle here was that there was no provision for giving land to landless families. We made a provision and approved it in the administrative council to provide land to landless construction of houses under the PMAY," Sinha told reporters here.

"We have given plots to 2,711 landless families across Jammu and Kashmir. We will be providing land as per the list we have and hope to complete the existing backlog by March 2024," he added. Sinha said the **More on P10**

'Foreign Tourist Arrival Rose After G-20 Meet'

The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Monday said that foreign tourist arrivals have shown a significant increase in the Union Territory after successful conduct of G-20 Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting in this capital city. Addressing a press conference at Raj Bhavan here, the LG said that the successful G-20 meeting in Srinagar held on May 22 to May 25 this year is proving to be a game changer for the tourism sector in J&K. "The participants of the G-20 meeting have gone back to their respective countries with a good message. Post G-20 meeting, we have seen a significant increase in the foreign tourist **More on P10**

Teacher Accused Of 'Sexually Harassing' Minor Denied Bail

M Ahmad

Srinagar: A court here has denied bail to a private tuition teacher accused of sexually harassing a 10-year-old girl at a suburb here in March this year.

According to police, on 14 March this year, a complaint came to be lodged by the father of the minor girl that his daughter, who is studying in class 3rd, is being sexually harassed by a tuition teacher identified as Abdul Wahid Bhat of Chanapora Srinagar.

Accordingly, police said, a case (FIR No 14/2023) under sections 12 of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was registered and during investigation the statement of the



POCSO cases Srinagar. "The tender age of the victim also makes her vulnerable to any threat or intimidation which she may be subjected to in case the accused is admitted to bail, moreso, when her evidence is yet to be recorded," the court said while rejecting bail application of the accused teacher Abdul Wahid Bhat of Chanapora, Srinagar.

Earlier the accused had submitted that he is a private teacher by profession and has been falsely implicated in a frivolous case. His counsel said that the arrest Bhat has adversely affected his personal, familial and social life, as the "arrest tantamount to attaching a stigma to the good will of the alleged accused."

Govt Orders Age Extension For University Professors

Agencies

Srinagar: Higher Education Department Monday approved 'Conditional' enhancement of age superannuation for University Professors from 62 to 65 years.

Under Secretary, Higher Education Department, Rubia Afroz Inqalabi said that the government in this regard has directed the Higher Education to convey that the administrative Council under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor, J&K has 'enhanced the age of superannuation of university professors from 62 to 65 years'.

"However, a committee constituted under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary of J&K shall examine each case separately and take a decision regarding enhancement of age

MULTI-CRORE I-T REFUND SCAM

Crime Branch Raids Multiple Places In Kashmir

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The crime branch of police on Monday carried out a series of raids in its ongoing probe into the multi-crore income tax scam, involving hundreds of people, including Jammu and Kashmir government employees.

The searches were carried by CB's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) into the bogus income-tax refund claims made by hundreds of people in the Union Territory over the past few years.

Multiple teams of the EOW carried out search of numerous houses, offices of accused and suspects in the presence of Executive Duty Magistrates allegedly involved in case FIR No's. 27/2023 and 28/2023, an official spokesperson said.

The cases had been registered on May 25 this year on the basis of a complaint from the office of the Principal Commissioner of Income Tax, Srinagar.

Reportedly, over 400 people, including government employees, besides a chartered accountant are facing criminal charges of conspiring and defrauding the government exchequer for a sum of Rs.16.72 crores between financial years 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Giving further details, the spokesperson said that the cases pertain to the criminal manipulation/ tampering of electronic and other data, which enabled the "perpetrators of the crime" to fraudulently claim refund of Income Tax shown to have been earlier deducted at source etc.

"The said criminal acts have resulted in wrongful pecuniary gain running into crores of Rupees to the accused individuals while causing a corresponding financial loss to the Income Tax Department, Government of India," he said.

Monday's searches, he said, were carried out as part of the ongoing investigation of the cases during which due diligence and all procedures mandated by law were followed.

"No arrests were made during the search operation. However, some incriminating documents, desktop & laptop computers etc. have been recovered and seized. These have **More on P10**

Policeman Shoots Self Dead

A 23-year-old Special Police Officer (SPO) of the Jammu Kashmir Police allegedly shot himself dead with his service rifle in Kathua district on Monday, an official said. SPO Avinash Sharma was on sentry duty at border police post Sanyal in the Hiranagar sector when he shot himself in the neck around 1.45 pm, the official said. A resident of Sanyal village, Sharma died on the spot and later his body was removed for postmortem, the official said. He said the motive behind Sharma's **More on P10**

Landslide Disrupts Highway Traffic

A landslide hit the Jammu-Srinagar national highway in Ramban district on Monday, disrupting traffic movement in one lane of the strategic road, officials said. The landslide occurred in the Kunfer area of Chanderkote, they said. The 270-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway is the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country. Traffic in one lane of the highway was affected due to the landslide. The movement of traffic in the other lane remains unaffected, the officials said. **More on P10**

Woman Drowns To Death

A woman died on Monday after slipping into a stream in South Kashmir's Pulwama district. 35-year-old Sakeena Begam, wife of Mohammad Altaf Khan slipped into Romshi Nallah in Chewa khurud village of the district on Monday afternoon, reports said. The woman was retrieved by the locals in an unconscious state and removed to the district hospital, Pulwama for treatment. However, reports said, that the doctors there declared her dead.

LG Prays At Mata Roop Bhawani Temple

The Union Territory Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Monday paid obeisance at Mata Roop Bhawani temple, Cheshmashahi, here. Inside the temple premises, the LG offered his prayers and participated in the Yagya organised on the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima, an official spokesperson said. Sinha, he said, also interacted with the devotees and extended his hearty greetings on the auspicious occasion.

Man Injured In Leopard Attack

A man was attacked and injured on Monday by a leopard in Central Kashmir Budgam district. Mohammad Sadiq Kumar was in an orchard in his native Banderpora village of Khansahib when a leopard appeared there and attacked him, reports said. Kumar, raised an alarm following which other villagers came to his rescue. Kumar, reports said, sustained injuries in the surprise beat attack. He was removed to Srinagar's SMHS hospital for treatment.

Tanker Falls Into Gorge, Driver Dead

A driver of an oil tanker died after his vehicle fell into a deep gorge near Shaitani Nallah in Banihal area of Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday morning, officials said. Quoting an official, news agency KNO reported that oil tanker rolled down and fell into a deep gorge near Shaitani Nallah. He said that soon after a rescue operation was launched, however, driver had died by then. The deceased has been identified as Ajay Kumar son of **More on P10**

S H O R T T A K E S

Srinagar Admin Conducts Surprise Inspection Of Patwar Khanas

Observer News Service

Srinagar: On the directions of District Magistrate (DM) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, the special teams of District Administration Srinagar on Monday conducted surprise inspection of various Patwar Khanas of Srinagar and checked the attendance of employees in order to ensure prompt delivery of Revenue service's punctuality in Government Offices.

absent from their duties or reporting late in the Office.

Taking serious note of their unauthorized absence and late office reporting, the District Magistrate (DM), who is also the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar has ordered withholding salary of all 10 employees. Further explanation was also sought from the all absentee employees as to why disciplinary proceedings should not be initiated against them.

Meanwhile, the District Magistrate/DC Srinagar reiterated that such inspections will continue further and dereliction of duties including unauthorized absence and late office reporting will not be tolerated at all.

He also asked the employees to strictly adhere to the Office timings to avoid inconvenience to the general public.

Record 2.18L People Visits Parks, Gardens On Eid; 1.20L In Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Valley's public parks and gardens, especially in Srinagar, witnessed a ten-fold increase of visitors - over two lakh people - during the four days of the Eid-ul-Adha festival.

A senior official at the Floriculture Department said during the Eid festival, the valley's parks and gardens recorded a rush of 2.18 lakh visitors, which is ten times higher than the normal footfall.

"During the Eid festival, especially Eid-ul-Adha, people visiting parks and gardens is normal, but this year, the footfall is much higher," he said.

According to the department's officials, the paid parks and gardens in south Kashmir recorded a footfall of over 94,000 people during the Eid days, while last year, it was around 74,000.

Of the approximate footfall of visitors in south Kashmir, 85,000 were locals while over 9,600 were from other states of the country, an official said. "In South Kashmir, Kokernag recorded a footfall of around 16,000 followed by 15,000 visitors at nine parks and gardens of Pahalgam. Achabal and Verinag recorded over 9,000

and 8,000 respectively."

As per the officials, Srinagar's paid parks and gardens recorded a footfall of over 1.20 lakh people, including both locals and tourists. They said 30,000 people visited Nishat, Shalimar, Harwan, Cheshmashahi, and Pari Mahal on Sunday.

Among the paid gardens and parks in Srinagar, Nishat recorded around 39,000 visitors during the Eid holidays, the highest number among all the gardens in Srinagar, with 13,000 people visiting the park on Sunday.

The famous Badamwari garden in the heart of Srinagar city's downtown area, as per the officials, recorded over 8,000 visitors with a majority of them from the valley only, while Iqbal Park and Children's Park also recorded a sizable footfall of local visitors on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha.

The officials said they had placed all arrangements for visitors including the convenience facility, drinking water facility, availability of dustbins, wheelchairs for the specially-abled, etc. There are many parks and gardens in the valley under the supervision of the Floriculture Department where public entry is free.



A worker applies salt on the hides of sacrificial animals to inhibit the growth of bacteria on it at Jamalatta area in the old city on Monday. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Set Deadlines For Smart City Projects: CS Direct Officers

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta today impressed upon the officers of the Srinagar Smart City Ltd (SSCL) and Jammu Smart City Limited (JSCL) including the concerned Divisional Administration to speed up the pace of works so that all the ongoing projects are completed within the shortest possible time frame.

He passed on these directions during a meeting at Civil Secretariat here to review the progress of smart cities in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, H&UDD; Principal Secretary, Education; Divisional Commissioner Kashmir/Jammu; Commissioner Secretary, I&C; Commissioner Secretary, Floriculture, CEO, SSCL; CEO, JSCL, Chief Engineer, PWD, Kashmir/Jammu

besides other concerned officers.

During the meeting the Chief Secretary took a detailed review of the ongoing projects in the twin cities under the Smart City Mission and set deadlines for each project. He expressed that any undue delay in the execution of the projects is unacceptable.

While reviewing the different works in Srinagar City, Dr Mehta directed the officers to pace up the work on Nishat precinct, Shalimar Canal, Foreshore Road, Lal Chowk and other areas to expedite the execution of projects under the Smart City Mission by endeavoring to finish the works within the set timelines. He said that some of these works should be completed within the next 20 days positively.

He asked the concerned officers to enhance necessary resources on all the sites where work is going on to ensure fast pace of development.

He said that Lal Chowk is the center of the City and the ongoing projects ought to be completed within the shortest possible time through multiple shifts. He underlined that due to the huge footfall of tourists at Lal Chowk, it warrants upgradation immediately.

He also reviewed the work on Apsara road Jammu among other projects under Smart City Mission and directed the concerned to complete the project fully by August 15. He said that it is a vital project and will enhance the aesthetics of the area besides improving the social as well as the economic condition of the people.

He also reviewed various projects related to the floriculture department and asked the officers to complete the projects on time as their completion would enhance the beauty of both the cities and other tourist places of J&K.

GST Week Celebrations

State Taxes Department J&K Organizes Interaction With Stakeholders

Observer News Service

Srinagar: As part of ongoing GST Week celebrations, the State Taxes Department today organized an interaction session with various stakeholders at Excise and Taxation Complex Solina.

The session was presided over by Additional Commissioner State Taxes Kashmir, Shakeel Maqbool, DC Enforcement (Central)

Parveez Raina, DC IT, Analytics & Economic Intelligence, Farooq Ahmad Baba, DC Appeals I & II, Assistant Commissioners, State Taxes Officers, Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and other officials of the department attended the session.

The stakeholders were represented by various trade and manufacturing associations like Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation, Kashmir Economic

Alliance, Joint Traders Association, Kashmir Economic Forum, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shehr-e-Khas Traders and Manufacturers Coordination Committee and Federation, J&K Economic Federation, KCCI, Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation (Rather Group), Kashmir CPE Chapter of ICAI, Federation Chamber of Industries Kashmir among others.

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RAILWAYS SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259 ANANTNAG: 01932-228243 BARAMULLA: 0194-102029 BIJBERA: 01932-228243 PAMPOR: 01933-294132 PATTAN: 01954-293507 QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open) Mughal Road - (Open) Srinagar-Leh - (Open)

PRAYERS FAJR 3:40 ZUHR 12:35 ASR 5:35 Magrib 7:50 ISHA 9:30 HIJRI CALENDAR 15 Zil-Hajj 1444

This Day In History

- 1927 - Sukarno and friends form the pro-Indonesian independence party, the PNI (Perserikatan Nasional Indonesia) in Batavia, Dutch East Indies
1942 - 1st American bombing mission over enemy-occupied Europe (WW II)
1942 - US air offensive against Nazi-Germany begins
1946 - President Manuel Roxas was inaugurated as the 5th President of the Philippines and the first president of the Third Republic at the Independence Grandstand in Manila
1950 - Harry Truman signs public law 600 (Puerto Ricans write own constitution)
1950 - The first broadcast by Radio Free Europe.
1968 - Radio astronomy satellite Explorer 38 launched
1982 - 4th Space Shuttle Mission-Columbia 4 lands at Edwards AFB
1987 - Discovery moves to Launch Pad 39B for STS-26 mission
1987 - Imran Khan takes 300th Test Cricket wicket, only Pakistani to do so
1988 - US Navy shoots down Iranian civilian jetliner over Gulf, kills 290
1989 - Unmanned Russian Mig-23 crashes in Belleme-Kooigem, Belgium (1 dies)
1994 - Russian manned space craft TM-18 lands
1997 - US space probe Pathfinder lands on Ares Vallis Mars
2006 - Space Shuttle program: STS-121 Mission - Space Shuttle Discovery launches at 18:37:55 UTC.

From KO Archives

3 Kashmiri Women Among 1,000 Nominated For Nobel Prize

Observer News Service

Srinagar - Three prominent Kashmiri women are among 91 nominated from India for this year's Nobel Peace Prize. They figure in the list of 1000 women from all over the world for the coveted nomination. According to reports, the three Kashmiris who had made to the crucial stage are Parveena Ahanger, Nighat Shafi Pandit and Dilafroza Qazi. They have made a mark in various fields of social service and empowerment of women and children.

Parveena Ahanger, 48 is an extraordinary woman who has been living with the trauma of the custodial disappearance of her son. Over the past over a decade, she has become rallying force for similarly circumstanced women and eventually formed an organization by the name of Association of Parents of Displaced Persons to fight the pernicious human rights abuse. In her relentless crusade against injustice, she braves physical danger to her own life and remains undeterred by the perils that go with it.

Ahanger has been instrumental in building up social pressure against the government which was initially clueless as the exact number of those disappearing from custody. As a result of untiring efforts of APDP, the authorities finally acknowledged more than 3000 custodial disappearances and held out an assurance to call a halt to these. Having risen above her personal trauma, Ahanger is now a prominent human rights activist in Kashmir.

Born in 1951, Nighat Shafi Pandit is the chairperson of a leading non-governmental organization. Human Effort for Love and Peace (HELP) Foundation, established in 1997 with the primary objective of organizing a social response to the growing destitution with particular emphasis on the education and healthcare of orphans, it prefers to call special children and rehabilitation of widows and other indigent members of the society irrespective of their creed, colour, community or region.

Wife of a senior IAS officer and the chairman of Public Service Commission, Muhammad Shaif Pandit, she preferred to step out of the comfortable home to move about extensively in the rural communities in both Kashmir and Jammu regions with a view to making a difference in the lives of its targeted segments. Nighat Shafi is more, focused on the education of orphans and rehabilitation of widows and leaves no occasion to share their pain and distress. She is actively involved in the promotion of peace and harmony in the insurgency-hit region.

Dilafroza Qazi is yet another Kashmiri woman who is engaged in promotion of literacy among rural folks. Born in 1972, she runs an engineering college known as SSM College of engineering near the highway town of Pattan. She is also running several primary schools. (Kashmir Observer, 04 July, 2005)

2 Firefighters Hospitalized During Late-Night Blaze In Batmaloo

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Two firefighters were hospitalized on the intervening night of Sunday-Monday when they were dousing flames in Moominabad area of Batmaloo here, officials said.

They said the fire once again broke out in Momin-

bad Batmaloo area on Sunday late night during which two firefighters suffocated.

An official from the Fire and Emergency Services said two officers, namely Noor Alam Jatta, sub-officer F&ES, and Altaf Ahmad Rather, leading fireman F&ES got suffocated and were shifted to hospital.

"Both of them experienced suffocation and breathing difficulties while extinguishing the flames and were subsequently shifted to the hospital late at night, when one was discharged Noor Alam is said to be at hospital, for precautionary measures," he said.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Office of The Executive Engineer Department Of Floriculture Kashmir Srinagar e-NIT No: 11 of 2023-24 Dated: 28.06.2023. For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory, J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Registered Contractors/Suppliers/Firms with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:

ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AWANTIPORA, KASHMIR. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR EMPANELMENT AS BOOK SUPPLIERS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023-24 (No: 1 of 2023) Expression of interest on prescribed format is invited from reputed Book Suppliers/ Vendors/ Publishers for Empanelment with the University for the supply of books to the University library and its constituent department/colleges during FY 2023-24.

KASHMIR OBSERVERTM

Tuesday | 04-07-2023

Address Economic Inequality

India, one of the world's fastest-growing economies, is marred by extreme income inequality. Estimates by the senior economic analyst Anindyo Chakravarty based on a study by the economist Thomas Piketty and his colleagues at the World Inequality Lab reveal a staggering reality: the top 0.5 percent of Indians, about 70 lakh individuals, earn as much as the poorest 80 crore people, accounting for 57 percent of the country's population. The figures underscore the truth that India is an immensely unequal country.

Earlier in 2021, the World Inequality Lab in its report termed India as one of the most unequal countries in the world. At the time, the report said that the top 1 percent of India's population earned more than one-fifth of the country's total national income, while the bottom 50 percent made just 13.1 percent.

The disparity, according to Chakravarty, becomes more pronounced when we consider how India's richest individuals fare compared to the wealthiest in developed capitalist nations. Strikingly, the richest 0.5 percent of Indians, earning the equivalent of \$30,000 PPP per month, match the affluence of the top 10 percent in the world's largest economy. In contrast, if we apply the same threshold to the UK and Germany, the combined top 4 percent of adults in these countries fall within the super-rich category.

To further grasp the extent of India's income inequality, people in Burundi, the world's poorest country, are as poorest as 58 crore Indians and once we expand the income threshold to the average level of Madagascar, 73 crore Indians fall below it.

This should be a source of deep concern for the policy-makers. We remain a poor country despite being the fifth largest economy in the world with a \$3.7 trillion economy. The government needs to ensure that this growth is equitable and percolates to the ground level. Eradicating poverty in India requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders. It necessitates a multi-pronged approach encompassing education, skill development, rural development, inclusive economic growth and social welfare. True, liberalization and privatization in early nineties played a critical role in unleashing India's economy. But it is also true that the growth has become increasingly unequal as evidenced by the new estimates. This should jolt the union government to reform the economy. With millions of people mired in poverty, the fastest economic growth counts for little.

OTHER OPINION

Spiralling food prices

And while the rise in onion and potato prices over the same one-month period is a seemingly far more benign 7.5% and 4.5%, respectively, the overall trajectory in price gains across the wider food basket is symptomatic of the unsettling build-up of underlying inflation pressures in the economy. For instance, the price of tur dal, a key protein source in the diets of vegetarian households, continues to keep rising; it had climbed 7.8% month-on-month to 130.75 a kilogram on June 29, as per the government's data. Official retail inflation data for May, released earlier this month, had shown that prices of pulses, which includes tur dal, had quickened by 128 basis points year-on-year to a 31-month high of 6.56%. The government's imposition of stock limits on urad and tur on June 2 seems to have so far done little to cool price gains in lentils.

To be sure there is a seasonality component to the prices of farm produce and their supply is largely determined by factors including timing of the harvest and the prices prevailing at the mandis when the farmers transport their crop to the markets. Just last month, tomato growers in rural Maharashtra had dumped sizeable quantities of their produce on the roads after being offered unremunerative prices. However, prices of several of these food items, including tomatoes, are still substantially higher than even the same time last year with the modal daily weighted average arrival prices at the mandis as per the government's agmarket website revealing tomato prices almost tripled year-on-year to 5,579 a quintal as on June 29. The same arrival price data show a 35% jump in tur dal and a 19% increase in common paddy (rice). With the monsoon rains 13% in deficit so far this year, and the outlook for spatial and temporal distribution in the coming months clouded with uncertainty by the El Niño, there is a real risk that food prices could cause retail inflation to accelerate again. Policymakers need to walk the talk and retain laser focus on taming inflation. After all, as the Reserve Bank of India's economists noted in the latest bulletin, "the path to high but sustainable inclusive growth has to be paved by price stability".

The Hindu

Why We Need to Refocus Human Wisdom Towards Sustainable Choices

The Holy Quran says that human beings are special, we can recognise, comprehend and identify things. This is the reason we are known as the Noblest of all the Creatures -Ashraf ul Makhloogat.

Humans used this wisdom and skill to progress. Now, new technologies have been introduced that are beneficial to all but at the same time man has been a cause of exploitation as well. One of the disasters that humans have created is Plastic. In nature, there is no waste that does not decompose but humans created an unnatural thing because of its properties. It used to be called the blessed invention from the 1960s but now it has become a curse for nature and humanity at large.

According to a 2019-2020 report by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which collates data from 60 major cities in India, the country generates around 26,000 tonnes of plastic waste a day out of which 40% plastic gets landfilled and is not recycled at all.



Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Human beings have shown their capability to survive by modifying their environment to fit their needs and by carrying out this modification, they have turned their own planet into hell

Humanity facing a new war

The UN Secretary General António Guterres in his speech during COVID 19 pandemic said that humanity was facing a new war as wildfires, hurricanes and powerful storms have scarred the globe.

Guterres said: "Humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal. Nature always strikes back – and it is already doing so with growing force and fury. Biodiversity is collapsing. One million species are at risk of extinction. Ecosystems are disappearing before our eyes ... Human activities are at the root of our descent toward chaos. But that means human action can help to solve it."

When we compare the ancient way of life in the Stone Age, we see that man has always been after development and improvement. The change of the mode of life can be studied in context with that particular age of man. However, this is not the case with the animals. All animals have followed the same pattern of survival for centuries. The environment may have modelled their pattern of survival but they have never been the masters of the environment. Many animal species have become extinct due to environmental changes.

Human beings have shown their capability to survive by modifying their environment to fit their needs and by doing this modification they have turned their own planet into a hell. The plastic has entered into our water bodies, mountains and forests and has penetrated as deep as 7 miles deep into oceans. This is not development but disaster.

Whenever we have to curse or criticise someone for littering, throwing waste at public places or tourist destinations we simply call them "animals" but this is far from true. These creatures are better than us.

We see lots of animals in the mountains like sheep, goats, horses and dogs. Do they throw waste in parks, gardens or streams? Do they make our environment dirty?

Tons of plastic are dumped by human beings on a daily basis in tourist destinations of Kashmir. Infact used diapers are thrown into rivers and streams and the same water is supplied to people downstream.

Some days back I got a call from



Gurwait village in Budgam wherein locals told me that used diapers and sanitary pads are dumped into Shali Ganga stream at Doodh Pathri and same raw water is then supplied to a mega water tank on the way, which is further supplied to villagers of Gurwait. He told me that PHE Jal Shakti employees daily take out diapers from the drinking water sources, especially the small water tanks that have been constructed near the banks of Shali Ganga.

The animals at least show tokens of goodness. They are peaceful, self-contained and happy. Animals do not grumble about their lives or have worldly lust.

Plastic a disaster for humanity

Man never knew that plastic which he invented 70 to 80 years back would one day affect his own life. This material is deeply intertwined with our modern lives. Plastic exists in nearly every industry, from food to cars to footwear to space equipment but we talk about it as both being incredibly useful and dangerous for species worldwide, as it contributes to plastic waste, plastic pollution, plastic debris, plastic packaging waste, and plastic waste generation. The plastics industry is notorious for

Biodiversity is collapsing. One million species are at risk of extinction. Ecosystems are disappearing before our eyes ... Human activities are at the root of our descent toward chaos. But that means human action can help to solve it

being bad for the environment. Plastic can be made in a variety of ways with a variety of materials. These materials can come from natural sources like latex from tree sap, tar, and amber. However, it is much cheaper and easier to make plastic from fossil fuels like crude oil and natural gas, partly because our industrial system is based on these fuels.

Intense heat or pressure is required to shape the plastic into something functional. For example, crude oil is heated in a furnace in the refining process before it is distilled into lighter compounds. Through a process called polymerization, the light compounds are connected into polymers either with the addition of a catalyst or the removal of water. Every part of the "plastics life cycle" is harmful for the environment and creates pollution. That includes:

- Extraction of fossil fuels
- Production of plastics
- Distribution and use of plastic products
- Disposal: recycling, incineration, litter.

Plastic, coming in many shapes and sizes, can end up polluting nearly every corner of our world. It impacts our water bodies, natural ecosystems and atmosphere. As I have explained in this piece and in my previous articles also, the plastic ends up in and around our oceans, which harms marine life, our natural environment, and contributes to ocean pollution. Some part of Plastic waste dumped in Jhelum river in Srinagar reaches Indus river in Pakistan as Jhelum enters into Indus (Sindh) and this waste then enters into Arabian Sea and finally goes into Indian Ocean as well. Have we ever thought about it?

Conclusion

July 3rd is celebrated as International Plastic Bag Free Day. This is a global initiative that aims to eliminate the use of plastic bags. Plastic bags may seem to be a shopping convenience but we can use alternative

materials like cotton or jute bags as well. If we spend so much money shopping for ourselves, why can't we buy a dozen cotton or jute bags and keep them handy?

The International Plastic Bag Free day is a unique opportunity to spread the word that a plastic bag free world is very much possible and we can achieve this goal provided we understand the gravity of the problem. Let us start carrying cotton and jute bags with us and get our groceries in these bags like our fathers, mothers or grandparents would do in the past.

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



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s Writing a Fame-Building Tool?

THE past few years have witnessed a huge number of people, pouring from all directions, donning their thinking caps, and putting their thoughts to paper, seemingly trying to bring change in the society and system. It's true writing has the power to act as a catalyst for change. But, before attempting to change anything, there needs to be a lot to be changed.

Coming straight to the point, checking newsfeed on Facebook a

couple of days back, my eyes struck on an article that a young lad had written. It was a nice article, but the distressing part of it was the mentioning of so many things that one had a feeling of the writer praising himself beyond limits. This piece of writing was made to attract the eyes of the people, and not to change anything whatsoever.

"Here I am..." that's what was written at the top of the Facebook post. Not only this, in the comments'

section, 'thanks' 'thanks' followed by love emoticons in torrents as replies to the compliments had one bury head in shame.

There's nothing wrong with emoticons and Facebook-sharing, but when a serious issue is being shared on a social media platform, such acts reveal the other side of the story: showcasing.

Put differently, those who are worried about issues work for solving it, their minds most of the time

trying to discover solutions. Writing aside, they work at grassroots, are pure by heart, mind, and actions.

It's high time that we mended ourselves. Nothing is going to change unless our words carry some holiness, unless we care less for ourselves and more for those that we often write about.

Peer Faizan Bashir

Quran Burning Is it a Hate Crime or Not?

The recent incident of burning a copy of the Holy Quran in Sweden has led to wider questions, whether such an act could be described as Hate Crime or not and what are the limits of Freedom of Expression, apart from why the culprit a Muslim, committed such an act?

Asad Mirza

Salwan Momika, 37, an Iraqi national living in Sweden for the last two years, burned pages of the Holy Quran outside a Stockholm mosque on Wednesday 27th June, after placing a piece of bacon, considered impure by Muslims, and stomping on it.

Apparently, he had posted a video online earlier, declaring his intention to burn the Holy Quran on the day of Eid-al Adha festival, and had even asked for donations and support from his family and friends in the video. Further justifying his act he said that he had received permission from the Stockholm Police to burn a copy of the Holy Quran and as reported by Al Arabiya, he intended to burn another copy of the Holy Quran within 10 days.

After being granted a permit to protest by Swedish police, Salwan stomped on the Islamic holy book and set several pages alight in front of the capital's largest mosque.

Obviously, the act sparked anger across and beyond the Middle East. On its part the United States condemned the incident but added that issuing the permit for the demonstration supported freedom of expression but it was not an endorsement of the action, thus tacitly supporting the Swedish authorities.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has stated that the incident was offensive and objectionable, but not illegal. The NATO chief, however, pushed for a deal on Sweden's NATO membership despite the event, adding another dimension to the incident.

Turkey condemned Swedish authorities' decision to approve the Quran-burning demonstration, a move that may risk Sweden's bid to join NATO before the bloc's key summit in July. Turkey's foreign minister has termed the protest a "heinous act."

Meanwhile, in its defence the Swedish Police said though it had granted Salwan a permit in line with free-speech protections, but now it has opened an investigation over "agitation against an ethnic group," noting that he



“ HOWEVER, A MORE IMPORTANT QUESTION here emerges whether this act can be construed as an act of Hate Crime or not? In absence of any universally agreed definition of Hate Crime and Hate Speech, there are opinions on both side of the spectrum.”

had performed the burning so close to the mosque.

The police authorisation for the protest came two weeks after a Swedish appeals court rejected the police's decision to deny permits for two demonstrations in Stockholm, which were to include Quran burnings.

Police had at the time cited security concerns, following a burning of the Muslim holy book outside Turkey's embassy in January which led to weeks of protests, calls for a boycott of Swedish goods and further stalled Sweden's NATO membership bid - which is being

blocked by Ankara.

The appeals court however in mid-June ruled that police were wrong to ban such demonstrations, saying the security concerns cited by the police were not sufficient to ban the events.

Apparently Sweden rarely condemns protests and public opinion. And, reportedly, a court there gave permission for Salwan's demonstration on Wednesday. Though the police claim that it refused to authorise the Quran burnings in Stockholm.

On his part, Salwan says his idea was to highlight the importance of freedom

of speech as he was quoted in reports as saying, "This is democracy. It is in danger if they tell us we can't do this."

However, a more important question here emerges whether this act can be construed as an act of Hate Crime or not? In absence of any universally agreed definition of Hate Crime and Hate Speech, there are opinions on both side of the spectrum debating whether or not this act qualifies as a Hate Crime or not.

Salwan, speaking to Swedish newspaper Expressen, denied that his actions constituted a "hate crime" or

"agitation towards any group." "The police have the right to investigate whether the burning is a hate crime. They could be right and they can be wrong," he told the newspaper, adding that it would be up to a court to decide in the end.

Thus, the whole episode leads us to the basic question whether the act was Hate Crime or not. In absence of any universally accepted definition of Hate Crime, and the manner in which crimes against the Muslim community in Europe and elsewhere are not dubbed Hate Crime, there is an urgent need to give a universally accepted definition of a Hate Crime.

Just like condemning Xenophobia in any form or shape, the western world needs to act unitedly against acts or words against the Islamic community. Otherwise the chasm between the western and the eastern world may increase further, and the so-called Islamic countries will continue to express only a muted response to such incidents, keeping their financial interests and ties with west, in mind.

At its level the UN had proclaimed 18 June as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, building on the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech launched on 18 June 2019.

But as articulated by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, at the launch on 18 June, "But we are far from powerless in the face of hate speech. We can and must raise awareness about its dangers, and work to prevent and end it in all its forms." We, by which, I mean the western nations first and other nations too, must act swiftly to put in place a universally accepted definition of Hate Crimes, encompassing all forms of Hate Speech and other acts inimical to the Muslim community, additionally also deciding what are the limits to Freedom of Expression, otherwise incidents like the Sweden one will continue to happen, agonising a vast global populace.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

On Superfluous People

Dean Rickles

As if to purposely provoke like a novel kind of adversary, author Yuval Noah Harari has said that "The most important question in 21st-century economics may well be: What should we do with all the superfluous people once we have highly intelligent, non-conscious algorithms that can do almost everything better than humans?" The implication is immediate: if humans aren't economically viable, they are, ipso facto, superfluous. Harari brings two elements into play here: (1) we are homo economicus (and nothing more), (2) algorithms rule. The two are interleaved for Harari: the better the algorithmic performance, the greater the economic value.

The idea that this might not be the only way to think about value seems to pass Harari by. We must ask, for example, to what end are we aiming with this improved performance? Who is it for if not humanity? The problem here is not with humans, but with a purely economically driven take on the world. This is, unfortunately, a rather natural consequence of a purely materialist view of the world. If we are nothing but matter in motion, then

Harari's logic is perhaps tenable. If we are simply the proletariat with nothing but our labour to sell, then we are seemingly doomed by AI's impressive advances.

Harari does consider some non-economic values, but finds that humans might well be just as superfluous there:

"Art is often said to provide us with our ultimate (and uniquely human) sanctuary. In a world where computers have replaced doctors, drivers, teachers and even landlords, would everyone become an artist? Yet it is hard to see why artistic creation would be safe from the algorithms. According to the life sciences, art is not the product of some enchanted spirit or metaphysical soul, but rather of organic algorithms recognizing mathematical patterns. If so, there is no reason why non-organic algorithms couldn't master it."

We see many problems here, which now come from (2): algorithms rule.

Oh, Noah.

Firstly, the programs we have thus far are little more than "stochastic parrots". They work from preexisting materials only. They do not create new things—they re-arrange and make guesses from prompts or seeds provided from real human creations. We might get a fugue that

mimics Bach, but we will not get a Bach. The result would be a quick stagnation of looping through the old masters. Here, as Salomon once said, there would be no new thing on the Earth, only here all novelty is but permutation.

Secondly, I know of no life scientist (I know many) that would tread so far as to say art is nothing but "organic algorithms recognizing mathematical patterns"—I'm not sure I've heard a more absurd claim about art. Some art might well be along these lines, but to say art as a whole is of this form bespeaks an impoverished standpoint.

Thirdly, Harari, even here, is focused on the need to produce things in order to have value. It is still an economic criterion, only switched to the production of artistic creations. This is the most worrying element of his viewpoint, which we might laugh off if he did not have such a seemingly influential role in guiding the minds of others of very significant influence on the global stage.

This much would be bad enough, but Harari goes further down the line of what is beginning to look like good old fashioned eugenics:

"In the 21st century, we might witness

the creation of a massive new unworking class: people devoid of any economic, political or even artistic value, who contribute nothing to the prosperity, power and glory of society. This 'useless class' will not merely be unemployed—it will be unemployable."

Oh, Noah. Surely this is where he stops? Surely he could go no lower than this remark, which removes all inherent dignity from human beings, ignoring human emotions, and converting them into human doings or human nothings? Nope, he goes on:

"The crucial problem isn't creating new jobs. The crucial problem is creating new jobs that humans perform better than algorithms."

Oh, Noah!

The crucial problem is recognising the divine in any human. Maybe, who knows, AI systems will pick up some of that divine spark, in which case they will deserve the same kind of respect as humans and other life-forms do. Even if they have very limited consciousness, then they will, in my opinion, still deserve respect as animals and plants do. Part of this respect would be to not demand that they better be producers lest they not be allowed to exist.

This is the road to a dangerous form of eugenics. It is promoting conditional love and respect in an era when the opposite is sorely needed.

But, being more charitable, what can we take away from this? I think it is that it can be useful to view AI as a kind of modern parable designed to show what it is like to have your creations trying to overthrow you through problematic programming and a lack of deeper understanding. This is simply Goethe's poem The Sorcerer's Apprentice, or could be if we continue down Harari's path. If we start to build algorithms that encode Harari's productive definition of value, then we are, indeed, doomed if they get out of our control. If we also communicate this idea of produce or perish to the public, and to future generations, then humanity will collapse. When that happens, the only beings in the cosmos, so far as we know, that are capable of generating meaning will be gone. We must consider what, if anything, will remain of the cosmos at that point. Bits of data only mean what we make them mean.

The article was originally published by Psychology Today

'Boil in the Bag': UK Introduces Eco-friendly 'Water Cremation'

Agencis

Co-op Funeralcare Has announced that it will introduce the water cremation practice, called resomation, later this year. The practice consists of the deceased being enclosed in a biodegradable pouch then placed in a container filled with pressurised water and a small amount of potassium hydroxide.

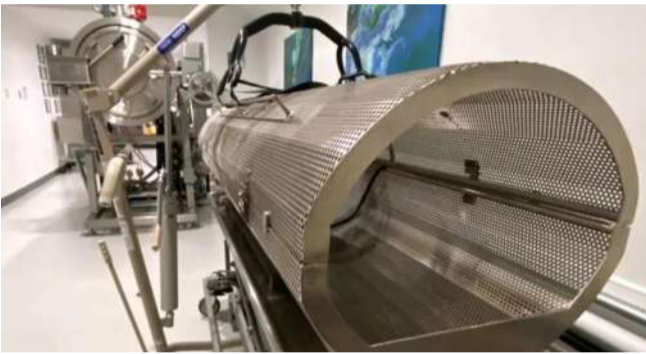
This process then rapidly converts tissue and cells into a watery solution, with one cycle taking approximately four hours to complete. Remaining bones will then be dried and reduced to a white powder, which can be returned to relatives in an urn.

Research suggests that water cremation is a more environmentally sustainable option as it does not release toxic gases, air pollutants or polluting fluids. Cremating a body leads to the release of carbon dioxide and

potentially toxic gases while burials can lead to the risk of groundwater contamination.

Gill Stewart, managing director of Co-op Funeralcare, the UK's largest funeral provider, said: "Up until now choice has been limited to burial or cremation. We've seen from the rapid uptake of newer funeral options such as direct cremation that when choice in the funeral market is broadened, this is only a positive thing both for the bereaved and for those planning ahead for their own farewell."

Co-op funeralcare added pilot locations to be announced later this year with the intention to expand the service to all Co-op clients. It also said it has updated the government on its plans to make the process available in the UK and that questions on new burial methods were raised at the Synod of the Church of England earlier this year.



Woman Hides Heroin With Rs 14 Crore In Handbag, Buttons Of Dresses And Soaps; Caught At Hyderabad Airport



Press Trust of India

Hyderabad: Over two kilograms of heroin valued at Rs 14.2 crore in the international market was seized from a woman passenger, a national of Republic of Burundi, at the international airport here and she was arrested, Customs officials said on Monday.

Based on passenger profiling, the officers of Hyderabad Customs identified and intercepted the woman passenger from the African nation, aged about 43, who arrived by a flight from Kenya's

capital Nairobi here on July 2, they said.

On examination of the passenger's baggage, it was observed that eight traditional African dresses, one handbag and three soaps contained in the baggage appeared to be heavier than the normal weight, a release from Customs said.

After opening the side walls/layers of the dresses, handbag and the soaps, black/clear plastic packets concealed in each of the walls/layers of the handbag, buttons of dresses and soaps

were found, it said.

Opening of these packets contained brownish-white powder which upon testing appeared to be heroin, the release stated.

A total of 2,027 grams of heroin valued at approximately Rs 14.2 crore in the international market was seized, it said.

The passenger was arrested under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and remanded in judicial custody by a city court. Further investigation was under progress, the release added.

Twitter Imposes Daily Limits On Reading Posts

Agencis

Twitter owner Elon Musk has limited the amount of tweets that most users can view each day, restrictions he described as an attempt to prevent unauthorized scraping of potentially valuable data from the social media platform. The site is now requiring people to log on to view tweets and profiles - a change in its longtime practice to allow everyone to peruse the chatter on what Musk has frequently touted as the world's digital town square since buying it for \$44 billion last year.

The restrictions could result in users being locked out of Twitter for the day after scrolling through several hundred tweets. Thousands of users complained Saturday of not being able to access the site.

In a Friday tweet, Musk described the new restrictions as a temporary measure that was taken because we were getting data pillaged so much that it was degrading service for normal users!

Musk has pushed back on what he calls misuse of Twitter data to train popular artificial intelligence systems like ChatGPT. They scour reams of information online to generate human-like text, photos, video and other content.

Musk elaborated on the limits Saturday, saying unverified accounts will temporarily be restricted to reading 600 posts per day, while verified accounts will be able to scroll through up to 6,000.

After facing backlash, he tweet-

ed that the thresholds would be raised to 800 posts for unverified accounts and 8,000 for verified accounts before later settling on 1,000 and 10,000 tweets, respectively. The crackdown began to have ripple effects, causing more than 7,500 people at one point Saturday to report problems using the social media service, based on complaints registered on DownteDetector, a website that tracks online outages.

Although that's a relatively small number of Twitter's more than 200 million worldwide users, the trouble was widespread enough to cause the #TwitterDown hashtag to trend in some parts of the world. The higher threshold allowed on verified accounts is part of an \$8-per-month subscription service that Musk rolled out earlier this year in an effort to boost Twitter revenue. It has fallen sharply since the billionaire Tesla CEO took over the company and laid off roughly three-fourths of the workforce to cut costs and stave off bankruptcy.

Advertisers have since curbed their spending on Twitter, partly because of changes that have allowed more sometimes-hateful and prickly content that offends a wider part of the service's audience.

Musk recently hired longtime NBC Universal executive Linda Yaccarino as Twitter's CEO to try to win back advertisers. An Associated Press inquiry about Saturday's access problems triggered a crude automated reply that Twitter sends to most media queries without addressing the question.

Quick eats for busy people



Bun Maska
& Chai

Chicken Crispy
Burger



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