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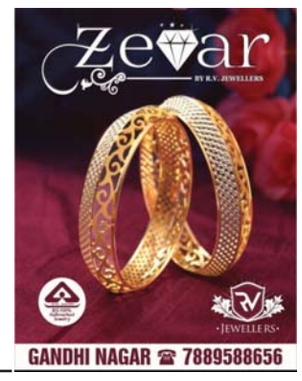

LG takes cognizance of minor girl's complaint

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, May 31: Taking cognizance of a six-year old Kashmiri girl's complaint to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about online classes, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha today directed School Education Department to come up with a policy within 48 hours to reduce the burden of homework on small kids.

"Very adorable complaint. Have directed the School Education Department to come out with a policy within 48 hours

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

B K Singh designated as Principal Secy

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, May 31: B K Singh, Administrative Secretary, School Education Department, has been designated as Principal Secretary to the Government, SED.

A communication in this regard was forwarded by the General Administration Department, J&K to the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

The officer, an IFS of 1989

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Govt to decide on 12th exams within 2 days

NEW DELHI, May 31:

The Government will take a final decision within the next two days on whether to conduct class 12th board exams amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court was informed today.

Attorney General K K Venugopal told this to a bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari which said if the Centre decides to depart from the last year's policy, wherein the remaining board exams were cancelled due to the pandemic, then it must give "tangible reasons" for it.

(Contd on page 9 Col 1)

Major tragedy averted, IEDs recovered

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, May 31 : Security forces today averted major tragedies by foiling two bids by the militants to carry out major IED attacks in Awantipora

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area of Southern Pulwama district.

Security forces recovered a huge quantity of IED material that includes 50 kg explosives beside other material at two separate

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Govt to develop Horticulture clusters at Shopian, other places

NEW DELHI, May 31:

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar today launched a programme for integrated and market-led development of 53 horticulture clusters, which have the potential to help 10 lakh farmers and attract Rs 10,000 crore investment.

The Minister launched Horticulture Cluster Development Programme (CDP) in a virtual event, an official state-

(Contd on page 9 Col 3)

Shops reopen as Unlock begins in Jammu region

20 die but cases down to 525, recoveries over 3 times more than positives

Sanjeev Pargal

**Gynecologist, BMO, Retd Col with 2 of family test +ve*

JAMMU, May 31: Twenty persons including six women died of COVID-19 and 525 tested positive in Jammu region today as markets in all 10 districts reopened on the basis of rosters issued by the respective District Magistrates after over a month with slight hustle bustle returning to cities, towns and even villages which reeled under Corona curfew in the month of May.

Though COVID casualties remained on the higher side, the positive cases have considerably come down to 525 today as compared to around 1800 about 20 days back. More significant were the recoveries today which were over three times more than cases.

As against 525 positive cases reported today, the recoveries stood at 1801 bringing down active positive cases close to 13,000.

Only Jammu district reported positive cases in three digits today while eight districts in the region recorded new cases below 50 which, according to doctors, was quite a healthy sign.

Indira Chowk market in Jammu city with selective shops open on Monday. —Excelsior/Rakesh

Among 525 positives, Jammu district reported 278 cases, Doda 64, Rajouri 40, Ramban 36, Poonch 29, Udhampur 25, Reasi 20, Kishtwar 14, Kathua 13 and Samba six. At the same time, maximum 485 persons also recovered from the virus in Jammu district followed by 341 in Rajouri, 243 Poonch, 159 Ramban, 124 Doda, 114 Samba, 103 Udhampur, 95 Reasi, 92 Kathua and 45 in Kishtwar district.

Of 20 fresh casualties, 12 were reported in Jammu district, two each in Ramban, Kathua and Udhampur and one each in Doda and Rajouri districts.

Six women were among the dead while two persons succumbed to the virus at home.

Three COVID casualties were reported from Talab Tillo and two in Shakti Nagar in Jammu district.

A 76-year-old man from Talab Tillo died at home and was later shifted to the Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

May turns out to be deadliest in Jammu

Month of May turned out to be deadliest from COVID-19 point of view in Jammu accounting for more casualties than total recorded in the region till April 30, 2021 since the pandemic broke out in February last year.

Data available with the Excelsior revealed that 1019 persons succumbed to the virus in Jammu region in the month of May alone.

(Contd on page 9 Col 3)

'COVID challenges not yet over'

Take decisions without fear & favour, end adhocism: LG to Admn Secys

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, May 31: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today chaired a high-level meeting with Administrative Secretaries of the Union Territory at the Civil Secretariat, here.

During the meeting, he urged the officials to improve the speed and quality of decision-making without fear and favour. He stressed that every department of administration must be responsive and accountable for citizen-centric governance.

"Administrative Secretaries must interact with public on daily basis and redress their grievances with empathy. Officers should put an end to ad-hocism, determine the need and action required for the welfare of common man", Sinha asserted.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chairing a meeting of the Administrative Secretaries in Srinagar on Monday.

Reiterating that an accountable, transparent and responsive administration is the cornerstone of any good governance structure, he asked the officers to remain connected with people so that maximum benefits of pro-people initiatives taken by the government percolate to the common man on the ground.

"Common people should feel the difference and I urge upon all of you to have a friendly and pro-people attitude so as to resolve their issues and grievances by strengthening grievance redressal mechanism where higher officers acknowledge and take timely objective actions on the public grievances emanating through any channel," he said

Underlining the importance of completion of various developmental projects taken up in the region, the Lt Governor maintained that a focused approach should be employed so that all these projects are finished within specified timelines.

"The officers have done a great job in handling the pandemic and simultaneously pushing the

(Contd on page 9 Col 1)

People feel pinch as prices of cooking oil, vegetables, fruits soar

Govind Sharma

JAMMU, May 31: Amid restrictions imposed by the J&K Government to curb COVID-19 pandemic, rising prices of cooking oil, vegetables and other essentials have upset the kitchen of common man, particularly labour class, rehri and pheri walas and others whose kitchens run on daily earnings.

Due to restrictions imposed by the UT administration on opening of shops, markets and other establishments, daily wage earners including labour class, electricians, plumbers, barbers, etc and those working in small and big shops, showrooms, restaurants, hotels, dhabas and automobile workshops have become jobless. They have no work and no earnings and on the other hand, rising prices of essential commodities are burning holes in their pockets.

The price of mustard oil, which is a main constituent of the Indian kitchens, is touching sky. It is being sold at 180-195 per litre in retail market. Not only mustard oil, but the prices of all cooking oils have risen by Rs 50/60 per litre in last few months. The prices of pulses had also risen but in last few days, there is slight fall.

"With whatever savings we had, we had been feeding our families but as prices of cooking oil and other food products including vegetables and fruits have risen manifold, we are struggling to provide even two-time meals to our families, what to say of fulfilling other basic needs," said Mahesh Kumar, a Tailor Master.

Shikha Kumari, a house wife said even seasonal vegetables like ladyfinger, bitter gourd, beans, brinjal and fruits like mango, watermelon, pomegranate, lemon and banana are out of common man's reach. One kg of ladyfinger and bitter gourd are being sold in retail market at about Rs 40 and brinjal Rs 30 per kg and beans Rs 40 per kg while the mango is available at Rs 70-80 per kg, one piece of coconut at Rs 60-70, Kiwi at Rs 40-50 per piece, pomegranate Rs 100-150 per kg, banana Rs 60-70 per dozen and lemon at Rs 50-60 per kg.

"Edible oil prices have risen over 50 percent in last six months due to import issues in crude palm oil which is one of the raw materials for all type of oils available in the market. Moreover, the demand of Mustard oil has risen during curfew while the production of the Mustard seeds was very less this season," said Anup Mittal, presi-

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

Man kills 2 sons, shoots self to death

Excelsior Correspondent

DODA, May 31: A man shot dead his two sons before killing self in Upper Gallo area of tehsil Kahara, in this district late tonight.

As per police sources, a man identified as Sunit Singh, son of Chuni Lal, a resident of Upper Gallo shot dead his two sons Kamal Kant (Class 9th student) and Chander Kant (Class 11th student) with rifle and later shot self also. Trio died on the spot.

On getting information, police team led by SDPO Gandoh Shahzada Kabir Matto, SHO Gandoh Inspector Vikram Singh and Incharge Police Post Kahara rushed to the spot.

A case under relevant Sections has been registered at Police Station Gandoh and investigation started.

When contacted, SDM

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

Suo moto cognizance of Excelsior report taken

ACB initiates probe into missing of LMD Labs: searches conducted, record seized

Nishikant Khajuria

JAMMU, May 31: Taking suo-moto cognizance of the Excelsior report on missing of two Centrally funded Working Standard Laboratories of Legal Metrology Department, J&K, Anti-Corruption Bureau today conducted searches after initiating an open verification for probe in this regard.

The ACB sleuths conducted simultaneous searches in the LMD office at Transport Yard, Jammu as well as Bemina, Srinagar and seized significant record pertaining to construction of the Working Standard Laboratories, official sources told the Excelsior.

Besides, sources added, the ACB searched the offices of J&K Housing Board and seized the relevant record from there also as the Board was executing agency in construction of the labs.

Pertinent to mention that the Excelsior, in its May 25 edition, had carried out an exclusive report about major fraud in the LMD where two Working Standard Laboratories went missing notwithstanding construction of the same on papers and release of lakhs of rupees for the each lab. Government of India had funded for the construction of six WSLs, three each at Transport Yard Jammu and Bemina Srinagar. Even as all the six labs were shown constructed on papers and Utilization Certificate was also submitted to the Government of India, only four WSLs existed on ground and remaining two are missing.

Taking suo moto cognizance of the Excelsior report, sources said that the Anti- Corruption Bureau registered an open verification (number Veri-19/2021) in this regard at Police Station Central, ACB, J&K and started investigation.

As part of the investigation, the ACB sleuths today conducted simultaneous searches in both the offices of LMD at Transport Yard Jammu and Bemina, Srinagar.

Sources said that the ACB searches began in the morning around 11 a.m and continued for more than five hours, during which the documents pertaining to construction of the labs were seized.

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Major COVID scam in SKIMS, report lying in LG's Sectt

Director purchases transport ventilators in bulk instead of ICU ventilators, patients suffer: Report

Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR, May 31: The Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Srinagar, has made bulk purchases of MRI compatible transport ventilators when the Head of the Department of Anaesthesiology and Critical Care had projected the demand for COVID specific ventilators for use in the Intensive care units of the hospital.

The purchase of these ventilators, which are now lying idle, was made in a hush hush manner in gross violation of financial code and as per records such a bulk purchase of MRI based transport ventilators was not even made by All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

A confidential report (SIMS 301 02/AD/2021-42 dated 18-02-2021) sent by then Additional Director SKIMS, Mathora Masoom, and addressed to Deputy Secretary Vikas Verma (LG' References Monitoring Cell GAD) has revealed that SKIMS purchased MRI compatible transport ventilators for Rs 1,28,40,000 without endorsement from the HoD Anaesthesiology and Critical Care, Dr Abdul Qayoom Lone.

"…HoD Department of Anaesthesiology and Critical Care (Dr Abdul Qayoom Lone) forwarded a requisition to Director SKIMS regarding procurement of transport ventilators on the basis of supply order of AIIMS New Delhi…model ASTRAL-100, company RESMED Ltd, Australia involving financial implications of Rs 77, 72, 800 including GST for 20 units (3, 47, 000). Case was processed and technical specifications were certified by coordinator machinery and equipment from HoD concerned…", read the report.

"Instead of procuring these ventilators, the SKIMS purchased MRI compatible transport ventilators for Rs 1,28,40,000 without endorsement from the HoD Anaesthesiology and Critical Care", the report stated.

The report said that there was no need for purchase of such a number of MRI compatible transport ventilators when at a time only one patient can be handled by MRI machine at the SKIMS. An official said that 7 similar transport ventilators were donated by an NGO to SKIMS who had purchased them on the same analogy. "These were not accepted by Chest Diseases hospital Srinagar. They said no to the NGO for these ventilators saying the transport ventilators were of no use for COVID-19 patients", he said.

"It is established here that financial implications of MRI ventilators were very high than those procured by AIIMS. There was an extra burden of Rs 50,67,200 on SKIMS and it is not justified anywhere what was the need of procuring 20 MRI transport ventilators, when at one time only one patient can be handled by MRI

(Contd on page 9 Col 3)

1000 test +ve in Kashmir, 17 die

Partial hustle bustle returns to markets after one month

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, May 31 : As Corona curfew restrictions were eased out today after a month, the hustle and bustle returned to the markets in Kashmir with shops, business activities and transport services resuming partially.

Kashmir remained under strict curfew since April 29 in order to prevent the COVID-19 from spreading. Srinagar was recording huge daily positive cases following which the second phase of lock-

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down was announced by the Government.

The lockdown was extended five times since April 29 and ended on May 31 morning.

The life limped back to normalcy today when shopkeepers opened their shops and the public transport was back on roads since this morning with certain restrictions.

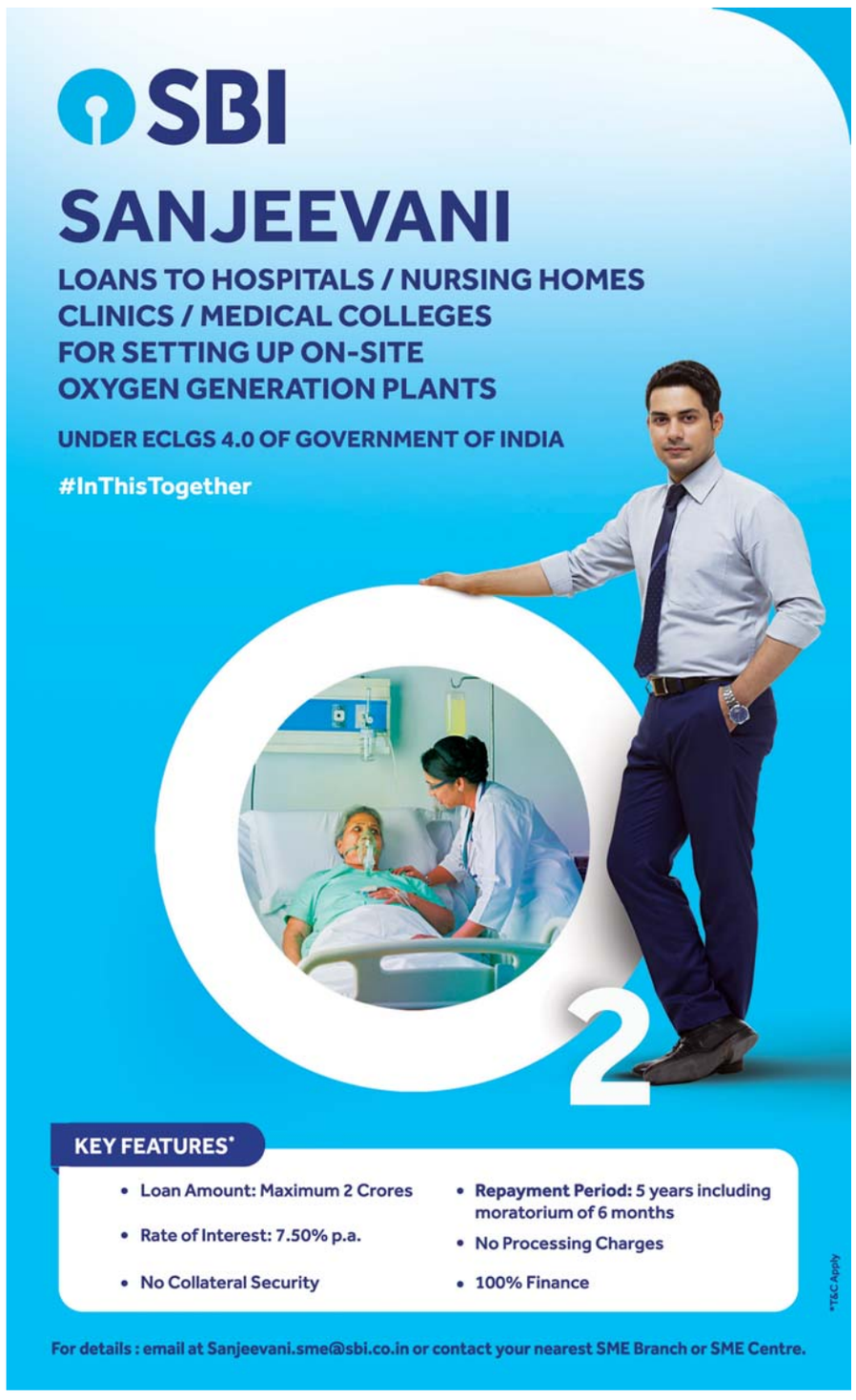
The markets witnessed hustle and bustle again today while the shoppers were seen buying the essentials like food stuff and other related items.

Markets open during partial Unlock in Srinagar on Monday. —Excelsior/Shakeel

However, the curbs continued to remain in place in the contaminated zones across Srinagar and other places to prevent the virus from spreading.

Moreover, night curfew would continue to remain in place across Kashmir from 08:00 p.m to 07:00 a.m.

Authorities today extended the suspension of train services between Baramulla and Banihal section till June 9 in view of COVID.

Authorities said that the cancellation of train service between Baramulla and Banihal has been extended till June 9. "The UT of Jammu and Kashmir has extended the cancellation of train service in J&K from Baramulla to Banihal

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