



Maximum : 04°C  
Minum : 0°C  
Humidity : 98%

SUNSET  
Today 05:36 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 07:37 AM



## News Digest

### Budgam Scholar Dies Of Cardiac Arrest

SRINAGAR: A PhD scholar died of a cardiac arrest on Tuesday in central Kashmir's Budgam district. Shakeel Ahmad Dar, a resident of Wathoor village suffered a massive cardiac arrest on Tuesday morning at his home, news agency KDC reported. He was immediately rushed to the nearby hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. Shakeel had completed his PhD from SKUAST University.

### Hunter Injured As Gun Goes Off

SRINAGAR: A hunter was injured on Tuesday when his gun went off accidentally in Ganderbal district of central Kashmir. 33-year-old Gulzar Ahmed Gaabru was hunting in Rabitar area of the district on Tuesday when his 12 bore file accidentally went off leaving him injured, police sources said. The injured hunter was removed to district hospital Ganderbal for treatment. However, the doctors there referred him to Srinagar's SKIMS for specialised treatment. Meanwhile, police have registered a case and set investigation into motion. (KNT)

### Jewellery Looted From Budgam House

SRINAGAR: Police on Tuesday quizzed two brothers in central Kashmir's Budgam district after unknown burglars struck a house in Wadwan area and decamped with jewellery. Unidentified burglars broke into the house of Muhammad Ashraf Bhat in Wadwan area and looted gold jewellery, including rings, ear rings and bangles before making a quick exit, local news agency KNT reported Tuesday. Bhat, the report said, filed a complaint with the police naming two brothers, both residents of Nasrullahpora as suspects. Accordingly, police ● P06

### Medical Officer Suspended Over Absence

SRINAGAR: The authorities in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Tuesday suspended a medical officer over 'unauthorized absence from duties'. An order in this regard, reads that "Pending enquiry into the 'unauthorized absence from duties', Dr. Faheem Shah, Medical Officer, PHC Khiram is placed under suspension with immediate effect and attached with Block Medical Officer, Bijbehara." "Additional Deputy Commissioner (S) shall conduct an enquiry and furnish a detailed report within 5 days positively", the order reads further. (GNS)

### 'Drug Peddler' Held Along LoC In Poonch

JAMMU: An alleged drug peddler was arrested on Tuesday along LoC in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said. A police team along with local Army units apprehended the person from Dabbi village in Balakote border belt of Mendhar sub division, and recovered 300 grams of heroin from him, they said. Searches are going on in the area as a huge quantity of arms and ammunition was recovered from this village recently, officials said. Police is also probing if the incident is linked ● P06

# Heavy Snowfall Batters Kashmir

## Major Roads And Highways Closed, Air Traffic Suspended; Avalanche Alert Renewed

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Several residential houses were damaged as Kashmir valley witnessed widespread snowfall for the third straight day Tuesday, bringing normal life to a grinding halt.

Nearly 4500 vehicles, mostly trucks carrying essentials to the valley, are stranded along the highway at various places.

"The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is closed due to accumulation of snow at many places, especially around Jawahar Tunnel," an official of the traffic control department said.

He said snow clearance operations were in full swing and efforts were on to restore movement of stranded vehicles along the 260 kilometre road.

Mughal Road, which connects the valley to Jammu division through Shopian-Rajouri axis, has been closed for several days due to heavy snowfall in the region.

The flight operations to and from Srinagar remained suspended for third consecutive day, the officials said.

They said that no flight could take off or arrive at the Srinagar international airport due to poor visibility.

The airlines have already cancelled or rescheduled the flights and as per the officials, it was highly unlikely for any operation to take place at the airport in wake of the snowfall.

The officials said south Kashmir's Bhatnagar district received highest snowfall with three to four feet of snow accumulated at some places.

Anantnag district has also received heavy snowfall, they said.

The officials said that Srinagar received 8cms of snowfall in the last 24 hours till 0830 hours while Qazigund, the gateway town of Kashmir, recorded the highest depth in the plains across Valley—29.8cms—during the time and 80cms (32inches)



KO Photo Anil Bhat

## Thousands Stranded On Highway

BANIHAL: The Jammu-Srinagar national highway remained closed for the third consecutive day on Tuesday following heavy snowfall and multiple landslides, even as over 250 stranded vehicles, mostly carrying passengers, were cleared after the arterial road was briefly opened for one-way traffic between Banihal and Qazigund, officials said.

The 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking

Kashmir with the rest of the country, was closed for traffic on Saturday night after Jawahar Tunnel, the gateway to Kashmir, experienced snowfall that left over 4,500 vehicles, mostly trucks stranded on either side.

With no let up in the snow in and around Jawahar Tunnel coupled with multiple landslides, mudslides and shooting of stones from the hillocks overlooking the highway at various places between Samroli

and Banihal, the strategic road was closed for vehicular traffic since Sunday, the officials said.

However, they said over 100 Jammu-bound trucks were cleared from Jawahar Tunnel area after the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) managed to clear the road of over three feet of accumulated snow on Monday evening.

Over 250 passenger vehicles and dozens of trucks carrying essential commodities to ● PAGE 06

in the last 48 hours.

Pahalgam, the famous tourist destination, and Kokernag recorded 18cms and 26cms of fresh snowfall in the 24 hours respectively.

Regarding Gulmarg, the official said that the famous skiing resort accumulated 20cms of fresh

snowfall in the last 24 hours while Kupwara recorded 2cms of snowfall. Central Kashmir's Ganderbal and Budgam districts received almost the same snow depth as Srinagar even as higher reaches accumulated around 24-30cms or more fresh snow.

Reports said that several main roads and almost all interior lanes are still clogged with snow even as the divisional administration pressed men and machinery into service in the early hours of the day to clear snow from the roads. The snowfall has also ● PAGE 06

THE JAMMU-SRINAGAR NATIONAL HIGHWAY IS CLOSED DUE TO ACCUMULATION of snow at many places, especially around Jawahar Tunnel," an official of the traffic control department said.

## Amid Bird Flu Scare, Alert Sounded In J&K



Image for representation

JAMMU: As neighbouring Himachal Pradesh reported cases of bird flu, Jammu and Kashmir has sounded an alert and started collecting samples to check the health of the winged guests flocking the Union territory during winters, officials said.

The joint teams of Animal Husbandry and Wildlife departments on Tuesday visited Gharana wetland in the outskirts of Jammu and collected 25 bird droppings for testing to ascertain whether any of the

birds is infected with the dreaded avian influenza, the officials said.

The J&K government has sounded an alert following reports of bird flu cases in Himachal Pradesh and issued certain guidelines as a precautionary measure, Wildlife Warden, Jammu, Anil Atri said.

Atri, who along with Dr Ranjit Katoch of the Wildlife department joined the Animal Husbandry team at Gharana wetland, said all the birds present in the wetland looked healthy. ● PAGE 06

## J&K Reports 137 New Corona Cases, 6 Deaths

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday recorded 137 new COVID-19 cases, while six deaths took place in the last 24 hours, taking the total case-load to 1,21,923 and the death toll to 1,897, officials said.

Of the fresh cases, 71 were from Jammu division and 66 from Kashmir division of the Union territory, they said.

The officials said Jammu district recorded the highest with 49 cases followed by 22 in Srinagar district.

While five districts -- Kulgam, Poonch, Rajouri, Shopian and Reasi -- did not report any fresh cases, 11 other districts had fresh cases in single digits. Besides Jammu and ● P06

## NC Leaders Meet LG, Raise Fears of 'Horse Trading'

### Seek Judicial Probe Into Lawaypora Encounter, Jeweller's Killing

JAMMU: An eight-member National Conference delegation on Tuesday met Lt Governor Manoj Sinha here and drew his attention to alleged attempts being made to mutilate the mandate of the people by encouraging horse-trading of the recently elected DDC members, the party said.

The NC stressed the crucial need of ensuring neutrality and impartiality of the administration in establishment of District Development Councils and said this is imperative for respecting the mandate and upholding people's faith in the grass-roots level democratic institutions which hold promise for transforming rural landscape in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Tarigami Seeks Probe Into Lawaypora Killings

CPIM(M) leader Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami on Tuesday called on Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha here and demanded a probe into an encounter in Srinagar in which three alleged militants were killed.

According to police, ● P06

The delegation was by led by party's Jammu provincial president Devender Singh Rana and included former ministers ● PAGE 06

## Shopian Woman Delivers Baby On Stretcher

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: Contrary to the claims of government that they were fully prepared to meet any challenge arising out of the heavy snowfall, a pregnant woman on Tuesday delivered a baby on a make-shift stretcher before she could be taken to a hospital in the snowbound Keller belt of south Kashmir's Shopian district.

Akhter Jan, wife of Papa Poswal of Zrakan Keller gave birth to a baby on a make-shift stretcher as the villagers were carrying her to a hospital for delivery, news agency KNO reported Tuesday. The villagers, the report said, were carrying the woman on cot amidst the heavy snowfall as the roads blocked by the snow were not cleared.

"The lady developed labour pain following which the locals put efforts to shift her to SDH Keller, which is around 10 km from Zrakan village," Choudhary Showkat Shabir, a local said.

"However, before she could be taken to the hospital, the woman delivered on a make-shift stretcher. The condition of both baby and mother is stable at SDH Keller," he added.

Shabir alleged that the ● P06

## 3 Of A Family Die Of 'Asphyxiation'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Three persons of a family were found dead on Tuesday morning purportedly due to 'suffocation' in Nehalpora village in Pattan of north-Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Reports said that three members of a family identified as Mohammad Maqbool Lone (50) his wife Hasena Begum (45), their son Talib Maqbool (4) were found dead at their home early this morning.

Upon intimation by locals, teams from police and medical department reached the spot upon which bodies of the trio were removed to a hospital for autopsy, the reports said.

Meanwhile a police official confirming the incident said that they are ascertaining the cause of death, "although it seems that the trio has died of suffocation."

## Boris Pulls Out As R-Day Chief Guest

NEW DELHI: South Block's preparations for the Republic Day parade have been thrown in a tizzy after UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson cancelled his India visit with a terse announcement from Downing Street that cited the need to oversee the pandemic response at home.

In 2018, US President Donald Trump had declined PM Narendra Modi's invite to be the Chief Guest at the 2019 Republic Day celebrations. However, Trump had conveyed his regrets nearly three months before the event, giving South Block enough time to invite South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

India had last suffered a last-minute pull out in 2013 when the Sultan of a West Asian monarchy declined the invitation but the King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who was the Chief Guest barely eight years back, graciously decided to ● P06

## Amarnath Yatra LG Chairs Preparatory Meet

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday called for best-in-class arrangements for pilgrims during the Amarnath Yatra to the holy cave shrine in south Kashmir Himalayas.

The LG was chairing a preparatory review meeting of Amarnath Yatra-2021 here at Civil Secretariat. He will personally oversee the preparations and setting up of on-ground facilities for the pilgrims, an official spokesman said.

Sinha called for best-in-class arrangements for pilgrims to improve their yatra experience, he said.

Laying special emphasis on providing the best medical facilities to the pilgrims, the LG passed directions for the increase of accidental insurance to pilgrims during the yatra, besides doubling the ● P06

## In FOCUS 500-Year-Old Spade Still Calling A Spade In Snowbound Kashmir

Umer Ahmed

As snowfall began blanketing Budgam's Muihpathri area on January 3, Chowdhary Manzoor came out with a unique and rustic wooden spade locally called "Fueh" to clear paths.

With an imposing figure, Manzoor stood in the backdrop of mounds of snow holding his ancestral article with pride.

"This is how my forefathers would come out and clear paths during the harshest winters in Kashmir," said Manzoor, holding the legacy spade in his hand. "This exceptional piece has witnessed vagaries of weather

and is still working just fine."

Every winter as it snows, Manzoor uses his inherited shovel only for emotional means to clear snow.

"I feel the presence of my father while using it," he said. "It seems as if he is just observing me from behind."

Once done with snow-clearance, Manzoor properly cleans the spade, before putting it back in the room filled with his family relics.

Manzoor received this antique spade from his father, late Mohammad Shafi Chowdhary, who had inherited it from his father, Lal Sheikh, who in-turn had received it from his father, Raj Sheikh.

"I only know three generations of



my family who has inherited it [the spade] but there's a story my father had told me," Manzoor recalls.

"My forefathers had taken it from someone 400 years ago, and that person had been carrying it for

some 100 years already. And since then, we have been using it every winter as a snow-clearing object."

Fueh is a unique piece of carpentry in itself. Made up of a single wooden slate, it has rectangular-shaped base, with a long handle. It is mostly made of Deodar or Kail wood which makes it durable and light weight.

But now, Manzoor is little worried as lately some cracks have appeared in his legacy tool.

"Such tools can't be repaired even if I wanted to repair it badly," he says.

"It's not just a tool to clear snow but an article that carries emotions and memories. I'm preserving it so that someday I can tell this story to my children and hand it over to them so that they carry this legacy forward."