



Maximum : 9°C  
Minimum : -1°C  
Humidity : 83%

SUNSET  
Today 06:11 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 07:18 AM

# OBSERVER

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NEWS/04  
**EGYPT FATWA BANS ERTUGRUL, TURKISH SOAPS**  
Egypt's Dar Al-Iftaa has published a statement accusing Turkey of trying to create an "area of influence" for itself in the Middle East using its soft power, according to Yeni afak English.....



POST-DELHI POLLS, JNUSU BACK IN ANTI-CAA MODE  
Following a brief lull during the run up to the Delhi Assembly election, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union (JNUSU) on Thursday sounded the bugle for a renewed fight against the Citizenship Amendment Act and other measures that the government is said.....

11/SPORTS.....  
**BANGLADESH DECLINES PCB OFFER TO PLAY DAY-NIGHT TEST IN KARACHI**  
The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has turned down an offer from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to play a day-night Test match in Pakistan. "The board understands their .....

## News Digest

### 3 Hizb Operatives Held: Police

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Thursday claimed to have busted a militant module in south Kashmir's Anantnag district and arrested three Hizbul Mujahideen operatives. Police have seized incriminating material from their possession, a police spokesperson said. Those arrested have been identified as: Adil Ahmad Dar, Aqib Fayaz Makroo and Ajaz Ahmad. The arrested were affiliated with Hizbul Mujahideen. They were involved in providing shelter and logistic support to militants and motivating and instigation youths to join militant ranks, the police spokesperson added.

### Soldier Ends Life In Anantnag

Srinagar: An Army man on Thursday allegedly committed suicide inside his camp in south Kashmir's Anantnag district. Sepoy Balram of army's 3rd Rashtriya Rifles was found dead in his barrack by his colleagues, local news-gathering agency KNT quoted official sources as saying. The report said that the soldier had consumed poison to end his life. Meanwhile, a police official said that a case has been registered and investigation set into motion.

### Families Of Slain Firemen Get Cash Help

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor, Girish Chandra Murmu on Thursday announced financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh for the families of the firemen killed in Talab Tillo blaze on Wednesday. According to an official spokesperson, Murmu announced Rs 2 lakh assistance for the three firemen-Constables Vimal Raina of Janipur, Mohammad Aslam of Rajouri and Rattan Lal of Jammu who lost their lives while trying to douse fire in Talab Tillo area of Jammu City on Wednesday.

### CB Charges 2 Notorious Cyber Criminals

Jammu: The Crime Branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police on Thursday filed a charge sheet against two notorious cyber criminals for allegedly duping a man of lakhs of rupees on the pretext of entering into some business, officials said. The charge sheet was produced in a court against Raj Kumar alias Rajan and Rajesh Kumar alias Sonu alias Champak alias Anurag Mittal of Trilokpuri in Delhi in a fraud case, they said. They had duped a J and K resident -- Javid Zargar -- of over Rs 82 lakh, the officials said. The accused pretended to be a woman, Christina George, on Facebook and became friends with Zargar. They told him that they wanted to enter into some business in India, the officials said. One day Zargar received a call on his

## Polls For 12,500 Panchayat Seats Announced



AGENCIES

JAMMU: By-election to over 12,500 panchayat seats in Jammu and Kashmir will be held in eight phases from March 5, the Union Territory's Chief Electoral Officer Shailender Kumar said on Thursday.

Polling would be held from March 5 to March 20 and ballots would be used

for casting votes, he said. The Model Code of Conduct has come into force with immediate effect will the announcement of the bypoll schedule.

After taking into consideration all relevant factors and inputs from various stakeholders, the Jammu and Kashmir election authority has prepared the schedule for the bypolls to

### Mockery Of Democracy: Yechury

NEW DELHI: CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury took a dig at the Narendra Modi government on Thursday over the announcement of by-election to over 12,500 panchayat seats in Jammu and Kashmir, saying it was a "mockery of democracy." The Union Territory's Chief Electoral Officer Shailender Kumar said polling would be held from March 5 to March 20 and ballots would be used for casting votes. "After arresting

## DSP Devinder Case: Cross-LoC Trader Arrested

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Police on Thursday arrested a cross-LoC trader Tanveer Ahmad Wani in tainted DSP Devinder Singh Case.

So far, six people have been arrested in this case. Wani's role is being investigated over money transfers to Hizb commander Naveed Babu, sources told IANS.

Sources said he acted as a conduit of money trail from Pakistan to militant groups including Hizbul Mujahideen.

Wani was the President of LoC traders association. His house was searched in July 2019 in a case related to cross-LoC trade.

According to sources, Wani was summoned to Delhi from Pulwama and arrested there.

On January 11, police arrested Davinder Singh on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway when he was transporting Naveed, Rafi and Irfan to Jammu.

After initial investigations by the J&K police the case was handed to the NIA. Police sources said that the two militants and the lawyer had planned a travel to Pakistan after reaching Jammu. Singh was earlier shifted from Srinagar to Jammu on a transit remand where an NIA team questioned him. After his arrest by the J&K police, multiple raids were conducted at his residence in Srinagar. Singh was posted with the anti-hijacking wing of J&K Police in Srinagar, and was part of the security staff that had received a group of foreign diplomats who visited Kashmir.

## India's Action In J-K Have Severe Consequences: US Senators

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON: Ahead of President Donald Trump's maiden visit to India, four influential US senators, who described themselves as "longtime friends of India", have sought an assessment of the human rights situation in Kashmir and religious freedom in the country, saying hundreds of Kashmiris remain in "preventive detention".

The bipartisan group of senators, in their letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo dated February 12, said that India has now imposed the longest-ever internet shutdown by a democracy, disrupting access to medical care, business and education for seven million people.

The Indian government abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019 that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and im-



File Pic...

posed severe curbs including on movement of people as well as on mobile telephone and internet connectivity. The crackdown drew international criticism with several countries expressing concerns over the situation in Kashmir.

India has categorically told the international community that its move to scrap Article

370 was an internal matter. According to officials, internet is being restored in the Valley in a phased manner after reviewing the security situation.

The US lawmakers, describing themselves as "longtime friends of India", wrote in the letter that "more than six months after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

**MORE THAN SIX MONTHS AFTER INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government unilaterally revoked the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, the government continues to block most internet in the region".**

## .....Meanwhile Visiting Envoys Get Briefing At BB Cant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR: Army officials on Thursday briefed the delegation of foreign envoys visiting Jammu and Kashmir on the security situation here.

The 25-member delegation arrived here on Wednesday on a two-day visit as part of a union government-facilitated trip to help the envoys have a first-hand assessment of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, a region which faced months of harsh restrictions after its special status was stripped of in August.

The envoys were briefed about the security situation at Badami Bagh Cantonment here, officials said.

The delegation later flew to Jammu for further engagements, they said.

The group comprises envoys from Afghanistan, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic,



FOREIGN ENVOYS ENJOYED SHIKARA RIDE IN DAL LAKE after their arrival in Srinagar on Wednesday. Pic Abid Bhat

Denmark, Dominican Republic, the European Union, France, Germany, Republic of Guinea, Hungary, Italy and Kenya.

Envoys from Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Namibia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Rwanda, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Uganda and Uzbekistan are also part of it. This is the third batch of for-

eign envoys visiting the union territory in the last one month.

The government had taken a group of 15 envoys to Jammu and Kashmir last month with an aim to make them see the efforts to bring back normalcy in the Kashmir Valley. A number of opposition parties called it a "guided tour".

## SC To Hear Today Plea Challenging Omar's Detention

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: A petition filed by Sara Abdullah Pilot, challenging the detention of her brother and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah under the J-K Public Safety Act, will be heard on Friday before a new bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice Arun Mishra. The plea has been listed for Friday before the new 2-judge

### PSA Challenged In SC

NEW DELHI: A plea challenging Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, under which several political leaders and activists have been detained since the abrogation of Article 370, was filed on Thursday.

The petition filed by Bhim Singh, Chief Patron of J&K National Panthers Party and Executive Chairman of State Legal Aid Committee, termed the Act as dead and "ultra vires" (beyond the legal power).

Singh, who is also a senior advocate, has sought directions declaring the J&K Public Safety Act, 1978 as

## Internet Snapped Over Geelani's Health Rumours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR: Mobile Internet services was restored in Kashmir on Thursday afternoon, hours after authorities had suspended the facility to prevent rumours about the health of separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani. The services were snapped late Wednesday night after some social media posts claimed the health of the

## Ex-Militant Found Dead In Srinagar Mosque

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR: A former Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen chief, who was an accused in the Jamiat-e-Ahli Hadith leader Showkat Shah's murder case, was found dead under mysterious circumstances inside a mosque here on Thursday, police officials said.

Abdul Gani Dar alias Abdul Gani Dar, a resident of Beerwah in Budgam district, was found dead inside the Jamiat-e-Ahli Hadith mosque at

Maisuma in the city, the officials said. Dar was the chief of militant outfit Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) in the 1990s.

A police spokesman said information about a murder of a person inside a mosque in the Maisuma area was received in the afternoon.

"Accordingly, senior police officers visited the crime spot and retrieved the body of an individual.

"The killed person was identified as Abdul Gani Dar alias

Gani Gazali, aged about 80 years," the spokesman said.

The police officials said there were injury marks on the head of Dar.

Police reached the spot and are scanning the CCTV footage around the mosque to ascertain if Dar was murdered, they said.

Jamiat-e-Ahli Hadith chief Maulana Showkat Shah was killed in a blast outside the same mosque ahead of Friday prayers on April 8, 2011. Dar was a co-accused in the

## Man Booked In Poonch For 'Sensitive' Social Media Post

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAMMU: A man was booked on Thursday for an alleged "sensitive" social media post having the potential of disturbing peace in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, police said.

During a routine surveillance of social media platforms, a Surankote police team came across Facebook accounts on which sensitive updates were being posted constantly, they said. Police said the posts "could



have emerged as a grave threat to peace and order".

The post by Shoket Ali, a resident of Surankote, was found to be "sensitive in nature" with the potential to disturb peace

## 400 Million Social Media Users Are Set To Lose Their Anonymity In India

AGENCIES

NEW YORK - Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and TikTok will have to reveal users' identities if Indian government agencies ask them to, according to the country's controversial new rules for social media companies and messaging apps expected to be published later this month.

The requirement comes as governments around the world are trying to hold social media companies more accountable for the content that circulates on their platforms, whether it's fake news, child porn, racist invective or terrorism-related content. In-

dia's new guidelines go further than most other countries' by requiring blanket cooperation with government inquiries, no warrant or judicial order required.

India proposed these guidelines in December 2018 and asked for public comment. The Internet and Mobile Association of India, a trade group that counts Facebook Inc, Amazon.com Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google among its members, responded that the requirements "would be a violation of the right to privacy recognized by the Supreme Court."

But the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is expected to publish the new

rules later this month without major changes, according to a government official familiar with the matter.

"The guidelines for intermediaries are under process," said N.N. Kaul, the media adviser to the minister of electronics & information technology. "We cannot comment on the guidelines or changes till they are published."

The provisions in the earlier draft had required platforms

such as Google's YouTube or ByteDance Inc's TikTok, Facebook or its Instagram and WhatsApp apps, to help the

government trace the origins

of a post within 72 hours of a request. The companies would also have to preserve their records for at

least 180 days to aid government investigators, establish a brick-and-mortar operation within India and appoint both a grievance officer to deal with user complaints and a government liaison. The Ministry is still finalizing the language and content.

The rules cover all social media and messaging apps with more than 5 million users. India, with 1.3 billion people, has about 500 million internet users. It isn't clear whether the iden-

tities of foreign users would be subject to the Indian government's inquiries.

Law enforcement agencies around the world have been frustrated by tech companies that have refused to identify users, unlock devices or generally cooperate with government investigations, particularly in cases relating to terrorism.

In India, where the internet — and fake news — are still relatively new phenomenon, a false report of rampant child abduction and organ harvesting circulated widely via WhatsApp, leading to mob violence and over three dozen fatal lynchings in 2017 and 2018.

WhatsApp refused a request from the government to reveal the origins of the rumors, citing its promise of privacy and end-to-end encryption for its 400 million Indian users. It instead offered to fund research into preventing the spread of fake news and mounted a public education campaign in the country, its biggest global market.

WhatsApp will "not compromise on security because that would make people less safe," it said in a statement Wednesday, adding its global user base had reached over 2 billion. "For even more protection, we work with top security experts,

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SPOT LIGHT



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