

Maximum : 31°C  
Minum : 19°C  
Humidity : 67%  
SUNSET  
Today 07:24 PM  
SUNRISE  
Tomorrow 05:48 AM

## OBSERVER

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## News Digest

## G C Murmu Takes Charge As CAG

New Delhi: Girish Chandra Murmu on Saturday assumed charge as the new Comptroller and Auditor General of India, an official statement said. Murmu, the former Lt Governor of Jammu & Kashmir union territory, was administered the oath of office and secrecy by President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan in the morning. At a ceremony held in the Ashoka Hall, Rashtrapati Bhavan, Murmu was sworn in as the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a statement. Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister ● P-02

## 2 Youth Arrested In Night Raids

Srinagar: Government forces arrested two youth during a nocturnal raid in Drabgam village of south Kashmir's Pulwama district, reports said Saturday. A joint team of government forces raided Drabgam village during the intervening night of Friday and Saturday and arrested two youth identified as Riyafat Manzoor and Shahid Ahmad, local news agency KNT reported. The report further adds that four youth were detained from the same village in last 20 days on charges of being involved in 'anti-national' activities. The report further ● P-02

## Soldier Injured In Road Accident

Srinagar: An army man on was injured after a speedy car hit him near Baramulla town in north Kashmir, reports said Saturday. Havaldar Karnail Singh of army's 46 RR was injured when a car (JK01AF-8354) hit him near post office in Baramulla town on Friday evening, news agency KNO reported. The accident, according to the report occurred when the driver lost control over his vehicle. Quoting an unmanned police official, the report said that a case has been registered in police station Baramulla in this regard.

## 3 Gamblers Held In Srinagar: Police

Srinagar: Police on Saturday claimed to have arrested three gamblers in a raid in Maloora area of the city outskirts. Acting on an input, a police team raided a site in Maloora and arrested three gamblers and recovered an amount of Rs 29,950, one watch and cellphone besides playing cards from the spot, a police spokesperson said. He identified the accused as Mehrajuddin Malla, Ab Rashid Goroo and Shakil Ahmad Khan. "They have been shifted to Police Station where they remain in custody. Accordingly, a case FIR No. 164/2020 under ● P-02

## 13 Govt Officials Suspended In Samba

Jammu: The deputy commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district ordered suspension of 13 government officials on Saturday after they were allegedly found absent from their duties, officials said. The deputy commissioner of Samba, Rohit Khajuria, conducted a surprise visit to offices and found 13 officials absent from their duties, they said. Taking serious view of the matter, he ordered suspension of those employees for dereliction of duty, the officials added.

## Kashmir Inaction

## Saudi Stops Oil To Pak Over OIC Split Threat

## Agencies

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has halted the provision of oil on loan for Pakistan after the Imran Khan government threatened to split the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) over Kashmir.

Hit by a severe economic crisis, Pakistan had borrowed a \$6.2 billion loan from Saudi Arabia in 2018. The loan package included a provision under which Saudi Arabia granted Pakistan \$3.2 billion worth of oil, a year on deferred payments. Pakistani media on Saturday said that the provision meant for Islamabad expired two months ago and has not been renewed by Riyadh.

Instead, Islamabad has prematurely returned \$1 billion Saudi loan, four months ahead of repayment period, The Express Tribune said quoting sources and Sajid Qazi, the spokesperson of the Petroleum Division.

Recently Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi during a talk show on a news channel had threatened that if the OIC headed by Saudi Arabia did not convene a foreign ministers' meeting on Kashmir, Prime Minister Imran Khan would



Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan in a file photo

## Not Sorry For Kashmir Comments: Mahathir

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Saturday that he will not offer apologies for his comments on Kashmir, which he recently admitted had strained the country's ties with India, News 18 reported. Taking to his Twitter handle, the former Malaysian Prime Minister said that what transpired since his contentious speech at the UN General Assembly in September last year only served to prove that what he had said were mild and to a certain ● P-02

hold it on his own with his allies among the Islamic countries.

"If you cannot convene it, then I'll be compelled to ask Prime Minister Imran Khan to call a meeting of the Islamic countries that are ready to stand with us

on the issue of Kashmir..." he had threatened on Ary news channel.

The OIC, the biggest block of Islamic countries in the world, has repeatedly declined Islamabad's several requests to hold a meeting on Kashmir. ►PAGE 02

## India, China Hold Military Talks On LAC

## NEW DELHI-

Talks between senior army commanders of India and China were underway on Saturday to take forward the disengagement process along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at a number of friction points including in Daulat Beg Oldi and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, people familiar with the developments said.

The Major General-level talks are being held at a border personnel meeting point in Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) area on the Chinese side of the LAC, they said.

The meeting comes a week after the two armies held the fifth round of Corps commander-level (Lt Gen) discussions in an effort to expedite the disengagement process.

At the military talks, the Indian side has been insisting on complete disengagement of Chinese troops at the earliest, and immediate restoration of status quo ante in all areas of eastern Ladakh prior to May 5 when the standoff began following a clash between the two armies in Pangong Tso.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has pulled back from Galwan Valley and certain other friction points but the withdrawal of its troops has not moved forward from the Finger areas in Pangong Tso, Gogra and Depsang as demanded by India, according to sources.

India has been insisting that China must withdraw its forces from areas between Finger Four and Eight. The mountain spurs in the area are referred to as Fingers. The formal process ● P-02

## 15 More Covid-19 Deaths In Kashmir, J&amp;K Toll 465

## Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR: At least fifteen more people succumbed to Covid-19 infection in the Kashmir Valley on Saturday, raising the number of fatalities due to deadly disease to 465 in the Union Territory.

Four deaths were reported from Kupwara, three each from Srinagar and Baramulla, two from Anantnag besides a one each from Pulwama, Bandipora and Kulgam, official sources said.

Among the victims include 70-year-old woman from Bijbhara, a 55-year-old woman from Malopora Pulwama, a 60-year-old man from Panzgam Kup-

wara, a 50-year-old woman from Natipora Srinagar,

a 50-year-old man from Zalooria Sopore,

55-year-old woman from Sogam Kupwara,

a 60-year-old woman from Muttulhama Qiomoh

Kulgam, a 58-year-old man from Gurez Bandipora,

a 50-year-old man and a 70-year-old, both from Handwara, an 85-year-old woman from Srinagar and a 65-year-old man from Baramulla.

Regarding the woman from Malopora Pulwama, a senior doctor at District Hospital Pulwama said that she was admitted ►PAGE 02

## A 70-YEAR-OLD MAN FROM Handwara, an 85-year-old woman from Srinagar and a 65-year-old man from Baramulla also died at SKIMS Soura and had multiple problems, the doctor added.

## IAS Officer, 36 Security Men Among 463 New Cases

A senior Indian administrative service (IAS) officer, 46 travelers and 36 uniformed men were among 463 new covid-19 infections in Jammu and Kashmir, taking the overall tally to 24390, officials said on Saturday. Among them, 81 were reported from Jammu Division and 382 from Kashmir Valley including 36 uniformed— 13 each from army and CRPF, four from BSF, four from SSB and one ● P-02

## DSP Davinder Singh Connection

## NIA Raids Carpet Dealer In J&amp;K, Delhi

## Agencies

SRINAGAR: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday carried out searches at multiple locations in Jammu and Kashmir, including premises of carpet businessman Sahil Zaroo, to look for financial links with Pakistan-based militant group Hizbul Mujahideen vis-a-vis the DSP Davinder Singh case.

"Searches are going on at multiple locations in Srinagar and other places in J&K in connection with the Davinder Singh case," top NIA sources in Delhi.

The source said that the raided places included the premises of Jaroo in Srinagar, adding that the anti-terror probe agency is looking at the financial link in Davinder Singh and Hizbul Mujahideen conspiracy case.

The development comes almost a month after the NIA filed a charge sheet against six persons, including suspended Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Superintendent of Police, in a special NIA court in Jammu.

The NIA has named Naveed Mushtaq alias Naveed Babu, Irfan Shafi Mir, Rafi Rather, Tanveer Ahmad Wani, and Syed Irfan ►PAGE 02

## Private Schools Warned About Holding Staff Salaries, Layoffs

## Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday said it will cancel the recognition of such unaided private schools that were withholding the salaries or were mulling terminate its staff members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The officials at School Education Department also warned the management of private schools of strict action in terms of relevant provisions of law in case of any violation found.

"The Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) has received complaints from the staff of recognized unaided private schools

regarding either termination of services or non-payment of salaries," reads the circular issued by the School Education Department.

Director of School Education Kashmir, Mohammed Younis Malik said, "There are clear cut orders from the Govt that the tuition fee only be charged from the student's during the lockdown period in lieu of COVID-19 pandemic facilitating the private schools to meet the expenditure of the salaries of the staff there."

Malik said that few schools were called to attend DSEK office to redress the grievances of staff in lieu of non-payment of salaries or termination thereof ►PAGE 02

## 6 Doda Men Held Over Lashkar Links

JAMMU: Police on Saturday claimed to have busted a finance network of Lashkar-e-Taiba by arresting six people from the Jammu district.

Special operations group (SOG) personnel on July 19 arrested Mubashir Farooq Batt of Sazan village of Doda when he was carrying a consignment of Rs1.5 L concealed in a tiffin box, a senior police officer said.

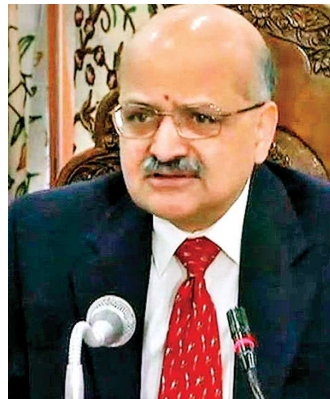
The police, he said filed a case FIR No. 42/2020 U/S 17/18/20/21/38 and 40 of UAPA Act 1967 at Police Station Peermitha, Jammu. ● P-02

## Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Several mainstream parties on Saturday hit out at Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam over his remarks that corruption was rampant in Jammu and Kashmir and not a "single soul had cried" over the detention of political leaders in August last year.

In a hard hitting statement, a PDP spokesperson said that the Chief Secretary has come here with a colonial mindset and being the chief executioner of RSS in Kashmir. He said that it was ironical that he is finding fault with the entire population of Jammu and Kashmir while running the most corrupt administration that the state has ever witnessed.

"The Chief Secretary is heading a cabal of officers who are affiliated



with RSS and are enforcing their agenda in Kashmir," the PDP spokesperson said.

He said that the BJP and its chosen bureaucrats in Kashmir were not only

heaping "insults, humiliation, and atrocities" on the people of Jammu and Kashmir but were also misleading and exploiting the so-called nationalistic sentiments in rest of the country.

"They are trying to appease the fundamentalist Hindu sentiments and creating an atmosphere in the people of the state especially against its Muslim populace. CS is representing a culture and ethos that have produced the biggest dacoits and looters of national wealth- be it the people who looted the banks or making money out of COVID and have amassed wealth amounting to thousands of crores," the PDP spokesperson said.

"Banks in the country have crumbled because of the crony capitalism promoted by the RSS government which the Chief Secretary ►PAGE 02

## High Court Seeks End To Adhocism In Govt Services

## Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir High Court has sought comments from the government as to how the system of adhocism can be put to an end and all recruitments and promotions are made strictly in terms of the rules and not on in-charge basis.

A bench of Justices Rajesh Bindal and Rajnesh Oswal issued a slew of direction in this regard to the government, underlining that this system is being followed despite depreciated by the Supreme Court way back in 2000.

"What is seen in the then State of J&K and now the Union Territory of J&K

is that the judgment of the Supreme Court is being complied with less and violated more, as practically in all the departments, promotions are being made on incharge basis," the court said, adding, "This practice is prevalent more in Engineering Department. The reasons therefor are not unknown."

How an employee, who is substantively working on the lowest post, can be given the charge of a highest post in the department without there being regular promotions, the court said. "No one knows their seniority position. It is the local adjustment made claiming that he is senior most available and ►PAGE 02

## Srinagar, Jammu Likely To Get Metro By 2024: Singh

NEW DELHI: The light transit metro train service in Srinagar and Jammu is expected to be ready by 2024, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said Saturday.

Singh said the metro project for the two cities would cost around Rs 10,599 crore.

The railway consultancy firm RITES Limited has submitted the final detailed project reports and the metro systems are expected to be completed by the end of 2024, he said, talking about the development initiatives being undertaken in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370.

Once the projects are completed, Srinagar and Jammu will become the first two ● P-02

## J&amp;K Govt Plans To Promote Border Tourism

SRINAGAR: A 600 km-long highway will be constructed along the border touching all picturesque tourist spots in the Kashmir Valley, each of which will be "another Gulmarg", Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam has said.

The Rs 8,000 crore road project will connect Gulmarg with Kargil and Drass in Ladakh.

"We are planning to construct a 600 km road which will touch tourist attractions like Keran, Gurez and Machhal. The road will connect all unexplored tourist spots and picturesque valleys and help open them ● P-02

## Swati Joshi | Tooba Towfiq

WHEN Moosa Raza as chief secretary of Jammu and Kashmir was trying to tackle the incipient militancy in Kashmir during nineties, he happened to ask Agha Ashraf Ali one day about Kashmir's relation with India.

The firebrand educationist known for having less tolerance for ignorance told Raza that every Indian politician and bureaucrat, every editor of an Indian newspaper, every judge of the high court or the Supreme Court, has come to Kashmir only to go around its valleys, enjoy its springs, its mountains and hills, its forests, and in the early days, to shoot its wildlife.

This conversation appeared in Moosa's 2019 published

book, Kashmir: Land of Regrets.

"Why should the Kashmiri feel any loyalty or commitment to India," Agha Ashraf tells Moosa, "when the Indian establishment has only treated Kashmir as a call girl – to be enjoyed for a brief while, to be thrown a few crumbs, a few rupees, in appreciation of that hospitality? Kashmir is soon forgotten. That is the reason why, in spite of the fact that you have spent four times more than PoK, Kashmiris are still not happy with you, still do not love you, still do not want to be with you, they still shout 'azadi, azadi, azadi'."

The man who had hushed the Indian emissary during the tumultuous time in Kashmir also finds a stirring mention in writer Amitav Ghosh's "The Ghat of the Only World"—the elegy for his poet friend—as an

## Agha Ashraf Ali: 'A Truly Renaissance Figure'

erudite man who "continued the family tradition of public service in education".

"He taught at Jamia Millia University in New Delhi and went on to become the principal of the Teacher's College in Srinagar," Ghosh writes. "In 1961, he enrolled at Ball State Teacher's College, in Muncie, Indiana, to do a PhD in Comparative Education."

But in Kashmir, the outspoken Agha was more than his heavyweight academic stature.

"He was the Rishi of RajBagh, the Sufi of Srinagar – a truly Renaissance figure," says Prof. Amitabh Mattoo.

"There were few like him in Srinagar or anywhere. An extraordinary intellect, who



Agha Ashraf Ali (1922-2020) - Photo credit Rafiq Kathwari

could quote from Ibn Khaldun with as much ease as reciting verses from the Isha Upanishad!"

A visit to Agha Ashraf's fairy tale home at Raj Bagh (rebuilt after the floods), the professor recalls, was an overwhelming

experience. "A raconteur par excellence, he would delight you with anecdotes drawn from history and personal experience; from his time in the United States to the special relationship he shared with Dr Zakir Hussain and Professor Mujib at Jamia – to the story of Kashmir and the Sheikh, as he knew it," he says.

Agha Ashraf retained his encyclopedic memory till almost the last, as separatist and mainstream, the devotee and the atheist, all made way to Agha's Sahib's chambers to be enlightened, the professor continues.

"And he served the delicacies of Awadhi cuisine in Wedgewood with the same epicurean sensitivity as his beloved late

wife Sufia," Prof Mattoo says.

"In his later years he became better known as Agha Shahid Ali's dad; it thrilled him to bits. But Agha Sahib was unmatched in his love and zest of for life in all its colours. In his passing away, Kashmir has lost amongst the last of its truly great souls."

Agha Ashraf breathed his last at 11:45 pm on August 7 at his residence in Srinagar.

At a time when the young were chided and rarely entrusted with leadership roles, Sheikh Abdullah had identified in Agha Ashraf the potential to usher in new reforms in education. However, his merit and role were hardly surprising.

He belonged to a highly educated family in which everyone from his grandparents, mother and his brothers enjoyed very seminal positions of power.

Such a background and an inspired legacy of education in his family ensured his initiation and integration into the world as a changemaker.

As his death triggered a tsunami of tributes, many recall how his work dramatically transformed the milieu of education in Kashmir. "The positions of administrative leadership in education that he occupied were in itself a statement at a time when Kashmiri Pandits dominated the education and literary landscape of Kashmir," argues Tania Shafi, a Kashmiri scholar.

A Shia Muslim spearheading reforms in education, he was at once an instigator as well as an incentive to invite more Muslims towards education, Shafi continues.

"The impact of his work as a scholar, educationist ►PAGE 02