



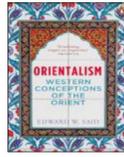
**P5 STATE**

**J&K TO CREATE 4 INNOVATION HUBS UNDER NEP: KANSAL**

Principal Secretary Higher Education Department, Rohit Kansal ON Friday reiterated that the J&K Government is committed to supporting the Indian Institute of Technology

**P7 READ WITH KO**

One of the most groundbreaking works on understanding the formation of knowledge and its capability of aggression, this work of Palestinian critic Edward Said is an absolute must read. The book explores how the west created a discourse around the east to frame it in an image completely antithetical...



**P11 SPORTS**

**BEIJING OLYMPICS GET POLITICAL WITH TAIWAN, UYGHUR QUESTIONS**

For two weeks and more, China's stance on questions about its politics and policies has been straightforward: It's the Olympics, and we're not



**Quote!**  
One half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other  
- Jane Austen

**NEWS DIGEST**

**Burglary Attempt At J&K Bank Branch**

SRINAGAR: A burglary attempt was made at the Jammu and Kashmir Bank Branch Chittergull in Anantnag district on Thursday night, said a police official. Reports reaching GNS said that Employees of J&K branch Chittergull | [More on P10](#)

**Wildlife Dept Guard Held For Taking Bribe**

SRINAGAR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested a wildlife department guard for accepting a bribe of Rs 5000 for releasing the belongings of a man seized by the department, officials said Friday. "Anti Corruption Bureau received a | [More on P10](#)

**Minor Girl Drowns In Kupwara Stream**

SRINAGAR: A minor girl died after drowning in a stream in Tekipora in north Kashmir's Kupwara district on Friday. Eight-year-old Sania, daughter of Shamsuddin Bhat drowned in Machhar nallah on Friday afternoon, reports said. Soon after the news | [More on P10](#)

**Shopian Labourer Slips To Death In Himachal**

SHOPIAN: A labourer from south Kashmir's Shopian district slipped to death in Himachal Pradesh, official sources said. They identified the labourer as Gulzar Ahmed Khan, a resident of Shadab Karewa and was doing labour work in Himachal Pradesh for quite some time. "Khan slipped from | [More on P10](#)

## HM Shah Discusses J&K Situation At High-Level Meet



**Orders Strengthening Of Security Grid To Ensure Zero Infiltration, End Of Militancy**

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday directed that the security grid in Jammu and Kashmir should be further strengthened to ensure zero cross-border infiltration and to eliminate militancy. The directive came at a high-level meeting here during which Shah reviewed the security situation in the Union Territory.

Lieutenant Governor of

Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Army Chief Gen Mukund Naravane and other senior officers of the central and Jammu and Kashmir governments attended the meeting. The home minister directed that the security grid should be further strengthened to ensure zero cross-border infiltration and to eliminate terrorism, an official statement said. He appreciated the efforts of the security agencies which have led to the reduction in militancy incidents in Jammu and Kashmir over the last few years. The number of terror incidents has declined from 417 in 2018 to 229 in 2021, while the number of security forces personnel martyred has reduced

from 91 in 2018 to 42 in 2021, the statement said. The home minister reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, including along the International Border and the Line of Control, official sources said. Shah also took stock of the progress of the development initiatives taken in the union territory, they said. Later talking to reporters, Sinha said the home minister reviewed the pace of progress in development matters and the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir. He described the hour-long meeting as "very fruitful".

Asked about the possibility of resuming the annual Amarnath Yatra, | [More on P10](#)

**Grenade Attack in Nowhatta, Cop Hurt**

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A policeman was injured on Friday in a grenade attack in Khawaja Bazar locality in the Old City of Nowhatta.

The policeman identified as Ashiq Hussain sustained minor splinter injuries on Friday afternoon when suspected militants lobbed a hand grenade towards a joint team of police and CRPF in Khawaja Bazar locality of Nowhatta here, police said. Three shops also suffered damages in the grenade explosion. A senior police officer said that the injured policeman is completely stable and was discharged | [More on P10](#)

**Covid-19 Cases Drop To 46-Day Low**

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The daily Coronavirus cases in Jammu and Kashmir dropped to a 46-day low on Friday as 197 people tested positive for Covid-19 while one more person succumbed to the infection in during the last 24 hours.

According to the officials, Kashmir Valley reported 79 fresh cases of novel Coronavirus while the remaining 118 were registered from various districts of Jammu division, taking the number of people infected in J&K since the onset of pandemic to 451989. In the Valley, officials said, Srinagar detected 30 new cases of virus, | [More on P10](#)

**PM Modi Praises UAE For J&K Investments**

India And UAE Ink Comprehensive Trade Pact; Release Roadmap To Further Boost Ties



Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday complimented the UAE for showing interest in investing in Jammu and Kashmir. "Following the successful visit of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir to the UAE last month, several Emirati companies have shown interest in investing in Jammu and Kashmir," Modi said.

The Prime Minister made these remarks during a virtual summit with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, an official statement said. India and the UAE inked a landmark Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and unveiled a roadmap for expansion of overall ties during the virtual summit. Both leaders also expressed deep satisfaction at the continuous growth in bilateral relations in all sectors, the statement said. "We welcome investment by the UAE in all sectors including logistics, healthcare, hospitality in J&K," he added. In his remarks, Modi delved into various facets of ties between India and United Arab Emirates and said both the nations will stand "shoulder-to-shoulder" against terrorism while referring to the recent terrorist attacks in the Gulf country. On CEPA, Modi noted that both sides could conclude the negotiations | [More on P10](#)

**THE SHARED OBJECTIVE IS TO PROMOTE** new trade, investment and innovation dynamics in diverse sectors, including economy, energy, climate action, emerging technologies, skills and education, food security, healthcare and defence and security."

**Govt To Issue Land Passbooks From Today**

Observer News Service

Jammu: As a major initiative towards good governance and ease of convenience to the citizens, the revenue department is kick-starting issuance of land passbooks across Jammu and Kashmir, starting from the twin districts of Jammu and Srinagar from February 19.

To begin with, the trilingual land passbooks in Hindi, Urdu and English will be distributed in 7 Tehsils of Srinagar district and 21 Tehsils of Jammu district at 28 locations with participation of representatives of PRIs, landholders, farmers, financial institutions and line departments, an official

spokesperson said Friday. "Pertinently, the land passbooks being issued to every landholder contains entry from the Jamabandi in revenue estate so as to enable him to make its use for credit facilities and for other matters connected therewith or incidental thereto," he said. "The land passbook prescribed by the Revenue Department is true to the record and can be generated online by landholder without visiting a Patwari or Tehsildar or any Revenue office," he added. With scanning and digitization of land records already under implementation for the convenience of citizens and | [More on P10](#)

**NIA Arrests IPS Officer For Passing Secret Info To Lashkar**

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday arrested its former Superintendent of Police (SP) and IPS officer Arvind Digvijay Negi on charges of passing secret information to an overground worker of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Negi, a police officer who was promoted to the IPS batch of 2011, was arrested in connection with a case registered by the NIA on November 6 last year, a spokesperson said. The case pertains to the spread of a network of overground workers (OGWs) of LeT for providing support in planning and execution of militant activities in India. The NIA had earlier arrested



six people in the case. "NIA has arrested ex-SP of @NIA\_India AD Negi after an investigation verified his role in passing secret information to one OGW of LeT in Jammu & Kashmir. Negi was repatriated to Himachal Pradesh Police last year and his house was sealed by NIA after a raid. This IPS officer during his tenure

with @NIA\_India investigated a number of terror and terror funding related cases in Jammu and Kashmir," the spokesperson said. According to reports, Negi, during his 11-year term with NIA served in its Terror Funding and Fake Currency (TFFC) Unit. Among other high-profile cases investigated by Negi, included that of sacked DSP Davinder Singh, who was caught ferrying Hizbul Mujahideen militants to Jammu, and arrest of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) youth leader Waheed Para besides cross-Line of Control (LoC) trade case. He has also probed fake currency and IS recruitment cases during | [More on P10](#)

**Punjabis Working In J&K Get Paid Holiday To Vote**

Observer News Service

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday declared paid holiday for the voters of Punjab, working in Jammu and Kashmir.

An order issued by General Administration Department of J&K in this regard reads, "In terms of Section 135-B of the Representation of People Act, 1951, sanction is hereby accorded to the grant of paid holiday in favour of Government employees/ Semi Government employees/ Industrial Workers, who are registered voters in the State of Punjab and are working in Jammu and Kashmir, for casting their vote on the day of poll i.e. 20.02.2022, on account of General Elections to the Punjab Vidhan Sabha."

**J&K Govt Finalizes Juvenile Justice Rules**

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The administration of Jammu & Kashmir has finalised the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Rules- 2021. In a notification, the department of Social Welfare has unveiled "The Jammu & Kashmir Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children) Rules- 2021".

These draft Rules were put in public domain for suggestions/objections, if any, on September 10, 2021.

The Rules have been notified under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act-2015, which became applicable to Jammu & Kashmir due to August 5, 2019 constitutional changes effected by the central government. Before these changes, the Jammu & Kashmir assembly had enacted

its own juvenile justice law.

According to these Rules, there shall be one or more juvenile Justice Boards in each district to be constituted by the government of Jammu & Kashmir through a notification in the official gazette. The Board shall consist of a metropolitan magistrate or a judicial magistrate of first class having at least three years' experience to be designated as the principal magistrate of the Board and two social worker members, of whom one shall be a woman, forming a Bench. "The social worker members shall be appointed by the government of Jammu and Kashmir on the recommendations of the selection committee constituted under these rules," read the Rules. The Rules also mandate setting up of one or | [More on P10](#)

**Why're Flames Erupting From Kashmir Wetlands?**

Auqib Javeed

When the air suddenly turned bitter on the evening February 17, Arshad Wani feared some burning house situation in his hometown Hyderpora, Srinagar. As he stepped out to find the source of the smoke smell, he suddenly heard shrieks and hoots. That nocturnal noise didn't sound human—and clearly, it didn't come far from his home. "They were migratory birds caught in flames," Wani recalls the deafening moment. "The poor creatures looked alarmed and were being roasted alive."

The flames were coming from the Hyderpora-Narkara wetland where Wani shortly paid a visit along with some neighbours. "The wetland is the home of



thousands of migratory and native birds," Wani said. "Someone had set it afire leaving the guest birds in the lurch. This was the second consecutive night that flora of the wetland was torched." On February 10, similar

mysterious flames came from the Baba Demb lagoon in Old City. The daytime blaze not only filled the locality with choking smoke but also forced birds to flee. "This is surely the job of drug addicts or land mafias eyeing these wetlands," Wani said.

When Kashmir Observer visited Narkara, the local residents alleged that gamblers and drug addicts have made the wetland their hub. "Narkaris also being encroached by land mafia and no one takes any cognizance of it," Mohammad Faisal, a local resident said. "The fire created panic in the area last night and no one from the official department came to extinguish it."

However, Ifshan Dewan, wildlife warden, told Kashmir Observer that the fire was dozed-off on time and the watch-and-warden team was immediately deployed for the nocturnal patrolling. "Since this is not the breeding season, the migratory birds will shift to other areas," said Intisar Suhail, Wildlife Warden

of Shopian and Pulwama belt. "The fire could've been disastrous for the birds in their breeding season."

Since wetlands are the breeding ground for the birds, thousands of migratory birds from different areas of the world arrive in Kashmir during winter when freezing temperatures in their summer habitats make food scarce. They start arriving in October and stay until the end of April. But according to reports, many migratory birds have already left the valley wetlands early this year because of the increase in day temperature.

Meanwhile, Wani is still shuddering at the sight he witnessed on February 17. "The flames could be seen from 3-4 kilometres," he said. "People from neighbouring areas like Barzulla, | [More on P10](#)

Do You Get Your Copy of **KASHMIR OBSERVER** Regularly?

**If Not**  
Contact Circulation Incharge: **Ishad Ahmad: 7006276927**

# Omicron Subvariant BA.2 May Cause Severe Disease, Lab Study Suggests

Press Trust Of India

Tokyo- The BA.2 subvariant of the Omicron coronavirus variant is not only faster at spreading, but may also cause more severe disease, a lab study suggests. The yet-to-be peer-reviewed findings, recently posted on the preprint repository BioRxiv, show that the BA.2 sub variant may have features that make it as capable of causing serious illness as older coronavirus variants.

On Thursday, the World Health Organization (WHO) said while BA.2 is more transmissible than BA.1, the subvariant is not more severe.

"Among all subvariants, BA.2 is more transmissible than BA.1. However, there is no difference in terms of severity," Maria Van Kerkhova, COVID-19 Technical Lead at WHO said in a video. In the latest study, a Japanese team led by researchers from the University of Tokyo found that similar to BA.1, BA.2 subvariant of Omicron appears to largely escape the immunity induced by COVID-19 vaccines.

"Neutralisation experiments show that the vaccine-induced humoral immunity fails to function against BA.2 like BA.1," the authors of the study said. Omicron was first reported from Botswana and South Africa in November, 2021. Its BA.1 sub variant has since rapidly spread across the world and outcompeted other variants such as Delta.

As of February this year, another subvariant of Omicron, the BA.2 lineage, has been detected in multiple countries such as Denmark and the UK. BA.2 has started outcompeting BA.1, suggesting that it is more transmissible than the original Omicron, the researchers said.

"Although BA.2 is considered as an Omicron variant, its genomic sequence is heavily different from BA.1, which suggests that the virological characteristics of BA.2 is different from that of BA.1," the authors noted.



When the researchers infected hamsters with BA.2 and BA.1, the animals infected with BA.2 got sicker and had worse lung function. In tissues samples, the lungs of BA.2-infected hamsters had more damage than those infected by BA.1, they said. "Our investigations using a hamster model showed that the pathogenicity of BA.2 is similar to that of an ancestral B.1.1 and higher than that of BA.1," the authors noted.

Similar to the original Omicron, BA.2 was resistant to antibodies in the blood of people who had been vaccinated against COVID-19. It was also resistant to the antibodies of people who had been infected with the earlier variants of SARS-CoV-2, according to the researchers. BA.2 was almost completely resistant to some monoclonal antibody treatments used to treat COVID-19 infection, they said. "Together with a higher effective reproduction number and pronounced immune resistance of BA.2, it is evident that the spread of BA.2 can be a serious issue for global health in the near future," the authors added. The reproduction number is a measure of transmission -- the average number of people infected by one infected person.

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Although BA.2 is considered as an Omicron variant, its genomic sequence is heavily different from BA.1, which suggests that the virological characteristics of BA.2 is different from that of BA.1.

## PUBLIC NOTICE.

I intend to apply for fertilizers license. If anybody having any objection in this regard He / She may file the same in the office of the Chief Agriculture Officer Anantnag within the period of seven (07) days no objection will be entertained after stipulated time.

**Tabsum Akhter**  
**D/o:- Ghulam Mohammad Ganie**  
**R/o:-ChekPanjpora Bijbehara Marhama**

## Office of The Regional Transport Officer Kashmir

### NOTICE

Whereas, a joint application has been received from Shri Ab Hamid Bhat S/O Mohi Ud Din R/O Qamarwari Sriangar ( Transferee) and Syed Gazanfar Shah S/O Syed Ali Shah R/O Bemina Sriangar ( Transferee) for transfer of Maxi Cab carriage route Permit No 2632/MC Covering Vehicle No JK01G-7254.

Now, therefore, it is notified for general information that objections, if any to the proposed transfer of the said route permit / vehicle shall be filled in writing in the office of the Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir. Within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily News Paper Kashmir Observer. Seller and purchaser identified by the authorized representatives of M/S N K T Co Namely Farooq Ah Bhat

NO: JK/RTOK /1313  
 Dated: 18/02/2022  
 Sd/-  
 Regional Transport Office,  
 fko Kashmir

## Office of The Regional Transport Officer Kashmir

### NOTICE

Whereas, a joint application has been received from Shri Wali Mohd Rather S/O Ab Aziz Rather R/O Parimpura Sgr ( Transferee) and Shri Nazir Ahmad Ganie S/O Mohd Rajab Ganie R/O Allici Bagh Beigh

Mohalla Sgr (Transferee) for transfer of Auto (p) carriage route Permit No 2139/MC Covering Vehicle No JK01J-2518. Now, therefore, it is notified for general information that objections, if any to the proposed transfer of the said route permit / vehicle shall be filled in writing in the office of the Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir. Within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily News Paper Kashmir Observer. Seller and purchaser identified by the authorized representatives of M/S New J&K Road Ways Namley Mr Mohd Yaseen

NO: JK/RTOK /1329  
 Dated: 18/02/2022  
 Sd/-  
 Regional Transport Office,  
 fko Kashmir

## The Jammu And Kashmir State Board Of School Education

### BRANCH OFFICE SOPORE

The candidates whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost the original marks certificate of 11th under Below mentioned particulars

Asif Ashraf Sheikh  
 Father's name: Mohamad Ashraf Sheikh  
 Mother Name : Naseema Begum  
 Roll No: 343249 Year 2013 Session Regular

Now the candidate has applied for Duplicate Marks Card. Anybody (if) having any objection may file the same before undersigned with (07) Seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides, the original marks card is treated as cancelled.  
 Sd/ Assistant Secretary  
 fko\_r Sub Office Sopore

## Office of The Regional Transport Officer Kashmir

### NOTICE

Whereas, a joint application has been received from Shri Nazir Ahmad Bakto S/O Gh Mohammad R/O Dalgate Sgr ( Transferee) and Shri Tariq Ahmad Dar S/O Gh Rasool R/O Gupta Ganga Nishat Srinagar

(Transferee) for transfer of Taveera carriage route Permit No 5324/MC Covering Vehicle No JK01M - 7963. Now, therefore, it is notified for general information that objections, if any to the proposed transfer of the said route permit / vehicle shall be filled in writing in the office of the Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir. Within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily News Paper Kashmir Observer. Seller and purchaser identified by the authorized representatives of M/S GTCO Hilal Ah Namely Mr Hilal Ahmad

NO: JK/RTOK /1292  
 Dated: 18/02/2022  
 Sd/-  
 Regional Transport Office,  
 fko Kashmir

## CLOTHING & HOME APPLIANCES

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## ELECTRONICS

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All types of Mobile and Mobile Accessories  
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 Contact:-7889657769

## TECH WORLD

All Mobile and Electronic Accessories Xerox also available.  
 Sannat Nagar Srinagar  
 Contact:-9149965005/ 9682370979

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, CONSTRUCTION DIVISION UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

NAAC Accredited Grade "A+" | HAZRATBAL, SRINAGAR-190006

### NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

For and on behalf of the University of Kashmir, e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible Electric Contractors registered with Govt. of J&K/ other union territories and CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost of the work (In Lacs)	Cost of tender document (In Rs.) In shape of E-Challan	Time allowed for completion of the work	Time and Date for Submission of E-Tender	Time and Date of Opening of Bid
1.	Electrification of new Labs and Electric renovation of Library cum Conference hall in the Department of Zoology at main Campus.	Rs. 6.24 Lacs	Rs.300/-	45-Days	17-02-2022 to 26-02-2022 (6.00 PM)	28-02-2021 (11.30 AM)
2.	Providing, Fixing of Sub Main Panels, Distribution Board and Sub Main Wiring of Teachers Hostel at Main Campus.	Rs.5.62Lacs	Rs.300/-	45-Days	17-02-2022 to 26-02-2022 (6.00 PM)	28-02-2021 (11.30 AM)

The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the web site www.kashmiruniversity.net/ www.jktenders.gov.in.

NIT No: - F(E.Tend)(UCD)/KU/92/21  
 DATED:17/02/22  
 Sd/-  
 Executive Engineer

## Department of Animal Husbandry Kupwara Office of the Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Kupwara CAHO/Kup/Tech/ 2281-85 Dated: - 17/ 02/2022

### Tender Notice

For and on behalf of the Government of UT of Jammu and Kashmir, sealed tenders affixed with revenue stamp of Rs 5 are invited from Registered Poultry Dealers for supply of poultry units of 100 birds each for identified beneficiaries under SCA to TSS 2021-22. The detailed specifications and terms and conditions shall remain as under.

Specifications: - Dual purpose Poultry birds 02-03 months age group for Cluster Rajwar and 30-45 days age group for cluster Karnah.

### Terms and conditions

- The rates quoted should be FOR District Veterinary Complex Kupwara per "unit of 100 birds" each.
- Birds should preferably be pre-sexed in 10:90 Male: Female ratio.
- Birds should be pre-vaccinated and should be in good state of health and free from any infectious disease.
- The tenders should be accompanied CDR of Rs 50,000/= pledged to Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Kupwara which will be released only after successful completion of the programme for the successful bidders.
- Birds should be supplied to the entire satisfaction of the designated committee of distributing officers.
- The tender should reach this office by or before 26th February 2022 upto 4 PM.
- The tenders shall be opened on 28th February 2022 at 11:30 AM in the office of the undersigned by designated committee of officers or the next working day, if 28th February happens to be a holiday.
- The undersigned has right to reject any tender offer without assigning any reasons, whatsoever.

**DIPK-18308/21**  
**Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Kupwara**

## Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION SOPORE.

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER Fresh NIT No- 286 of RnB-Sopore of 2021-2022 e-tendering DATED- 17.02.2022.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K, e-tenders (in Single Cover System) are invited on item rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:

S. No.	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/DOC (In Rupees)	Time of Completion In days	Time & Date of Opening of Bid	Class of Contractor	M. H of Account	Position of AAA
01	Construction of lane by way of providing and laying WBM grade 1st and 2nd from main road to H/o Javid Ahmad Pir at Masjid Alkounser Krankshivan Colony ward No.1 MC Sopore	0.58 lacs	200/-	10 days	25.02.2022	DEE	IDMT	Accorded
	Construction of U shaped cement conc. drain from H/O Imtiyaz Shah to H/O Raja Gul connecting with main drain at Gousia Colony Noorbagh wards No.09 MC Sopore	1.28	200/-	10 days	25.02.2022	DEE	IDMT	Accorded

Position of funds: Available  
 1. The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other detail's can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

01. Date of issue of Tender Notice	17.02.2022
02. Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 17.02.2022 (10.00 A.M) to 24.02.2022 (4.00P.M)
03. Bid submission start date	17.02.2022 from (04.00P.M)
04. Bid submission end date	24.02.2022 upto (4.00 P.M)
05. Date & time of opening Bids (on line)	25.02.2022 at (04.10 P.M) in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore (tender inviting authority) and Bid Security Declaration as per format given in SBD. The EMD has to be submitted by the lowest bidder L1 (3% of quoted cost) within the period as specified in SBD.
- All Bidders have to submit Bid security Declaration form instead of Earnest money as per circular of Finance Department ( Bid Security declaration form is as per Annexure "A" below.
- The lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 3% of contract as performance security in shape of CDR/FDR within 02 days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of work/DLP.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the office of the Tender receiving authority )
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of technical Bids.
- Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.
- Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in acquaint bid submission process.
- To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendor.
- The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No Financial bid will be accepted in physical form.
- Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with bid.
- All other terms, conditions shall remain same as per NIT No: 2 of 2020-21 issued under No:- 641-61 dated: 22.4.2020 PWD form 25 (Double agreement form) And NIT No:213, NIT No:275 and NIT No:281 of 2021-22.
- If the contractor/HMPO quotes rate for any item of work in his tender as free of cost at the time of tendering process, his tender shall be rejected outrightly.

For and on behalf of the,  
 Lt. Governor of J&K UT,  
**DIPK-18315/21**  
 Executive Engineer,  
 R&B Division Sopore  
 No:- 18212-32  
 Dated:- 17.02.2022

## AnjumanAuqaf Concerned at continuous closure of Jamia Masjid

Agencies

Srinagar: AnjumanAuqaf Jama Masjid Srinagar expressed grave concern over the fact that the authorities while exhibiting their 'dictatorial attitude' today once again prevented the Muslims of Kashmir from performing important duties like Friday prayers at the historic Central Jama Masjid Srinagar for the 29th consecutive week, which is extremely regrettable and reprehensible.

The Anjuman in a statement said that it is incomprehensible that while the followers of all the religions across the world including Jammu and Kashmir are attending their respective religious places of worship and performing rituals why are the prayers being disallowed and stopped in the largest place of worship in Kashmir - the Jama Masjid Srinagar which is a great center and source of Islamic teachings.

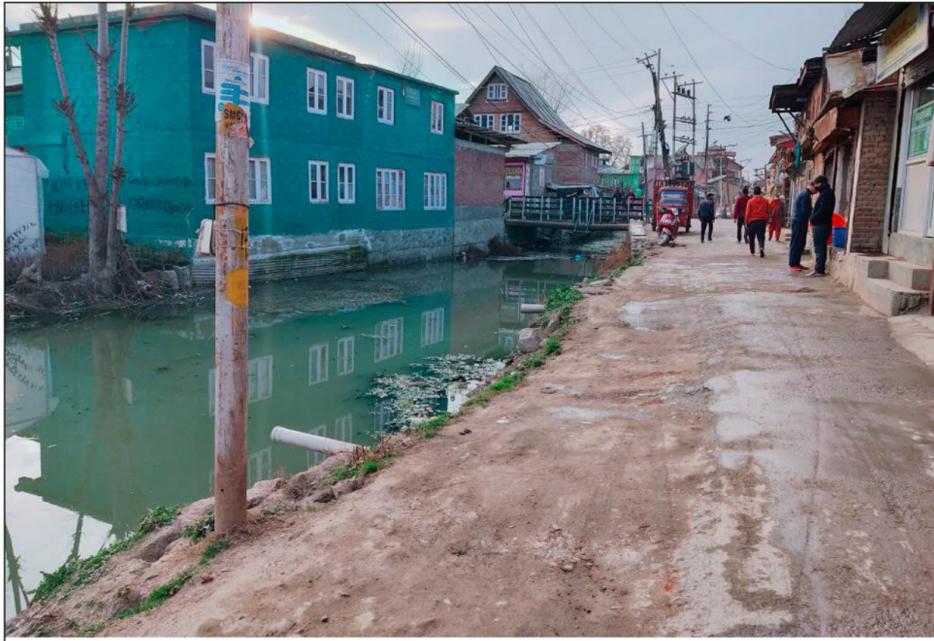
The statement said that not only are the religious sentiments of Muslims constantly being hurt by this behavior of the authorities but also the message of humanity, love and harmony propagated through "Qaal Allah WaQaalalRasool (SAW)" from the pulpit and mihrab of the centuries-old mosque is being suspended.

## Information Department organises "Mehfil e Sama"

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A devotional musical programme was organised by the Cultural Unit Srinagar DIPR today on the eve of Jumah Mubarak. A Manqabat (Imam Aali Maqam) was the masterpiece performance by UstadMushtaq Ahmad Saznawaz based on muqamAwzaal.

Some sufi folk songs were also performed by Ghulam Mohammad Bhat (Anzwal) accompanied by Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Khanday. Officials of Joint Directorate of Information Kashmir Division were present on the occasion who acclaimed the performances of staff artists of cultural unit Srinagar.



Sunken road at Chowdhry Bagh, Rainawari poses risk to life and property. Locals have urged the Governor administration to repair the road.

## Bad Roads Posing Risk to Life, Property in ChowdhryBagh

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: The residents of Chowdhry-Bagh, Rainawari have urged the Governor administration to repair vital link road in the area which locals say, is in shambles since last many years.

The locals say stream passing nearby also poses risk to residents and commuters alike as authorities have failed to install a barrier. Residents say the sunken road poses risk to life and property no one is paying heed to their woes.

"There is a high risk of vehicles falling in the stream, which runs

parallel to the road. In the past there have been instances when people have drowned in the stream along with their vehicles," said Umar Hassan Mugloo who runs a grocery shop adjacent to the stream.

"This is literally a death trap in our locality," he added.

Another local, Parvez Ahmad also voiced similar concerns.

"There is movement of school going children in the vicinity, every time children walk on this stretch we become cautious of their presence and make sure they cross the stretch safely," Parvez said.

Residents say the road is an important link road between Nishat and Rainawari and is dotted with potholes which hamper the smooth vehicular movement.

Corporator Asif Ahmad Beigh put the blame on previous administration saying that the locality is a victim of official apathy.

He further said the allotment on the work has been done but due to bad weather the work could not be executed.

"This year we will make sure that macadamization of this road is done," he said.

## DC Srinagar Inspects Progress Of Major Projects In City

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC), Srinagar, Mohammad AijazAsad Friday undertook an extensive tour of various City areas to inspect progress of various ongoing major projects being carried out atPanthachowk, HMT, Mirgund, Bemina and other areas in the District.

At Panthachowk, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the pace of works being carried out for construction of fly-over on Lasjan Bypass and slip road on NH-44 near Panthachowk. He also reviewed the process for the shifting of utilities coming in the alignment of Service road.

On the occasion, the DC directed the concerned agencies to remove all structures and bottlenecks in the right of way of the project within the next five days. He also directed the Executive Engineer PDD to ensure shifting of utilities in the alignment of Service road within seven days.

The DC also directed the concerned executing agency to work in



double shifts to accelerate the pace of works and complete the works within two months so that regulation of traffic movement over national highway is improved.

The DC also visited HMT near Gurduwara to inspect the progress of work being carried out for widening of Parimpora-Narbal road. Similarly, he also visited the Mirgund (RambiarGarh-PratabGarh) and took stock of the measures taken for widening/extension of the double lane Srinagar-Baramulla road.

At both the sites, the DC directed the concerned executing agencies to engage more men and machinery to

speed up the work progress and expedite the projects at a fast pace so that they are completed in set time lines.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner resolved various issues hampering the work progress by passing on the spot direction to the concerned.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner visited Bemina to oversee the process of transfer of 750 kanals of land to the Industries Department for setting up of Medi-City. The DC asked the concerned Tehsildar to complete the demarcation of identified land and expedite the process of land transfer at the earliest.

## Office of The Regional Transport Officer Kashmir

NOTICE



Whereas, a joint application has been received from Shri Gulzar Ahmad Bhat S/O Abdul Rashid Bhat R/O Sultan Arfeen Colony Bemina Srinagar (Transferee) and Shri Muzamil Ahmad Sheikh S/o Mohammad Hafiz Sheikh R/o H. No: 13J Alnoor Colony Chanapora Sgr (Transferee) for transfer of Taveera carriage route Permit No 761/AR/2014 Covering Vehicle No JK01V-8591.

Now, therefore, it is notified for general information that objections, if any to the proposed transfer of the said route permit / vehicle shall be filled in writing in the office of the Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir.

Within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily News Paper Kashmir Observer.

Seller and purchaser identified by the authorized representatives of M/S STW Co Namely Bagh Hussain

NOJK-RTOK 291  
Dated: 18/02/2022  
fko

Sd/  
Regional  
Transport Officer, Kashmir

## The Jammu And Kashmir State Board Of School Education

BRANCH OFFICE MAGAM

The candidates whose photograph is published in this notice is claiming to have lost the original marks certificate of 10th under Below mentioned particulars

Name : Neelofar Majeed  
D/o Abdul Majeed Dar  
R/O Russu Budgam



Details of Marks Certificate lost  
Secondary School Examination (class 10th )  
Roll No 282529 Session /Year Bi-Annual 2010

Now the candidate has applied for Duplicate Marks Card. Anybody (if) having any objection may file the same before undersigned with (07) Seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Besides, the original marks card is treated as cancelled.

Sd/ Assistant Secretary  
Sub Office Magam

bmg

## Attendants at SMHS Decry Shortage of Medicines

Agencies

Srinagar: The attendees allege that there is a shortage of medicines and other drugs at Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital (SMHS) in Srinagar, attendants accompanying patients said on Friday.

They said they are being forced to purchase lifesaving drugs from open markets.

Medical Superintendent of the hospital, DrKanwaljeet Singh rejected the allegations and said that all medicines are available in the hospital.

"Patients won't take medicines on OPD tickets. If a doctor prescribes injections, patients can go to casualty and injections are being administered there," he said.

"If patients remain admitted, after 24 hours they will get every medicine free," Singh said.

### National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) 2022

Admission to 5-year Integrated MSc Programmes in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics at NISER (Bhubaneswar) and UM-DAE CEBS (Mumbai) (Autonomous institutions under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India)

The National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) is a compulsory test for admission to the 5-year Integrated MSc programme in basic sciences - Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics - at National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER), Bhubaneswar and University of Mumbai - Department of Atomic Energy Centre for Excellence in Basic Sciences (UM-DAE CEBS), Mumbai. NEST 2022 will be conducted in around 115 towns and cities all over India on **June 18, 2022 (Saturday)**.

**The candidates admitted to the programme are eligible to receive an annual scholarship of Rs 60,000 through DISHA program of Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India. In addition, the scholarship recipients receive a grant of Rs.20,000 per annum for summer internship. Candidates selected by DST for the INSPIRE-SHE program are endorsed for INSPIRE scholarship by NISER and CEBS.**

For detailed information on NEST 2022 application procedure and previous years' question papers please visit NEST 2022 website: [www.nestexam.in](http://www.nestexam.in)

<p><b>Application:</b></p> <p>Through ONLINE portal ONLY. Visit <a href="http://www.nestexam.in">www.nestexam.in</a> to apply. Online portal opens on Feb. 21, 2022, &amp; closes on May 18, 2022</p>	<p><b>Examination:</b></p> <p>ONLINE/computer based ONLY. Date of examination: June 18, 2022 (Saturday) Time: 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM (1<sup>st</sup> session) 2:30 PM - 6:00 PM (2<sup>nd</sup> session) <b>Results announcement : July 05, 2022</b></p>
<p><b>Address for correspondence :</b></p> <p>The Chief Coordinator, NEST 2022 UM-DAE CEBS, Nalanda Building, University of Mumbai, Vidyanagari Campus, Kalina, Santacruz (E), Mumbai 400098, India E-mail: <a href="mailto:nest@cbs.ac.in">nest@cbs.ac.in</a> Website: <a href="http://www.nestexam.in">www.nestexam.in</a></p>	<p><b>Fees structure and mode of payment :</b></p> <p>Male (General and OBC categories): <b>Rs.1200/-</b> Male (SC and ST categories): <b>Rs.600/-</b> Female (all categories): <b>Rs.600/-</b> Diversity candidates: <b>Rs.600/-</b> Pay ONLY via Net banking/ Credit card/ Debit card</p>

**DIAL-EMMA**

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

**AIRPORTS**

SHEIK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

**RAILWAYS**

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

**HIGHWAY STATUS**

- Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)
- Mughal Road - (Closed)
- Srinagar- Leh- (Closed)

**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
17 - Rajab  
1443

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5: 54
ZUHR	12:45
ASR	4:38
Magrib	6:20
ISHA	7: 42

## This Day In History

- 197 - Lucius Septimius Severus' army beats Clodius Albinus at Lyon
- 356 - Emperor Constantius II shuts all heathen temples
- 607 - Boniface III begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 842 - Medieval Iconoclastic Controversy ends as a council in Constantinople formally reinstates the veneration of icons in churches
- 1512 - French troops under Gaston de Foix occupy Brescia
- 1574 - Spanish troops plunder Krommenie, Wormerveer & Jisp, Netherlands
- 1634 - Battle of Smolensk: King Wladyslaw IV of Poland beats Russians [NS=Mar]
- 1674 - Netherlands & England sign Peace of Westminster (NYC becomes English).
- 1797 - One third of papal domain ceded to France
- 1819 - British explorer William Smith discovers the South Shetland Islands, and claims them in the name of King George III
- 1856 - Tin-type camera patented by Hamilton Smith, Gambier, Ohio
- 1878 - Thomas Edison is granted a patent for his gramophone (phonograph)
- 1920 - Netherlands joins League of Nations
- 1936 - Manuel Azaña becomes Prime Minister of Spain for the second time
- 1942 - Japanese troops land on Timor
- 1943 - German tanks under Generalmajor Karl Buelowius attack Kasserine Pass, Tunisia
- 1944 - 823 British bombers attack Berlin
- 1944 - U-264 sinks off Ireland
- 1945 - 980 Japanese soldiers reportedly killed by crocodiles in 2 days on Ramree Island, Burma
- 1945 - Brotherhood Day-1st celebrated
- 1949 - Mass arrests of communists in India
- 1952 - French offensive at Hanoi
- 1959 - Britain, Turkey & Greece sign agreement granting Cyprus independence
- 1959 - Gabon adopts its constitution
- 1963 - USSR informs JFK it is withdrawing several thousand troops from Cuba
- 1970 - USSR launches Sputnik 52 & Molniya 1-13 communications satellite
- 1977 - Space shuttle Enterprise makes 1st Test flight atop a 747 jetliner
- 1984 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalinsk USSR
- 1985 - 150 killed when a Spanish jetliner crashes approaching Bilbao, Spain
- 1986 - King Hussein of Jordan severs ties with PLO
- 1987 - US President Reagan lifts trade boycott against Poland
- 1990 - Soyuz TM-9 lands
- 1992 - Peter Collins discovers nova Cygni 1992
- 1998 - Soyuz TM-26 lands
- 1998 US hockey team destroys their rooms at Olympic village in Japan
- 2001 - An Oklahoma City bombing museum is dedicated at the Oklahoma City National Memorial
- 2002 - NASA's Mars Odyssey space probe begins to map the surface of Mars using its thermal emission imaging system.
- 2007 - Blogging website Tumblr is founded by David Karp in New York
- 2008 - Toshiba announces its formal recall of its HD DVD video format, ending the format war between it and Sony's Blu-Ray Disc
- 2008 - Serzh Sargsyan wins the Armenian Presidential Election
- 2012 - 44 people killed in prison brawl in Apocada, Mexico, between two rival drug cartels

## From KO Archives

## Farooq Advocates 'Pro-Active' JK Policy

Observer News Service

JAMMU - Chief minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah today said he was never opposed to prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's peace initiative in the state which would be carried forward to its logical end.

Winding up discussions on the motion of thanks on the govt-ernor's address in the legislative assembly, Abdullah urged the comity of nations to pressurise Pakistan to stop militant violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

The chief minister launched a frontal attack on the Hurriyat Conference who, he said, accused him of scuttling the peace process saying I am for peace, am never opposed to peace. He said killing of innocent people, were continuing unabated in the state despite the cease-fire and suggested a pro-active strategy to deal with militants. According to a NAFA report, Dr. Abdullah advocated a more aggressive 'pro-active' policy for Jammu and Kashmir adding this was the only way Pakistan could be brought under pressure.

Stating he was never opposed to talks with Hurriyat leaders, Abdullah said let the Centre treats the Hurriyat the way it wants and let them go to any country.

If those nearer and dearer to Pakistan come close to New Delhi, what objection I have, he said, adding the Centre was doing experiments.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 19 FEBRUARY, 2001)

தமிழ்நாடு கेंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय  
(संसद द्वारा पारित अधिनियम 2009 के अंतर्गत स्थापित)  
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TAMIL NADU  
(Established by an Act of Parliament, 2009)  
नीलकुंडी परिसर/Neelakudi Campus  
तिरुवार्कूर/Thiruvarkur- 610 005  
E mail: [recruitmentteaching@cutn.ac.in](mailto:recruitmentteaching@cutn.ac.in) ;  
[recruitment@cutn.ac.in](mailto:recruitment@cutn.ac.in)

**RECRUITMENT ON TEACHING & NON -TEACHING POSTS**

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Application link for Teaching : [cutnrec.samarth.edu.in](http://cutnrec.samarth.edu.in)  
Application link for Non - Teaching : [cutnnt.samarth.edu.in](http://cutnnt.samarth.edu.in)

Place: Thiruvarkur  
Date : 16.02.2022

Sd/  
Registrar (i/c)

DAVP/21299/12/0007/2122

## UKRAINE: What Would A Russian Invasion Actually Look Like? These Are The Three Most Likely Scenarios



Press Trust Of India

Despite suggestions to the contrary from the Kremlin, Ukraine remains surrounded by Russian troops, both along its long border with Russia and from within occupied Crimea. The Russian Federation has deployed land, air and naval forces that give the Kremlin a range of possibilities should it seek to initiate military action.

Not for the first time, Russian forces look set to challenge the sovereignty of Ukraine, and the west appears no closer to knowing what to do about it without risking war between nuclear armed states.

Russia has been laying the ground for military action against Ukraine since 2014, when it seized Crimea and thereby gained a more substantial military foothold to the south.

Meanwhile, the ongoing war in Ukraine's Donbas region allowed Russian security and intelligence units to continue to gauge Ukrainian military and paramilitary operations.

In spring 2021, the Russian Federation ramped up actions against Ukraine, stopping short of actual war.

It launched cyber attacks and misinformation campaigns as well as disrupting the energy supply.

The Ukrainian Security Service has identified operational and sleeper units from Russia's Federal Security Service, Foreign Intelligence Service, Military Intelligence and Special Forces operating within its borders.

If military action does occur, there are three likely scenarios for how it would play out.

The first is the decapitation approach. Russian military and security forces would seek to remove the current government and state powers in order to insert replace them with people more favourable to (and owned by) Moscow.

Perhaps surprisingly, this would entail keeping on some people who are already working in the Ukrainian state.

There are figures who have shown sympathies for and have worked with the Russian Federation.

This scenario would probably entail security and intelligence units on the ground in Ukraine as well as units from the military exercise currently being conducted in Belarus. The greatest concern for Russia in this scenario would be how the Ukrainian military and police would respond.

There may also be a significant public backlash against a change of government led from Moscow.



Students of Kundapur Junior College denied entry.

## Hijab Not An Essential Part Of Islam, Says Govt

Press Trust Of India

**BENGALURU:** The Karnataka government on Friday contended before the High Court that the hijab is not an essential religious practice of Islam and preventing its use did not violate Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees religious freedom.

"We have taken a stand that wearing hijab is not an essential religious part of Islam," Advocate General of Karnataka Prabhuling Navadgi told the full bench of the High Court comprising Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, Justice J M Khazi and Justice Krishna M Dixit.

**WE HAVE** taken a stand that wearing hijab is not an essential religious part of Islam,"

The AG also rejected the charge of some Muslim girls, who challenged the Karnataka government's order on February 5 that barred students from wearing hijab or saffron scarves saying that it violated Article 25 of the Constitution. Article 25 gives freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion to the citizens of India.

The government order also does not violate Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution, Navadgi argued. Article 19(1)(a) guarantees to all its citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression.

The Advocate General also contended that the February 5 order of the state government was in accordance with the law and there was nothing to object in it.

The High Court, in its interim order pending consideration of all petitions related to the hijab row, last week restrained all the students from wearing saffron shawls, scarves, hijab and any religious flag within the classroom. PTI GMS R S GMS HDA HDA

## Dasna Temple Priest Yati Narasinghanand Released From Jail

Press Trust Of India

**DEHRADUN:** Dasna temple head priest Yati Narasinghanand who was arrested in January in connection with the Haridwar Dharma Sansad hate speech against Muslims and other cases has been released from jail.

Immediately after walking out of the Haridwar district jail on Thursday, Narasinghanand proceeded to Sarvanand ghat to resume his hunger strike demanding the release of co-accused in the case, Jitendra Narayan Tyagi, formerly known as Waseem Rizvi. Narasinghanand's release follows bail granted to him on Tuesday by a local court in a case slapped on him under section 509 of the Indian Penal Code for making objectionable remarks against women and abusing a journalist.

Though granted bail in the Dharma Sansad case on February 7, Narasinghanand was still in jail due to the other cases in which the same court granted him bail on Tuesday.

The Hindutva leader had or-



ganised a conclave in Haridwar in December last year where several speakers delivered hate speeches against Muslims.

Talking to reporters after coming out of jail, Narasinghanand said his release without that of Tyagi did not mean anything and he was going to resume his hunger strike at the Sarvanand ghat in Haridwar.

He said the protest will continue till Tyagi is released.

Tyagi's bail application will be heard by the Uttarakhand High Court on February 21.

Rizvi, a former Uttar Pradesh Shia Central Waqf Board chairman, had adopted the name of Jitendra Narayan Tyagi after converting to Hinduism.

## "Nuclear Deal Possible Within Days If Iran...": US



Agence France-Presse

**WASHINGTON:** The United States said Thursday that "substantial progress" during negotiations in Vienna to save the Iran nuclear deal had been made, deeming an agreement possible within days if Iran "shows seriousness" on the matter.

The Vienna talks, which involve Iran as well as Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly, and the United States indirectly, resumed in late November with the aim of restoring the 2015 deal.

That accord had offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program, but the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under former president Donald Trump and reimposed heavy economic sanctions, prompting Iran to begin rolling back on its commitments.

Stating that "substantial progress has been made in the last week," a State Department spokesperson told AFP that "if Iran shows seriousness, we can and should reach an understanding on mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA within days," using an acronym for the 2015 deal.

But "anything much beyond that would put the possibility of

return to the deal at grave risk," the spokesperson added.

Experts believe Iran is only a few weeks away from having enough fissile material to build a nuclear weapon -- even if it would take several more complicated steps to create an actual bomb.

President Joe Biden said he is willing to return to the deal and ease some of the US sanctions, provided Tehran resumes its commitments under the agreement.

France had warned Iran Wednesday that time was running out to accept a new deal. Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said it was "a question of days," adding that a major crisis would be unleashed if there is no agreement.

But earlier in the day, Iran's top negotiator Ali Bagheri said they "are closer than ever to an agreement."

He called on the other parties to be "realistic" and make "serious decisions."

Tehran also called on the US Congress to say Washington would commit if an agreement is reached in Vienna.

Iranian authorities had said in 2018 they wanted a "guarantee" that an agreement would be implemented, as the potential of US political turnover had once more brought that into question.

## RUSSIA: Putin To Oversee Huge Nuclear Drills Amid Ukraine Tension

Agencies

Russia says President Vladimir Putin will personally oversee military drills involving "strategic forces" on Saturday, at a time of soaring tensions at the country's border with Ukraine.

The defence ministry said the exercise will include multiple practice launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. The air force, units of the southern military district, as well as the Northern and Black Sea fleets would be involved in the huge nuclear drills.

Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, during talks with Putin on Friday in Moscow, said he would also take part in overseeing Saturday's drills.

The war games follow US President Joe Biden's warning on Thursday that Russia could invade Ukraine within days. Western fears focus on an estimated 150,000 Russian troops -- including about 60 percent of Russia's overall ground forces -- concentrated near Ukraine's borders.

The Kremlin insists it has no plans to invade. But Moscow has demanded that the US and its allies keep Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations out of the NATO military alliance, not deploy weapons in Ukraine and pull back NATO forces from Eastern Europe.

Washington and its allies bluntly rejected the Russian demands, and Moscow threatened to take



unspecified "military-technical measures" if the West continued to stonewall.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia was being transparent about Saturday's exercises, had given notice to all proper channels, and that they "should not cause anyone concern", the TASS news agency reported.

He said Putin's role was essential, and the president was likely to take part from a "situation centre".

Russia holds huge drills of its strategic nuclear forces on an annual basis, but the manoeuvres planned for Saturday pointedly involve the Black Sea Fleet.

The fleet is based on the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

"According to the Russians, this is not an escalation, it is something that the country is carrying on, on an annual basis," Al Jazeera's Dorsa, reporting from Moscow, said. "Usually these drills are carried out in October, but they have been moved around in the past."

## 2008 Ahmadabad Blast Case 38 Sentenced To Death, 11 To Life In Jail

Press Trust Of India

**AHMEDABAD:** A special court on Friday sentenced to death 38 members of terror outfit Indian Mujahideen (IM) in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts, which claimed 56 lives and left over 200 injured.

The court also sentenced 11 other convicts to life imprisonment.

This is for the first time that so many convicts have been handed down death sentence by any court at one go. In January 1998, a TADA court in Tamil Nadu sentenced to death all 26 convicts in the case of assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

The pronouncement of the quantum of punishment by judge A R Patel came 14 years after the blasts.

The court had convicted 49 persons and acquitted 28 others in the case on February 8.

As many as 21 explosions had ripped through the city on July 26, 2008 within a span of 70 minutes.

In the over 7,000-page judgement, the court termed the case as "rarest of rare" and ordered that 38 convicts in the case be hanged till death, while 11 others were given life imprisonment till death, public prosecutor Amit Patel told reporters here.

While 38 were convicted under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 302 (murder) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) and provi-



sions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 11 others were held guilty for criminal conspiracy and under various sections of the UAPA, he said.

The court imposed a fine of Rs 2.85 lakh on 48 convicts and of Rs 2.88 lakh on another one. It also awarded compensation of Rs one lakh to the kin of those who died in the blasts, Rs 50,000 to those who were seriously injured and Rs 25,000 to those who received minor injuries.

Those sentenced to death include key conspirators Safdar Nagori and Qumaruddin Nagori (from Madhya Pradesh) and Qayyumuddin Kapadiya, Zahid Shaikh and Shamsuddin Sheikh (from Gujarat).

Both Safdar Nagori and Zahid Shaikh were accused of collecting funds for acquiring explosives and for other illegal activities of banned outfit Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), while Kapadiya had acquired mobile SIM cards us-

ing fake documents and stayed in hotels using fake identity.

All the convicts attended the hearing via video link from eight jails, including Sabarmati central jail in Ahmedabad, Tihar jail in Delhi and jails in Bhopal, Gaya, Bengaluru, Kerala and Mumbai.

The trial began in December 2009 against 78 persons linked to the banned terror outfit. One of them turned approver. The court concluded the trial against 77 accused in September last year.

Four more accused were arrested later, but their trial has not commenced yet, a government lawyer said.

Bombs had exploded at various spots in Ahmedabad, including the state government-run civil hospital, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation-run LG Hospital, on buses, parked bicycles, in cars and other places, killing 56 persons. As many as 29 live bombs were also found in Surat in the next couple of days, though none of them exploded.

## Yogi NSE Scam: CBI grills ex-CEO Ramkrishna



**MUMBAI:** The CBI, speeding up the probe in the alleged fraud case at the NSE involving the influence of a "yogi" living in the Himalayas, on Friday recorded the statements of the bourse's former MD and CEO Chitra Ramkrishna, who has learnt to be alleging that she is being "framed". Ramkrishna, who reached the Mumbai office of the CBI in the afternoon to record her statements, is being questioned by a team of senior officials, including one woman.

According to sources, the CBI has asked her around 50 questions, including how long she had been sending mails to the "yogi", was she given any cut for sharing classified information, if so, where she invested this money.

Ramakrishna also tried to play victim card, claiming she didn't know a lot of things, a source said. She also has claimed that she is innocent and somebody is trying to frame her, the source added.

A CBI official close to the investigation said that Ramakrishna was evasive and was frequently changing her statements. She has tried to mislead the investigation and in the coming days, her predecessor at the NSE, Ravi Narayan and Anand Subramanian, who was appointed by Ramakrishna to a senior post at the NSE on the allegedly at the yogi's urging will also be grilled by the CBI, added the official. -IANS

## 8 Get Life In Jail For Killing Man Over 500 In Maharashtra



**LATUR:** A court in Maharashtra's Latur district has sentenced eight people to life imprisonment for brutally killing a 35-year-old man in a dispute over 500 in 2018. First District and Sessions Court judge A V Gujrathi on Thursday convicted the eight accused, including a woman, under section 302 (murder) and other relevant provisions of the IPC and imposed a fine of 10,000 each on them.

As per the case details, the victim, Shadul Shaikh, a resident Anjalnagar in the city, ran a food cart and had a long-standing dispute with the accused.

On April 14, 2018, the accused approached the victim and demanded 500 from him and he refused. On April 16, the accused called the victim to one of their houses, tied him up, put pepper powder in his nose, mouth and genitals and brutally beat him up with an iron rod, it was stated.

The accused also consumed alcohol and the woman accused shot a video of the attack on a mobile phone. After hearing the victim's cries, people in the locality reached the scene and the victim was rushed to a government hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the police said. -PTI

## Man Claims He Became World's Richest Person For 7 Minutes



A YouTuber has claimed to have become the world's richest person, surpassing the wealth of tech billionaire Elon Musk. But his stint at the top of the money table was short-lived, for 7 minutes, to be precise. Max Fosh, who exploited a market capitalisation loophole, also realised that he needed to dissolve his company immediately as he was being accused of fraud. He has shared a video of how

he made this happen and also why he had to shut his company down. On paper, he claimed, he was the world's richest person for 7 minutes. The video showed how he had set up a company. "In the UK, it's quite easy to set up a company. There's something called the company's house, and you essentially fill a form," Mr Fosh said, explaining the procedure. But he needed a name for the company, which should end with "Ltd". So, he mockingly named the venture 'Unlimited Money Ltd'. Now, he had to decide what would be the company for - manufacturing macaroni, noodles, couscous and similar farinaceous products. "I don't know what farinaceous means, but that's what the company does," he said. Next up were shares. He decides on 10 billion. "If I created and registered a company with 10 billion shares, and then sold one of those shares for 50 pounds, that would legally value my company at 500 billion pounds, thus making me the richest man in the world, absolutely decimating my nearest rival Elon Musk," Mr Fosh said in the video. -NDTV

## Kashmiri Man Found Dead In Punjab, Family Alleges Murder

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** A day he went missing, a 35-year-old of man from North Kashmir's Handwara was Friday found dead under mysterious circumstances in Firozpur area of Punjab while his family here alleged that he was murdered.

A man identified as Mushtaq Ahmad Mir son of Habibullah Mir, was found dead under mysterious circumstances this morning in Firozpur area of Punjab.

The deceased was selling shawls in Firozpur for the last many years. "Yesterday afternoon he went to receive the payment from his customers but didn't return back following which a missing report was filed by his partners," the family members said, as per news agency KNO.

Meanwhile, family members of the deceased alleged that Mushtaq was murdered and demanded justice and action against "culprits" involved in

the crime.

"He had been going to Punjab for the last ten years and was earning his living there and yesterday at 8 PM we found out that he was missing while his phone was switched off which made us even more worried," the family members said.

They further said that this morning they came to know that his body was found in a field. "He was killed there. We just want justice. We request the government to conduct a thorough investigation," Qayoom Ahmad a family said.

Peoples Conference chairman, Sajad Lone also demanded justice for the family.

"Mushtaq A Mir of Sirajpora Handwara, Kashmir was found dead in Ferozpur Punjab. The family believes he was murdered, strangled or hanged to death. Request @DGPPunjabPolice to please ensure that justice prevails. @CMOPb @CHARANJITCHANNI," the PC chief tweeted.

## IIMC's 5 Day Media & Communication Course For DIPR Officials Concludes

Such Training Course Would Enhance Performance Of Media Officers In Their Field: Director DIPR



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** The five-day long Media and Communication (M&C) Course for the officers and officials of Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) concluded here on Friday.

The training programme was meticulously designed and organised virtually by Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) in collaboration with J&K Government to acquaint the officers and officials of DIPR with emerging trends and techniques in the world of Media and Communication.

Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir and Member, National Disaster Management Authority, Lt. General, Syed Ata Hasnain, was the chief guest on valedictory ceremony of the training course.

While addressing the officials of DIPR during the valedictory session, Hasnain said, "Every Public Relations Officer's (PROs) first priority should always be National Security".

He added that PROs should be well-versed in their respective professions in terms of historical knowledge of J&K.

While lauding the initiative of IIMC, Director Information and Public Relations, Rahul Pandey, hoped that the training course would enhance the perfor-

mance of the Media Officers in their field.

He added that the DIPR will further collaborate with IIMC for more such short during courses so that all the Media Officers and PR officials would get acquaintance with the latest technologies and happenings with respect to the Media.

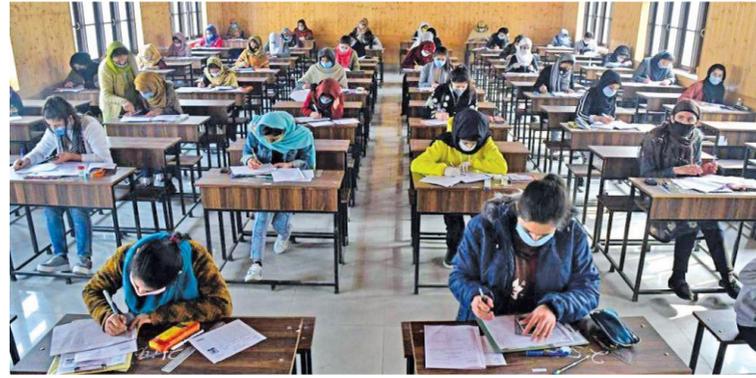
Speaking on behalf of DIPR during the valedictory session of training course, Neeraj Bhargava and Yasir Ashraf highlighted that this training program covered all aspects of the emerging media in this age of digital world.

They added that this training course has met the professional training needs of all officers and officials of department who are regularly engaged in highlighting initiatives taken by government for welfare, empowerment and development of the entire Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinently, the five day training course was divided into several sessions and touched vast aspects related to media like Media Landscape in India & Image Building through PR, Social Media Ecosystem for PR, Crisis Communication, Elements of Press Releases and handling media in digital age, introduction to media campaigns, Digital Media and Emerging technologies and others.

## MATRICULATION RESULTS

### CEO Anantnag Suspends School Staff Over 'Poor Performance'



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Education Officer Anantnag has ordered for suspension of school staff at High School Pohru Kalnag over 'poor performance' of students in recently declared matriculation exam results.

"In view of their poor performance in the Annual Regular Examination of Class 10th Session

Nov-2021, the following teaching personnel of High School Pohru Kalnag are hereby placed under suspension with immediate effect; i) Ab Rashid Khan - Headmaster ii) Farooq Ahmad Lone - Teacher, Grade II iii) Mukhtar Ahmad Rather - Teacher, Grade II iv) Ab Rashid Khan - RRT v) Tasleema Jan - Teacher, Grade II vi) Zakir Hussain Lone - Teacher, Grade II vii) Mahjabeen Akhter -

Teacher, Grade II viii) Rafiq Ahmad Khan - RRT ix) Yasmeena Akhter - Teacher, Grade II x) Mohd Towseef Bhat - Teacher, Grade II and xi) Javid Ahmad Kumar - Teacher, Grade II", reads the order.

The school staff, including Headmaster, of High School at Wantrag, falling in Zone Matran, associated with academics of Secondary classes has also been put under suspension.

## J&K To Create 4 Innovation Hubs Under NEP: Kansal

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Principal Secretary Higher Education Department, Rohit Kansal ON Friday reiterated that the J&K Government is committed to supporting the Indian Institute of Technology Jammu and other institutions to build a culture of innovation and growth.

He also committed to supporting innovation hubs not just in IIT Jammu but in other universities in J&K also, an official spokesperson said.

Kansal, he said, announced that the entire process would be enlarged and a J&K wide start up contest would be organized soon. The Higher Education department would support and facilitate a J&K wide version of the event which would be organized by the IIT and supported by the government.

He made these remarks while speaking at a prize distribution ceremony of the first-ever I2EDC Pitch Desk Competition-2022 held at IIT Jammu here today.

The first-ever completion witnessed an overwhelming response from innovators all over the Jammu and Kashmir during which three teams were conferred prizes for the first three places which include: Team BB & GG from SKAUST-K (Rs one lakh) bagged first prize while as Team Azad Identity Solutions (Rs 50,000) from IIT Jammu and Team Manukrishi (Rs 25000) bagged second and third prize respectively.

The organizer of this competition was I2EDC (Institute Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centre) also known as the Idea Factory of IIT Jammu whose job is to help in



incubating promising startups not just from IIT Jammu but also from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

I2EDC hosted an early stage idea pitch deck competition open to the community of all higher education institutes as well as research labs in JK UT and Ladakh in the month of January. The competition received over 70 registrations, and 35+ valid entries from the Union Territory.

Speaking at the ceremony, Kansal observed that we are living in the age of innovation and the I2EDC Pitch Desk Competition-2022 was a first but very significant step in this direction. He confirmed that the government stands committed in supporting IIT Jammu in all their innovation efforts and are going to take this forward to expand the scope of this exercise to enable it to reach a much larger audience set.

"We will expand our support in size as well as scope whereby IIT Jammu shall be developed as an incubation hub; we will also support other institutions and universities in J&K by mapping up these incubators with spokes that we will create in

all our colleges. The resultant culture of innovation, growth and progress will benefit not just J&K but the entire nation," Kansal said.

On the occasion, he congratulated all the participants and hoped that the innovators and entrepreneurs will continue in their endeavours.

Director IIT Jammu, Dr Manoj Singh Gaur; Assistant Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT Jammu and Head I2EDC, Dr Amit Kumar Singh; Professor Incharge Incubation, Prof Rakesh Singhai among other also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the role of innovation and startups in entrepreneurship.

On the occasion, the institute also announced multiple levels of hackathons where all the entrepreneurs and innovators throughout J&K will be invited and will later on also be opened to all over India.

The IIT Jammu will support the innovators in prototyping with proper guidance while also proving to connect with industry so that developed products can be marketed and startups can grow and have exponential growth as well

## MERC Bags First Prize At 'SONY World Of Film Competition'



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Kashmir University's Media Education Research Centre (MERC) has bagged the first prize at the 'SONY World of Film Competition' 2022

A university student entry titled 'An Unknown Environmentalist' by Muzamil Bhat, Suheel Nissar Paul, Aadil Shafi and Suhaib Rafiq Bhat (3rd semester students from batch 2020) at MERC made it to the final round amongst a huge number of such entries received by Sony India.

The films in the final round were evaluated by a jury having a vast experience in the art of filmmaking, a handout issued by MERC said.

'Sony World of Film' competition commenced in 2021, celebrating the best short-form filmmaking shot on Sony Cameras across Asia Pacific, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Australia and New Zealand.

The competition aims to encourage filmmakers at all levels, from aspiring filmmaking students to passionate amateurs and industry veterans, to showcase their exceptional talents and abilities using the Sony system to capture their stories.

As a national winner, the 'Sony World of Film' will be felicitating 'An Unknown Environmentalist' team with a Sony

Cinema Line FX3 + SEL 1635GM, the handout said.

The MERC team of student winners will be receiving premium Sony wireless headphone WH-1000XM4 and be a part of exclusive workshop on Sony Digital Imaging. 'An Unknown Environmentalist' has also entered to compete at international level (Asia Pacific) for which the winners will be announced around March-April 2022, the handout said.

Pertinently, MERC students have proved their mettle at the national and international levels from time to time.

Mohammad Abu Bakar, a student from batch 2020, was recently selected for the prestigious International Foundry Photojournalism Workshop 2021 while another student Mohammad Fazil from the same batch won the first prize at the Chandigarh University Festival Kissa-Goie (Storytelling) competition.

KU Vice-Chancellor Prof Talat Ahmad and Registrar Dr Nisar A Mir congratulated the students for winning the first prize, hoping that the department would continue to bring more laurels to the university in future.

Head MERC Dr Aliya Ahmad also congratulated the winning team and said the department would continue to excel in academics and research while facilitating its students to actively participate in such national and international level competitions. (KNS)

## Snow Clearance Work In Full Swing On Leh Highway



Agencies

**GANDERBAL:** The snow-clearing operation on the kilometer-long Srinagar-Leh, which is the only connecting highway to connect Ladakh with the rest of Jammu and Kashmir, is in full swing. The highway was closed on January 3 this year after heavy snowfall.

According to the reports, BRO officials said there had been heavy snowfall this year, adding that about 17 feet of snow had accumulated on the road along the Zojila pass.

Commanding Officer 122 RCC said Bacon's staff, including laborers and state-of-the-art machinery have been deployed to clear the road.

"Our employees are facing a difficult situation due to heavy snowfall and slippage," he said.

He said he hoped the snow clearing would be completed by next month. The highway was closed on January 3 this year following heavy snowfall after remaining open for the record time despite inclement weather.

Reports said that nearly 8-10 feet of snow has accumulated along Zojila pass while 4-6 feet of snow has accumulated along Sonmarg-Baltal road.

The officer said the highway passes through mountains with a deep ravine on one side. Staff and machinery have to take extra precautions to avoid loss of life and property while working on the road. -(KNO)

## TRANSFORMING J&K

### Drug De-Addiction Policy: An Explicit War On Drug Abuse In J&K

**SRINAGAR:** Drug Addiction has assumed the magnitude of a silent epidemic in J&K and despite its high prevalence, the awareness about the problem is low.

Jammu and Kashmir lies in the vicinity of the "Golden Crescent", a name given to South Asia's opium producing countries Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan which produces 80 percent of the world's opium and is considered as the prime source of illicit drug trade. Under such a scenario, it becomes more imperative to curb the menace of drug abuse in J&K.

In order to combat this rising societal problem, the Jammu and Kashmir government has released its maiden drug de-addiction policy so that stakeholder departments and the masses are involved in the efforts meant for combating the menace of substance abuse here.

J&K is the first UT in the country only after Punjab state, which has a drug de-addiction policy of its own. Substance abuse required a multi-pronged strategy and the policy incorporates social, medical and legal aspects to address the issue better. The

policy while stressing the need to have standards of care in drug de-addiction centers and remove the taboo surrounding the problem, also inculcates setting up of drug de-addiction centers with proper guidelines and standards of care. These centers are being set up in all district hospitals under a centrally-sponsored scheme to improve the access of facilities for those seeking help for substance abuse. The government has also launched Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) to help the affected come out of opium addiction, a life-threatening menace.

Substance abuse is responsible for an increase in crimes, increase in moral degradation and lower participation of the youth in economic activities. If it is not addressed properly it can lead to annihilation of our young generation. The menace of drug-addiction is spreading widely and quickly taking the form of an epidemic and places where a bus cannot go, the deadly drugs reach.

To tackle this social evil in J&K, the Government has come out with a detailed mechanism

to supervise and review implementation of Drug De-addiction Policy and has even roped in civil society members so that drug menace is fought effectively. Under this mechanism, UT Level Policy Implementation Monitoring Committee and Jammu and Kashmir Division Level De-addiction Centre Monitoring Committees have been constituted.

The UT Level Committee has assigned the task of suggesting changes in the Drug De-addiction Policy from time to time as may be deemed necessary and try to look for financial support for various de-addiction activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

Similarly, the Divisional Level Committees have been assigned the task of inspecting the existing de-addiction facilities in Jammu and Kashmir and grant or cancel licenses after thorough inspection of infrastructure, manpower and standards of care. These committees are also supposed to advise various stakeholders from time to time for implementation of Drug De-addiction Policy on ground and look at monitoring of prescription drug abuse and sug-

gest remedial measures to the Drug Controller.

The Policy focuses on various key aspects including prevention, rehabilitation and integration, training and sensitization, community participation, generating awareness, upgradation/establishment of drug de-addiction centers. It lays out a comprehensive action plan for addressing the drug addiction issue in its entirety. Pertinent to mention here is that there has been a steep rise in physical, mental and substance-use disorders over the past two decades across the UT.

There has been an alarming shift in the pattern of substance use in terms of rise in the number of female users, decreasing age at first-use, increasing use of solvents, injectable-opiates and use of steroids as well as increasing drug related deaths (overdose and accidents).

More so, for effective surveillance and law enforcement, the government has also formed the Anti-Narcotics Tasks Force (ANTF) in coordination with the Excise and Agriculture departments to map the expected cul-

tivation areas and take remedial actions in terms of destruction of the illegal crops on both private and government lands.

The ANTF has further been asked to formulate an action plan to prevent such cultivation in the next season. The ANTF will also undertake extensive awareness generation drives to inform the public on the associated risks and issues, and accordingly plan a calendar of activities. The Task Force will institutionalize the mechanism for promoting wide ranged reporting on illegal cultivation, transportation, trade and consumption of drugs and their synthetic derivatives; through NGOs, PRLs and Volunteers.

In summary, the implications of policy decisions need to be considered explicitly not only to prevent harm but to promote health. It can be said that major improvements in health can only be addressed by broad-based impacts that benefit both high-risk groups and the general public. In this aspect, the UT of Jammu and Kashmir has taken a lead by addressing this serious societal issue on a large scale.

## Police Asks People To Dial 112 In Emergency Situations

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Friday informed people to use the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) to address emergencies of citizens.

The ERSS is designed to address all emergency signals received from citizens through voice calls, SMS, email, panic SOS signal, ERSS web portal, a police spokesperson said.

ERSS is a pan-India integrated single emergency helpline number for various emergency services such as Police, Fire & Emergency Services, Medical Services, Social Welfare and Disaster Management etc, the statement reads.

It further adds that the emergency number "112" provides 24x7 emergency responses and immediate assistance to the callers in distress, besides a special desk for assistance of women in distress is also functional.

ERSS is designed to address all emergency signals received from citizens through voice calls, SMS, e-mail, panic SOS signal, ERSS web portal, etc. An SOS alert can be activated

through the "112-Mobile app" anytime when you feel your safety or the safety of another is in imminent danger. The exact location of the person in distress is forwarded to the Control Room and the location of the victim is displayed on the GIS map of the Call-taker.

In case of any SOS alert or emergency assistance from Police, Fire or Ambulance etc, please follow:

1. Dial-112 from Phone/Landline
2. Send SMS to 112.
3. Press the power button on the Smartphone 3 times in quick succession to activate panic call.
4. Log-on to ERSS-JK website <https://jk.erss.in/> and place your SOS request
5. Email SOS alert to Emergency Response System on [dial-112@jkpolice.gov.in](mailto:dial-112@jkpolice.gov.in)
6. Using 112 India mobile app (available on Google Playstore and Apple Store) to activate panic calls.

This is for the information of the general public as the ERSS is functional throughout the UT of J&K. For any queries or questions please visit <https://jk.erss.in/faq.html>

# KASHMIR OBSERVER

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## Twitter Talks



"Turkish joke. A prisoner goes to the jail's library to borrow a book. The librarian says: "We don't have this book, but we have its author"  
**@GeorgiGotev**

"while one would find it amusing how so many of us have been turned into raging outrage machines, pls know we'd love to tweet just about the series we watched, the places we saw, the meals we enjoyed, the books we read if our basic dignity and existence is not smeared every day"  
**@zoyarasul**

"A person is driving a car alone. He is already following COVID 19 protocol, how can he be fined for not wearing Mask?"  
**@rtimuzaffar**

## ADVENTURES IN ARCHIVES

### Words Of War

It is familiar territory for the sub-continental neighbours to be locked in tensions and teetering on the brink of war. Aggressive posturing, tough talk, movement of troops, and worse, have all been seen before. As one side blows hot and cold by asserting that no one wanted war but all options were open, the other, naturally, commits itself to a befitting reply in case of a misadventure.

Ironically, the basic issue of bringing the Mumbai perpetrators to book takes a back seat as the antagonists calculate the risks in strikes and counter-strikes. By wisdom of hindsight, it is easy to say that the situation could have been handled better and in a much more productive way had the exigencies of domestic politics not governed the approach to the crisis.

The severe clobbering New Delhi has been giving Pakistan right from the start in full view and hearing of the world was bound to make Islamabad feel hurt and humiliated. Its retreat into a bristling, defensive shell, and rebounding accusations with combative denials, is characteristic of an already beleaguered entity being pushed to the wall. If the government in New Delhi has domestic compulsions in being seen to be taking action, if not actually acting, the regime in Islamabad is more hard pressed not to appear succumbing to outside pressure. After all, the Zardari dispensation's indulgent view of US forces targeting its territory has not exactly earned it popularity in Pakistan. And it is not the easiest of tasks to be waging a war in tribal areas in the face of growing resentment at home. Before going hammer and tongs at Islamabad, New Delhi would have done well to take the latter's sensitivities and vulnerabilities into account if it really wanted Pakistan to act meaningfully. By airing its demands openly for all the world to hear and asking for action that amounted, under the circumstances, to nothing less than abject capitulation, New Delhi has painted Islamabad into a corner, foreclosing any chances that there might have been of the latter cooperating substantively.

India had been wounded gravely – that is undeniable, but in the interest of the broader and all-important goal of getting the perpetrators collared, wiser counsel should have prevailed. Quiet, persuasive diplomacy, out of sight of the world, with available proof being presented convincingly, would have yielded better results as Pakistan would have been more amenable to India's requirements if approached with sensitivity and understanding. How could New Delhi not have sensed the acute susceptibility of its most important neighbour that is engaged in a highly unpopular military operation in the west and paying a heavy price in bloody terrorist reprisals?

War in the subcontinent would be the recourse of the insane as it entails mutually assured destruction; and having been mercifully recognized as such by both sides, it is incomprehensible that rhetoric has overtaken temperance. Even if the two sides limit themselves to tit-for-tat surgical strikes, nothing would have been achieved and much lost. Needless to say, the painstakingly built composite process would be one of the many casualties and it is doubtful it would ever take off again. Howsoever hemmed in Pakistan may feel, it has to be fair in addressing Indian concerns, and putting at rest the grievances the latter has. The current situation sorely demands an approach of understanding of each others concerns from both sides. Pakistan cannot ignore entirely the apprehensions voiced by India as it has itself suffered at the hands of rogue forces springing from its soil. In any case, it can put its point more effectively through established channels of communications between state rather than shouting over the fence.

Both neighbours need to get out of the trap of the chequered history of their relations. The temptation to play to the domestic galleries can spin out of control, and if, heavens forbid, it reaches the point of no return, it would be impossible even to pick up the pieces. Terrorism is not the exclusive preserve of any one nation, but both, India and Pakistan, have internal factors that have contributed to the growth of the scourge. New Delhi would win half the battle if it acknowledged that the excuse for attacks on it partly stems from the targeted violence on the minorities, including the Muslims, and that the slaughter in Mumbai in the nineties and later on in Gujarat constitute terrorism as much as the carnage in the Taj and the Trident. Islamabad, in its turn, cannot remain an idle spectator as extra-constitutional forces undermine the authority of the state, and even put the very existence of the nation in peril.

The article is an editorial from KO's archives and was originally published on 15 November, 2011

## IN MY OPINION



RECENTLY, TWO EVENTS IN KASHMIR TRIGGERED widespread condemnation as well as debate. One was the unfortunate Acid Attack on a woman by a rejected suitor and another was the incessant trolling of a woman topper for her choice of dress. We asked our readers to weigh in on the issue. Here's what the deal is all about – in their opinion:

### Maan Na Maan, Misogyny

Sama Zehra

Limelight hit an 18year old when she cleared class 12th boards with flying colours. Many rejoiced but some looked at her accomplishments through a cynical and sexist lens.

The recent events in Kashmir have unmasked the deeply engraved patriarchal values of our society.

Over the years, cishet men have claimed certain positions as their birthright and when these positions are taken by others, the hell loop of criticism starts. The wrath of backlash initiates when men think that their dominance is being challenged, and they are being robbed of their opportunities and privileges.

Two weeks back, one incident shook Kashmiri society. A human-faced barbarian lashed out his anger by throwing acid on the face of a woman, who showed audacity against his filthy demands. Statistically speaking, the cases of acid attacks in Kashmir are on the prowl and are gradually on rise. In the last 8 years, four cases of acid attack were reported whereas numerous have gone unreported. Such instances narrate the story of misogyny in our society. A practice of punishing women for expressing

audacity to disregard male entitlement, by not giving men the required attention; either socially or in private, by refusing to engage with them either sexually or emotionally, or being indifferent to "any" of his demands while bound in wedlock.

Time and again, the Apex court has gone to great lengths for safeguarding the autonomy and liberty of women, however, recent instances highlight some major loopholes and inefficacy in Law. In recent times, with advances in the technological world, the Internet, other than being a legitimate workspace, has become a safe haven for trolls and cyberbullies.

According to a survey conducted by Microsoft, India ranked 3rd out of 25 countries in the list of online bullying cases. The survey also revealed that 90% of such cases go unnoticed and therefore, the matter never reaches the doorstep of the Judiciary.

To strengthen the rights of women, the Supreme Court in "Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan", broadened the definition of "sexual harassment" and defined it as "as any physical touch or conduct, display of pornography, any unpleasant taunt or misbehaviour, or any sexual desire against women, or sexual favour". Considering the broader ratio of the case, the cases of cyberbullying and stalking also come under its ambit. Although certain sections of the IT Act combined with other laws have the teeth to bite such wrongdoers, the laws are

grossly insufficient. Moreover, India lacks a full-fledged Law against cyberbullying.

Whether it is a case of cyberbullying or acid attack, an instance of sexual assault or marital rape, or any other women-related crime, the vicious cycle of sexism lies at the root of it all. Ironically, sexism also encompasses men who reject traditionally established gender roles in favour of taking on what patriarchy labels as women's responsibilities.

Misogyny is a cultural attitude that we unknowingly engage in. We are immersed in this culture, and we internalize the practices and social mores that characterise it, therefore, perpetuating it. Even if we are not

**IGNORING harassment as harmless banter, silencing the victim, instilling male chauvinistic beliefs into boys, and advising women to "compromise", all this colloquial termed behaviour perpetuates the entwined power structures of patriarchy and discrimination**

aware, we still are involved.

Ignoring harassment as harmless banter, silencing the victim, instilling male chauvinistic beliefs into boys, and advising women to "compromise", all this colloquial termed behaviour perpetuates the entwined power structures of patriarchy and discrimination. No matter how many laws are introduced, or how safeguards are provided, the issue will remain where it is, until and unless a change in perspective and mindset is brought.

Undoubtedly, it is not an overnight project, but slowly changes can be introduced. We need to chip away at the infrastructure that categorizes humans as "powerful/ strong" and "powerless/fragile".

The moment to counter this cruel categorisation is now.

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

The author is a student of Law

### Why Should Girls Have All The Flay?

Kabir Writes

If the times were sane, every section of society would have been celebrating the success of J&K's Science topper in 12th class examinations. However, the internet decided to act otherwise. The topper, who appeared for accolades for interviews, was trolled in an unprecedented manner for not observing Hijab/head scarf.

Times are quite strange. Towards South, Hijab is seen as a provocation and students are being coerced into taking it off to access education. Here, in Kashmir, a place where women have outdone themselves and scored brilliantly, they are being trolled for not wearing hijab. In both instances, whether the motive is political or religious, the important aspect of women's agency to exercise their choice is missing.

Many women wear hijab out of their own volition and many do not. If it can't be banned, it can't be imposed either. Our society often jumps at the opportunity to police women and impose all moral codes on them while men are given a free hand to run over the codes of ethics and are also given a leeway as far as religious morality is concerned.

If clothing is a scale to measure the impact of "westernisation" and western morality, why are only women targeted for it? Boys who roam about as Romeos in every street, publicly staring and leering at every passing woman are never talked about. Their wearings, hairstyle, lifestyle, way of talking and behaving is all copied and colonial but no one seems to care to call them out.

One would think that it must be better for those who follow Islamic principles to the tee. However, a much more concerning instance of an anti-hijab sentiment has come to fore and only escalated in Karnataka. While the motivations are grave and no false equivalence can be drawn - there's one common argument that needs to reach one and all. In the case of Karnataka, many "progressive liberals" have either indulged in what-aboutery or rationalised violence against muslim women's agency by calling hijab regressive. Ironically, they argue that the coercion is progressive. This is nothing but just another way women are dictated about their choices and policed around their dress.

Can such voices sit back for sometime and think both Muskaan and Aroosa are educated enough to think for themselves? What is this uncritical urge to

talk over muslim women? Why can we not give them some space to be themselves and not subject them to the gravely unequal social norms set by us? While we are all rallying in unison about the choice of Muskaan in Karnataka, standing up for her right to wear Hijab, we can't keep criminal silence about the virtual lynching of Aroosa in Kashmir.

Women in Kashmir are becoming achievers and the numbers have only increased over the

**OUR SOCIETY often jumps at the opportunity to police women and impose all moral codes on them while men are given a free hand to run over the codes of ethics and are also given a leeway as far as religious morality is concerned**

years. Our society is capable of addressing issues that may make life difficult for women here. If as a community, we are really concerned with the rights of our women, we must allow them space to grow, learn and make their own choices. Additionally, it will do us a lot of good, if we start with addressing the double-standards we have as a society. It makes no sense to have a shirtless guy sporting a spanish fedora demanding women to be the sole representatives of Islam. We need to do better.

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

Kabir is a student and can be reached at @kabir\_writes on Twitter

# 'Islamic History' Through 'Civilizational Perspective'

On Reading Alexander Knysh's *Islam In Historical Perspective* (2017)



DR TAUSEEF AHMAD PARRAY

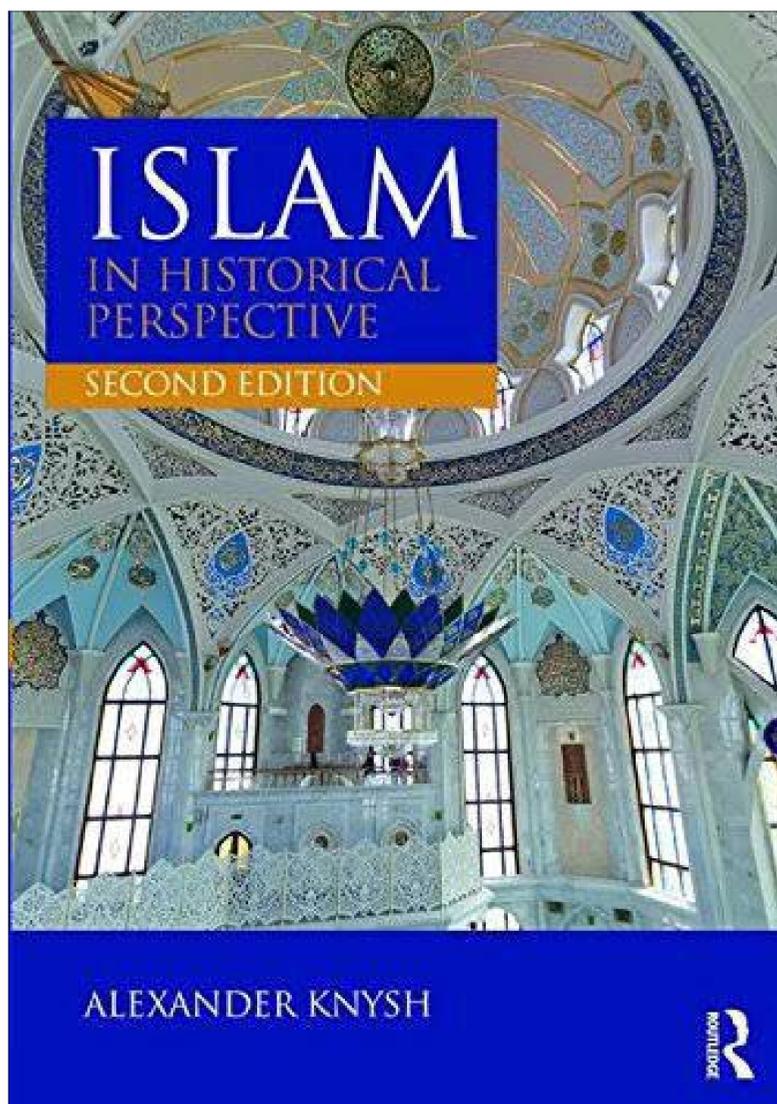
**Title:** Islam in Historical Perspective (2nd Ed.)  
**Author:** Alexander Knysh  
**Publication Details:** New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2017  
**Pages:** 368; **ISBN:** 978019063251; **Paperback**

~ 'Islam in Historical Perspective' is a remarkable reference work for its wide-range of topics and issues, approach and methodology, thematic structure and pedagogical and learning features~

Alexander D. Knysh (b. 1957) is presently Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan (USA) and Academic Director of Islamic Studies project sponsored by the St. Petersburg State University, Russia. His major areas of interest are Islamic mysticism (Sufism), Qur'anic studies, Islamic intellectual history, and modern Islamic/Islamist movements. He has authored and translated a number of books; some of them include: *Ibn Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition* (1999), *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism* (2007), *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (2010), *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (2017), and *Islam in Historical Perspective* (2017). Below is presented a brief assessment of this last mentioned book.

First published in 2011 (by Pearson), the second edition of Knysh's *Islam in Historical Perspective* (published by Routledge in 2017) is a comprehensive volume which "provides the readers with an introduction to Islam, Islamic history and societies with carefully selected historical and scriptural evidence that enables them to form a comprehensive and balanced vision of Islam's rise and evolution across the centuries and up to the present day" (p. i). "Treating Islam as a social and political force", Knysh's book addresses "Muslim devotional practices, artistic creativity and the structures of everyday existence" and is thus "designed to help readers to develop personal empathy for the subject by relating it to their experiences and the burning issues of today" (p. i), and includes pedagogical features like illustrations, study questions, and chapter summaries. That is, Knysh analyses, describes and narrates Islamic history, and its varied aspects, through 'civilizational perspective'.

David Waines (Lancaster University, UK) in his review on its first edition has described it in these words: "inspired by a 'civilizational' perspective", Knysh's book is "chronological and thematic" in structure and covers not only history, from past to present, but thought, culture, art, and modern developments and global challenges as well. On the basis of its broad coverage of topics and issues, thematic arrangement, and other features, Waines has described Knysh's book as "a formidable achievement" (see review of David Waines in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 75, 2, 2012, pp. 382-84). This equally, and more fittingly, applies to



THE MAIN GOAL OF THIS BOOK, AS KNYSH MENTIONS IN the Introduction, is "to show how Islam is being continually reshaped and readjusted to reflect the needs and aspirations of its followers in any given age"

its second edition as well.

Structured chronologically and thematically, the 2nd edition of this book consists of twenty-four (24) chapters (spread over 550 pages). These chapters are preceded by a Preface, Acknowledgements, Note on Transliteration and Dates, and an Introduction and ends with a comprehensive Bibliography and Index. Almost every chapter includes pedagogical features like conclusions, questions to ponder, and summary, and notes, respectively.

In its first eight chapters (chapters 1-8), it discusses the historical development of Islam, from

its formative phase to the end of the Abbasids as well as chapters on the Islamic primary sources, the Qur'an and hadith, under these headings: Arabia: The Cradle of Islam; Muhammad (pbuh) and the Beginnings of Islam; The Rightly Guided Caliphs and the Conquests; The Murder of 'Uthman, the Fitna Wars, and the Rise of the Umayyad Dynasty; The Principal Source of Islam: The Qur'an; The Prophetic Hadith and Sunnah; The Problem of the Just Ruler: The Abbasid Revolution and Beyond.

These are followed by eight (8) chapters (chapters 9-16) on development of Islamic scholar-

ship, different schools of thought, philosophy, and sects, like Schools of Law/ Fiqh, Theological debates and Schools of thought, Twelver Shi'ism (Ithna Ashari) and Zaydism, Ismailis, Sufism, Philosophy versus Theology, and Transmission and Conservation of Knowledge: 'Ulama, Madrasas, and Sufi Lodges. The next three chapters (16-18) focus, respectively, on Basic Beliefs and Practices of Islam—Islamic Life Cycle; Islamic Art and Religious Architecture (Mosques); and Women in Islamic Societies.

It is interesting to note here that Knysh has devoted a full chapter (18th) to the "Women in Islamic Societies" (pp. 323-40). Knysh deliberates on "Women in the Qur'an" (pp. 324-29), "Women in Hadith and Fiqh" (pp. 329-31), and "Theorizing the Muslim Women" (pp. 332-36) and describes it as a "Controversial Topic" (p. 323), and thus needs more attention (than other contemporary issues). Knysh begins this chapter with this statement: "With the possible exception of so-called Islamic terrorism, it is difficult to find a subject that has generated more controversy in the modern Western media and public discourse than the status of women in Islamic societies" (p. 323).

In the last six (6) chapters (19-24), the book focuses on Islam vis-à-vis modern developments. Beginning with Islam and West and ending with global Jihadism, these six chapters cover, respectively, these topics/ issues and themes: Islam and the West; Islam, Modernity and European Colonialism; Renewal and Reform in Islam; Islam as a Political Force and Vehicle of Opposition; Islam Reinterpreted—Major Trends in Islamic Thought Today; and Ideology and Practice of Globalized Jihadism.

The main goal of this book, as Knysh mentions in the Introduction, is "to show how Islam is being continually reshaped and readjusted to reflect the needs and aspirations of its followers in any given age" (p. 4); and in the conclusion of its final chapter, he rewinds and caps it as: "In the introduction to this book, we pointed out that the exact ways in which Islam is understood and practised by its followers are shaped decisively by the sociopolitical and cultural conditions of the societies in which they happen to live. ... If this book has helped the reader to realize the astounding richness of the Islamic tradition and the endless variety of paths it offers to its followers to pursue, then its goal has been achieved" (pp. 492-93).

Knysh's book is indeed broad and rich in coverage of topics and themes, breadth, comprehensiveness, analysis, in utilizing (primary and contemporary) sources, and in present-day pedagogical tools and features. On the basis of its broad content coverage, (employing civilizational) methodological approach, and features, it is not unfair to assert that Knysh's book indeed succeeds in achieving its main goal of showing the reader to "realize the astounding richness of the Islamic tradition and the endless variety of paths it offers to its followers to pursue" (p. 493).

In sum, Knysh's *Islam in Historical Perspective* may be described as a remarkable reference work, not only for its wide-range of topics, themes and issues but also for its approach, methodology, thematic structure, and additional pedagogical and learning features. It is, indeed, a comprehensive introduction to Islam, and is fairly described as 'authoritatively written and astutely arranged' and an 'intellectually stimulating, lucidly written work'.

The author is Assistant Professor, Islamic Studies, at GDC Sogam, Kupwara (J&K). Email: tauseef.parray21@gmail.com

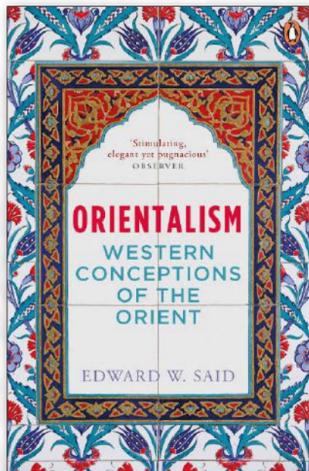
## READ WITH KO

KO Web Desk

One of the most groundbreaking works on understanding the formation of knowledge and its capability of aggression, this work of Palestinian critic Edward Said is an absolute must read.

The book explores how the west created a discourse around the east to frame it in an image completely antithetical to the self-image of the west. "The orient" East is deemed to be barbaric, medieval, subhuman and mostly uncivilised in comparison with "the occident", the West.

It is extremely important for all readers at many levels. A book that will instantly challenge many of your borrowed biases and even views that you did not even know were fed onto you. As readers from South Asia, this book is extremely important to understand the nuances of how knowledge operates, how discourse is built and how power acts in tandem and with the help of these — often in coercive ways.



## All Jokes Aside, Scientists Find Talking Duck

AMSTERDAM: A Dutch scientist has uncovered old recordings of a musk duck mimicking the phrase, "You bloody fool!" - learnt when it was raised by humans in an Australian bird park.

Leiden University scientist Carel Ten Cate said that what was interesting about the vocal expression of the waterfowl, nicknamed "Ripper", was not so much the message, but that he could imitate humans at all.

"It's definitely based on the human voice, even though the pronunciation is a bit odd - which might be the Australian accent, I don't know," said Ten Cate, who published his findings in the Netherlands' *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society biological research journal*.

He said he had at first wondered whether the recordings, made in the 1980s, could be a hoax, but they were made by living ornithologist Peter Fullagar, who co-au-

thored the paper. The recordings had been kept in a sound archive and referenced occasionally until Ten Cate rediscovered them in the course of his research on vocal learning in birds.

Ten Cate said Ripper had a bit more in his repertoire - he could also make a noise like the sound of a door closing and its latch clicking.

Some species of animals, and notably birds such as parrots and songbirds, are capable of mimicking human speech. But the phenomenon is rare - if somewhat more common in animals raised by humans.

"To find a species quite outside these groups...in a duck, that's quite extraordinary. So it's an independent evolutionary occurrence of the ability for vocal learning - that's very special," Ten Cate said.

Reuters

# Ubiquitous And Mysterious, Algorithms Are Ruling Our Lives

Press Trust Of India

Algorithms hugely impact our consumption of news, media and much more but very little is known about how they do it. Automated decision-making systems have crept into every corner of our lives they impact the news we see, the songs we're recommended, the products we buy and the way we travel. At the heart of these systems lie algorithms computerised instruction sets that operate over data to produce controlled outcomes. Algorithms that, until recently, operated with very little scrutiny. When it comes to news, algorithms can determine what content comes top of your search, what advertising is targeted at you, and what is and isn't allowed to exist on a platform through automated moderation. Despite their ubiquity, algorithms can harm. Automated decision-making can discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, class and more. These systems have been exploited by individuals and groups to proliferate misinformation. Many news algorithms operate in closed proprietary systems shrouded in secrecy aptly described as black boxes. To best assess the potential and risks of automated decision-making in news and media, the community would need to access information about how these systems work in practice. That requires transparency. Most of us would have encountered collaborative filtering a prevalent content recommendation algorithm popularised by Netflix. Collaborative filtering makes recommendations by extrapolating from shared qualities between items and/or users, directing audiences with messages like people similar to you enjoyed this film, so you should also enjoy this film. More data improves this prediction accuracy. The volume of user preference data collected by platforms such as Spotify, Facebook, and YouTube is now so vast that serendipity is rendered mostly absent. These platforms instead resemble what marketing researchers Aron Darmody and Detlev Zwick describe as highly personalised worlds that are algorithmically emptied of irrelevant choice. As algorithmically-enabled social media platforms become embedded in our cultural fabric, many users are developing their own beliefs about how algorithms work. Not all are correct. Two commonly encountered beliefs are that our devices are listening to us all the time, and that we collectively exist in filter bubbles. We've all heard stories along the lines of: I was discussing a fairly niche topic with friends and



**The reality is our devices don't need to listen in to our conversations to know how to profile us and target advertising. It's much easier than that: we give away thousands of data points each day by sharing our location, click-throughs, text comments, status updates, and broader web-surfing behaviours.**

shortly afterwards I started receiving targeted advertisements about the topic we were discussing. This idea has been widely debunked the data transfer requirements alone make it implausible but the pervasiveness of this belief speaks to a deeper concern: that algorithms know more about us than we feel they should. The fact that many believe our phones are listening to us is partly psychological, but also a testament to the power of modern algorithmic recommendation systems. The reality is our devices don't need to listen in to our conversations to know how to profile us and target advertising. It's much easier than that: we give away thousands of data

points each day by sharing our location, click-throughs, text comments, status updates, and broader web-surfing behaviours. A lot of this data isn't even captured inside the app we're using web trackers mean our ordinary internet-surfing activity can be made available to big social media platforms. If we appear predictable, it is because our phones and the platforms behind them can figure out an awful lot about us through our everyday activity. Fear around algorithms has led to other exaggerations and moral panics, particularly around so-called filter bubbles and echo chambers. Coined by activist Eli Pariser, the filter bubble hypothesis suggests that as platform algo-

rithms tune towards our specific tastes, those systems would self-reinforce us into bubbles' where we eventually only encounter materials that confirm our pre-existing world views. The bulk of work on this idea has so far failed to produce such evidence. Most evidence suggests we are consuming a wider variety of content in the modern digital news era. While platforms attempt to optimise their algorithms and drive specific user experiences, there are also external actors that attempt to exploit such algorithms for their own gain. For instance, YouTube's search ranking has been gamed by highly active niche entrepreneurs who were able to gain exceptional levels of visibility by posting inflammatory and controver-

sial content. On Twitter, coordinated inauthentic activity has been noted around major elections, the agents behind these campaigns exploiting the networked and algorithmic structure of the popular social media platform, purposely entangling orchestrated action with organic activity to boost platform visibility. The myths and harms of algorithms point to a bigger issue: consumers do not know much about how these systems function. What is being done to address these problems? The algorithmic audit creates artificial user personas that can be made to interact programmatically with various algorithmic systems and track, at scale, whether specific demographic traits lead to specific forms of discrimination. Critical simulation seeks to replicate aspects of algorithms (such as how Instagram uses machine vision to profile images uploaded by users) but in an open way. Doing so exposes the inner workings, subjecting it to scrutiny and experimentation. Citizen science data donation' tools look back at platforms. Unlike the audit, data donations rely on users volunteering their authentic profile information. An Australian study is analysing how Google personalises search results, and another examines how Facebook's algorithmic advertising model works. Those methods seek to bring transparency to otherwise opaque algorithmic processes. But some approaches have been met with resistance. In 2021, researchers at AlgorithmWatch and New York University NYU were threatened with legal action by Facebook over alleged violations of the platform's terms of service for developing plugins that allowed users to anonymously donate advertising-related data. In the case of the NYU project, several researchers had their personal Facebook accounts suspended. A way forward from this impasse is the recently tabled US Platform Transparency and Accountability Act. The Act is yet to pass and only provides coverage within the United States. It proposes that platforms be forced to make certain data available to researchers and provide basic computational tools for supporting transparency research. It suggests appointing the US National Science Foundation to act as the arbiter of these data requests, but it is not clear whether they would support non-US citizens from making data requests. Given the global reach of these platforms the internationalising of any data access model would be highly practical.

## Opera Browser Now Allows Emoji-Only Web Addresses

IAN S

Web browser company Opera has said it will enable emoji-only based web addresses "to bring a new level of creativity to the internet".

The integration is part of a



partnership with Yat, a company that sells URLs with strings of emoji in them, reports The Verge.

"It is been almost 30 years since the world wide web launched to the public, and there has not been much innovation in the weblink space: people still include .com in their URLs," Jorgen Arnesen, executive vice president of mobile at Opera, was quoted as saying in a statement.

Yat pages are unique domains generated when someone purchases a string of emoji (which itself is called a Yat). The owner of a Yat can create an NFT of their emoji string, and the company plans to eventually let users connect their Yats to electronic payments.

According to the company, musicians are among the early adopters of Yats; for instance, singer Kesha's Yat page is the emojis Rainbow Rocket Alien (editor note: Vox's CMS does not allow rendering of emojis), followed by y.at, which redirects to her Kesha's World website.

Yat co-founder Naveen Jain said Yat emoji domains let users personalise their internet identity, potentially giving creators, artists, and others, more visibility online.

The company introduced Yat pages on February 1.

With the Opera integration, users won't have to type in the y.at part of the Yat page web address as they do in other browsers.

## 'Bedtime Media Use Harmful For Sleep'

ANI

A recent research examined how sleep might be impacted by media use—such as watching movies, television, or YouTube videos; browsing the Internet, or listening to music—before bed.

The study was published in the 'Journal of Sleep Research'.

It's not uncommon to hear people rant about becoming insomniac, especially post the COVID-19 pandemic. Even the early birds started staying up late into the night, binge-watching films or web series or scrolling through social media, as there was no other outlet during then. But how much does that impact our bodies?

In the study, 58 adults kept a diary that recorded information related to time spent with media before bed, location of use, and multitasking.

Electroencephalography—tests that detect electrical activity of the brain



using small metal discs attached to the scalp—captured parameters such as bedtime, total sleep time, and sleep quality.

Media use in the hour before sleep was associated with an earlier bedtime. If the before-bed use did not involve multitasking and was conducted in bed, it was also associated with more total sleep time.

A long use of media was

associated with later bedtime and less total sleep time. Sleep quality was unaffected by media use before bed.

"If you are going to use media, like watching TV or listening to music, before bed, keep it a short, focused session and you are unlikely to experience any negative outcomes in your sleep that night," said lead author Morgan Ellithorpe, PhD, of the University of Delaware.

## Noise Launches New Smartwatch In India

IAN S

Domestic tech-life-style brand Noise on Friday launched a new smartwatch 'ColorFit Pulse Grand' with SpO2 monitor, 150 watch faces, IP68 rating and more in the Indian market.

The smartwatch features a 1.69-inch TFT LCD and offers 60 sports modes to delight fitness enthusiasts with various activity alternatives.

The smartwatch is available on Amazon.in and the Noise website (gonoise.com) at an introductory price of Rs 1,999.

"The smartwatch offers a grand experience to relentless fitness enthusiasts. Noise



is the first homegrown brand to lead the smartwatch segment. We intend to reinforce our position in the industry and introduce newer and upgraded products," Amit Khatri, Co-founder at Noise, said in a statement.

It is equipped with Noise Health Suite that offers sig-

nificant features, including heart rate monitor, stress monitor, sleep monitor, blood oxygen monitor, and menstrual cycle tracker.

It is compatible with NoiseFit App, which helps Noisemakers connect with their friends and share their fitness progress.

The smartwatch has a longevity of up to seven days for uninterrupted usage and can be charged to 1,500 minutes in just 15 minutes, the company claims.

IP68 waterproof rating allows users for uncompromising swimming sessions. It also provides more accessibility with quick replies to texts and calls (Android only).



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## Dollar Millionaires In India Rise By 11% In 2021 But Less Happy Than Earlier: Survey

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: Dollar millionaires or those possessing a personal wealth of over Rs 7 crore rose by 11 per cent to 4.58 lakh households in India at the end of the pandemic-hit 2021, as per a survey.

The survey of 350 such dollar millionaires also indicated that the number of those who classify themselves as happy in personal and professional lives slipped to 66 per cent in 2021, down from 72 per cent in the previous year.

The Hurun Report findings on the dollar millionaires come at a time when there is rising concern about the growing inequality in the country with a population of over 130 crore.

A recently released report by non-profit Oxfam pegged the wealth of top 100 richest Indians at USD 775 billion, and added that India accounted for 4.6 crore or half of the overall people on the planet falling into extreme poverty in 2021.

The report estimated the number of Indian dollar millionaires will increase by 30 per cent to touch 6 lakh households by 2026.

Mumbai is home to the largest number of dollar millionaires with 20,300 households in the list, followed by Delhi at 17,400 and Kolkata with 10,500, it said.

At a time when calls for taxing the super-rich are growing -- Oxfam advocated higher taxation to save lives -- less than a third among those surveyed felt paying taxes is a determinant of social responsibility, the report by Hurun said.



Ability, the report by Hurun said.

Similarly, when calls for greater help through philanthropy are growing, only 19 per cent of the millionaires surveyed by Hurun said they believe in giving back to society.

Over two-thirds of those surveyed said they will prefer sending their kids abroad for education, with the US emerging as the favourite destination followed by the UK, New Zealand and Germany.

The survey also focused on consumption, and found that a fourth of those in the list change their cars every three years with the German carmaker Mercedes Benz emerging as the most preferred.

Watch collection is a favourite hobby among the millionaires and nearly two-thirds of those surveyed said they own four time pieces, the survey said, adding that Rolex is the most preferred brand.

Indian Hotels' Taj emerged as the most preferred hospitality brand, while Tanishq, also owned by the Tata Group, emerged as the favourite jewellery retailer.

Louis Vuitton was the most preferred luxury goods brand while Gulfstream was the most preferred private jet brand, the survey said.

## India, UAE Ink Comprehensive Trade Deal To Boost Economic Ties

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: India and the UAE on Friday signed a free trade agreement (FTA) to give a fillip to bilateral trade and economic ties.

The agreement, dubbed as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), was signed and exchanged by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and UAE Minister of Economy Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri.

The trade agreement was signed during a virtual summit held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Briefing media after the signing of the pact, Goyal said this is a comprehensive and balanced trade agreement.

"It opens up huge business opportunities for both sides. The agreement will help in doubling our bilateral trade," Goyal said.

An official release stated that the agreement will provide significant benefits to Indian and UAE businesses, including enhanced market access and reduced tariffs. It is expected that



the CEPA will lead to increase in bilateral trade from the current USD 60 billion to USD 100 billion in the next five years.

In September last year, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) formally launched negotiations for the trade agreement.

The pact covers areas including goods, services, rules of origin, customs procedures, government procurement, intellectual property rights, and e-commerce.

Under such agreements, two trading partners reduce or

eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they also liberalise norms to enhance trade in services and boost investments.

Bilateral trade between India and the UAE stood at USD 43.3 billion in 2020-21. Exports were worth USD 16.7 billion and imports aggregated at USD 26.7 billion in 2020-21. The two-way commerce stood at USD 59.11 billion in 2019-20.

The UAE is a gateway to Africa and other parts of the world.

## J&K Bank Bags Khadi India Award For PMEGP



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: For its distinguished pan-India performance in implementing the Union Government's flagship scheme of Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) for the financial year 2020-21, J&K Bank has bagged 4th Position across the country under Khadi India Award.

On behalf of J&K Bank, Zonal Head Mumbai Rajesh Malla Tikoo received the award during the Banker's Review Meeting for the implementation of PMEGP Scheme organised by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) Mumbai, Union Ministry of MSME (GoI) at Hotel J W Marriot in Juhu Mumbai.

While acknowledging the Government support on the occasion, MD & CEO Baldev Prakash

appreciated the efforts of Bank staff for the achievement. He said, "Being among top 4 banks in the country for the implementation of PMEGP Scheme suitably recognizes Bank's commitment as the premiere financial institution towards realizing the socially-inclusive and financially-growing economy as envisaged by Government through effective execution of flagship economic programs."

"Besides, such a recognition will provide further impetus to the Bank's mission of empowering people financially through all the sponsored schemes devised by the Government for their socio-economic development", MD & CEO added.

Notably, the Bank has sanctioned 12455 PMEGP cases with a sanction limit of Rs 797.37 Cr during the FY 2020-21.

## Govt Releases Buffer Stock Of Onion To States To Check Price Rise

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: To check any sharp jump in retail onion prices, the Centre on Friday said it has started offloading the buffer stock in a calibrated and targeted manner to states where prices are increasing over the previous months.

The buffer stock is being released even in Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon wholesale mandis of onion in Maharashtra to augment the supply in these markets, the Consumer Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

The ministry said the states had been offered onion at Rs 21/kg ex-storage locations. The Mother Dairy's Safal outlets had also been supplied at Rs 26/kg inclusive of transportation cost, it said. "aggressive releases of onion from the buffer contributes to stability in prices," the ministry noted.

As per the ministry's data, retail onion prices are inching up slowly in the last few weeks.

Onion prices were ruling at Rs 37/kg in Delhi and Chennai, while Rs 39/kg in Mumbai and Rs 43/kg in Kolkata on February 18.

The ministry further said that late Kharif (summer) onion arrivals are steady and expected to remain till Rabi (winter) arrival from March, 2022.

As of February 17, the all-India average price of onion was ruling 22.36 per cent lower than the last year, it said.



According to the ministry, onion prices remained substantially stable during 2021-22 due to effective market intervention through the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF).

Similarly, all India average retail price of potato was ruling 6.96 per cent lower at Rs 20.58/kg on February 17 from over the last month.

"Potato sowing has been delayed in the southern part of West Bengal due to cyclone Jawad, however, the State reported that crop area has recovered almost to the level of last year," the ministry said.

The total crop area for 2021-22 is estimated to be comparable with that of last year, it added.

Under the PSF scheme, interest-free advances are provided to states for the creation of State-level Price Stabilisation Fund, on a 50:50 sharing basis (75:25 in case of NE States).

So far six states, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal have drawn the advance and a total of Rs 164.15 crore has been released as Central share.

## Economy Likely To Grow At 5.8% In Q3 Of 2021-22: Report

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The country's gross domestic product (GDP) is likely to grow at 5.8% in the third quarter of fiscal 2022, according to an SBI's research report - Ecowrap.

The country's economy expanded by 8.4% in the second quarter of 2021-22, to cross pre-pandemic levels. However, the GDP growth in July-September period was slower than the 20.1% expansion in the previous quarter.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) will declare the GDP estimates for Q3 FY 2021-22 on February 28.

"As per SBI Nowcasting Model, the forecasted GDP growth for Q3 FY22 would be 5.8%, with a downward bias. The full year (FY22) GDP growth is now revised downwards to 8.8% from our earlier estimate of 9.3%," the report said on Friday.

The Nowcasting Model is based on 41 high frequency indicators associated with industry activity, service activity, and global economy.

The real GDP will be around ₹2.35 lakh crore more / 1.6% higher than the FY20 real GDP of ₹145.69 lakh crore, the report said.

The report said the recovery in domestic economic activity is yet to be broad-based, as private consumption remained below pre-pandemic levels.

The high frequency indicators suggest some weakening of demand in Q3 also continuing to

January 2022, reflecting the drag on contact-intensive services.

Rural demand indicators, say two-wheeler and tractor sales, continued to decline since August 2021.

Amongst the urban demand indicators, consumer durables and passenger vehicle sales contracted in Q3, while domestic air traffic weakened in the wake of Omicron variant spread. Investment activity though, is displaying a traction in pick up, with merchandise exports remaining buoyant, it said.

The report said this slower growth momentum reconfirms recent assertion that incipient growth recovery needs to be supported by accommodative policy longer than anticipated.

"We thus expect liquidity normalization may be delayed. This could have a further softening impact on government securities (G-sec) yields from current 6.7 per cent towards around 6.55% or so," the report said.

The report suggested that the government can offer livelihood loans, say up to ₹50,000 to rural poor.

This loan may be given on the premise that interest-servicing alone will keep the loan standard with subsequent loan renewal linked to successful repayment record, it said.



"If the government were to bear, say, 3% interest subsidy, on a portfolio of ₹50,000 crore, the outlay would be only ₹1,500 crore during 2022-23. And these loans will also act as a big consumption booster at subsistent levels," it said.

The additional advantage of these micro livelihood loans is that they will help the banking system prepare a comprehensive database and credit history of marginal borrowers that can be further leveraged to create new credit-worthy borrowing classes, the report said.

The present overdraft facility for PMJDY accounts in the banking system, in existence for some time can be streamlined and tech enriched with a central nodal agency/bank to monitor and promote the scheme meaningfully, it said.

The report further said that given the significant success of vaccination in the third wave in rural pockets, the livelihood loans can be the silver bullet catapulting the broader economy to unprecedented highs.

## Sarmad Reviews Tourism Scenario With Stakeholders, Officers



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Sarmad Hafeez reviewed the tourism scenario of Kashmir in a joint meeting of tour travel operators and officers of the Department here Friday.

Chairing the meeting, the Tourism Secretary said due to the coordinated efforts of the stakeholders and the Department the last few months witnessed an unexpectedly encouraging tourist footfall. He said the Department's decision to open destinations like Sonamarg and Doodpathri during winters has yielded encouraging results. He exuded optimism that coming months would bring tourists in good number and asked the stakeholders to brace up for that in terms of facilities and logistics.

Sarmad Hafeez said that it is the endeavour of the Government to promote the tourism potential of the UT on a bigger scale in collaboration with the stakeholders. He disclosed that as the Covid situation in the country improves the Department would again undertake promotional activities across various tourism

markets of the country. "We are endeavouring to enhance the experiences of tourists by introducing new and more concepts", he said while referring to floating theatre in Dal and recently launched conducted city tour for tourists by the Department.

The Tourism Secretary sought support and cooperation from the stakeholders in further promoting the 75 offbeat destinations identified by the Department across J&K. He also advised them to come up with attractive and competitive packages so that more and more tourists are persuaded to visit J&K.

The tour travel operators lauded the efforts of the Tourism Department in promoting Jammu & Kashmir at national and international level, which they said, has even won accolades from many quarters in the country. They brought many issues into the notice of the Tourism Secretary and sought their redressal. Earlier, Director, Tourism, Kashmir, Dr. G N Itoo gave a resume of the tourism scenario in Kashmir valley and the efforts being made by the Department to tap the potential and promote it across the country.

### SHORT TAKES

#### LIC Likely To Launch \$8 Billion IPO On March 11: Report

SYDNEY/NEW DELHI: A public offering of shares by India's state-run Life Insurance Corp (LIC), set to be the country's biggest ever at \$8 billion, is expected to open for anchor investors on March 11, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The book will open for bidding by other investors a couple of days later, the sources said.

LIC's initial public offering (IPO) is expected to obtain regulatory approval by the first week of March after which an indicative marketing price band will be set, said the sources, declining to be named as the deal discussions are private.

LIC declined to comment. A finance ministry spokesperson did not immediately respond to a Reuters request seeking comment.

#### Co-Promoter Gangwal Resigns From Indigo Board

NEW DELHI: IndiGo's co-promoter Rakesh Gangwal on Friday resigned from the board of directors of parent company InterGlobe Aviation, stating that he will gradually reduce his equity stake in the airline over the next five years.

Gangwal and his related entities own around 37 per cent stake in this company. Rahul Bhatia and his related entities own around 38 per cent in InterGlobe Aviation.

"I have been a long-term shareholder in the company for more than 15 years and it's only natural to someday think about diversifying one's holdings," Gangwal said in his letter to the board members. "Accordingly, my current intention is to slowly reduce my equity stake in the company over the next five plus years," he added.

An extraordinary general meeting held on December 30, IndiGo shareholders had approved a special resolution to remove a clause from the company's Articles of Association (AoA) which gave its two promoters the power of right of first refusal when one of them wanted to sell his shares. The passage of the special resolution paved the way for resolution of a dispute that has been going on between Gangwal and Bhatia since 2019.

In his letter on Friday, Gangwal said he continues to be a big believer in the long-term prospects of IndiGo and more so now with the industry consolidation underway.

"Under this backdrop and in the long-term, Indian aviation should prosper, as in various other parts of the world," he noted. While new investors should benefit from the potential future growth in the company's share price, a gradual reduction of his stake will also allow him to benefit from some of the upside, he mentioned. (PTI)

#### Gold Climbs Rs 77; Silver Jumps Rs 379

NEW DELHI: Gold prices rose by Rs 77 to Rs 50,037 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal settled at Rs 49,960 per 10 grams. Silver zoomed by Rs 379 to Rs 63,869 per kg, from Rs 63,490 per kg in the previous trade.

"Spot gold prices for 24 carat gold at Delhi were up by Rs 77, reflecting overnight gains in COMEX gold prices," Tapan Patel, senior analyst (commodities) at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international market, gold was trading 0.1 per cent lower at USD 1,896 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 23.94 per ounce. (PTI)

#### CBI Questions Former NSE CEO Chitra Ramkrishna

NEW DELHI: The CBI on Friday questioned former CEO of National Stock Exchange Chitra Ramkrishna in the view of fresh facts emerging in connection with its ongoing probe into alleged abuse of co-location facility in the NSE, officials said.

The CBI has also issued look out circulars against Ramkrishna, another former CEO Ravi Narain and former Group Operating Officer Anand Subramanian to prevent them from leaving the country.

The central probe agency had booked owner and promoter of Delhi-based OPG Securities Pvt. Ltd. Sanjay Gupta and others in connection with alleged abuse of NSE co-location facility to make gains by getting early access to the stock market, they said.

The agency was also probing unidentified officials of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and National Stock Exchange (NSE), Mumbai and other unidentified persons.

"It was alleged that the owner and promoter of said private company abused the server architecture of NSE in conspiracy with unknown officials of NSE. It was also alleged that unknown officials of NSE, Mumbai had provided unfair access to the said company using the co-location facility during the period 2010-2012 that enabled it to login first to the exchange server of Stock Exchange that helped to get the data before any other broker in the market," the CBI has alleged in the FIR. (PTI)

#### Sensex, Nifty Extend Losses To 3rd Day As Global Cues Weigh

MUMBAI: Equity indices surrendered mid-session gains to close lower for the third day in a row on Friday as participants remained cautious amid geopolitical uncertainties in eastern Europe.

Persistent selling by foreign investors and expectations of policy tightening by global central banks kept sentiment muted, traders said. After swinging about 700 points between gains and losses, the BSE Sensex finally closed 59.04 points or 0.10 per cent lower at 57,832.97.

On similar lines, the NSE Nifty edged lower by 28.30 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 17,276.30.

The Sensex was dragged lower by mainly Ultratech Cement, M&M, Infosys, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finance and Nestle -- dropping as much as 1.88 per cent. In contrast, HDFC topped the gainers' chart with a jump of 1.25 per cent, followed by L&T, Axis Bank, SBI, Dr Reddy's, Kotak Bank and HDFC Bank. On the index, 17 shares closed in the negative zone.

"...market opened low taking cues from yesterday's sell-off in Wall Street following the release of FOMC meeting minutes. Reports that the US Secretary of State agreed to meet the Russian foreign minister in order to ease tension helped the domestic market to wipe-off early losses though sell-off was seen in late hours. (PTI)

## CBI Arrests AAP Municipal Councillor In Delhi On Graft Charges



Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** The CBI has arrested an AAP municipal councillor in Delhi for allegedly accepting bribe for permitting laying of a building roof unhindered, officials said on Friday.

Reacting to the arrest of Geeta Rawat, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said "strictest action" should be taken against her if she has done "anything wrong", and hoped that the CBI will investigate the case in an impartial manner.

The central probe agency booked Rawat, municipal councillor, Ward 10-E, East Delhi Municipal Council (EDMC), and an unidentified person on the allegations of demanding bribe of Rs 20,000 from the complainant for extending him a favour to lay the roof of his building in an unhindered manner, officials said.

After getting the complaint, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) laid a trap and arrested a vendor operating near Rawat's office who

was allegedly acting at her behest, they said.

"The complainant on the specific directions of the accused handed over the bribe amount of Rs 20,000 to a vendor and the same was recovered from him. Both the accused were caught. Searches are being conducted at the premises of the accused.

"Both the arrested accused will be produced before a competent court in Delhi," CBI spokesperson R C Joshi said.

The AAP quickly responded to the arrest of its councillor, which came just days before the February 20 assembly elections in Punjab where the party is making all-out efforts to win a majority.

"Whether it is a councillor or an MLA or an MP, strictest punishment should be given to anyone committing corruption in public office. Such an example should be set that one would think a hundred times before indulging in corruption," the party said in a statement and asserted that it has always been against corruption.

## Guest Lecturer In K'taka Resigns Over Alleged Denial To Wear Hijab

Agenceis

**Tumakuru:** A guest lecturer in a private pre-university college here has resigned after she was allegedly asked not to wear Hijab or display any religious symbol.

Chandini, who has been working as a guest lecturer in a private college, teaching English for the past three years told reporters she was hurt after being instructed to hold classes without Hijab or displaying any religious identity.

The college management has refuted the charge saying there was no such issue.

The woman said the principal of the college summoned her and told her they have received orders that no one should take class wearing Hijab or displaying any religious identity.

"For the past three years, I had been holding classes wearing Hijab but this instruction has



hurt my self-respect. So I have resigned on my own because I am not okay working without Hijab in that college," she said.

In her resignation letter, she wrote, "resigning from my position of lecturer of English subject, as you demanded me to remove my Hijab, which I have been carrying from 3 years in your college. Right to religion is constitutional right, which nobody could deny. I condemn you undemocratic act."

Educational institutions in Karnataka, especially schools and colleges are witnessing tense moments over Hijab, which started from Udupi in the December end with some girls insisting that they should be allowed to wear the headscarf as it was their religious right.

In reaction, some Hindu students started coming to college wearing saffron scarves.

The Karnataka government subsequently banned any cloth that could disturb peace, harmony and, public order.

## Constitutional Courts Can't Assume Role Of Appellate Authority In Cases Of Disciplinary Inquiries: SC

Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** Constitutional courts cannot assume the role of an appellate authority in exercising judicial review powers in matters related to disciplinary inquiry and have to see that legal or procedural errors do not lead to manifest injustice, the Supreme Court said on Friday.

The apex court made this

judicial observation in a verdict by which it quashed the 2021 judgment of the Allahabad High Court setting aside the disciplinary proceedings and consequential punishment inflicted upon an employee of the UCO Bank.

So far as the scope of judicial review in the matters of disciplinary inquiry is concerned... the Constitutional courts while exercising their power of

judicial review under Articles 226 or 227 of the Constitution would not assume the role of the appellate authority where jurisdiction is circumscribed by limits of correcting errors of law or procedural errors leading to manifest injustice or violation of principles of natural justice.

At the same time, the power of judicial review is not analogous to adjudication of the case

## VVIP Chopper Case: HC Reserves Order On Bail Plea Of Christian Michel James

Agenceis

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court on Friday reserved its order on the bail applications by Christian Michel James, the alleged middleman in the AgustaWestland scam being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement Directorate.

The verdict was reserved by Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri after hearing the counsel appearing for James and the two investigating agencies who have opposed granting bail to him.

The Rs 3,600-crore alleged scam relates to the purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters from AgustaWestland.

In his bail applications in both the CBI and ED cases, James has said he is not required for investigation and expressed willingness to cooperate with the probe.

The applications have also said that the accused never sought to evade the process of law and that no purpose will be served by keeping him in further custody.

The trial court, while dismissing the bail pleas in both the CBI and ED cases last year, had said that considering the overall facts and circumstances, the gravity of the offence, the nature of the offence, and the conduct of the accused, it did not consider it to be a fit case for grant of bail.

James was extradited from Dubai in December 2018 and was subsequently arrested by CBI And ED.

The CBI, in its charge sheet, has alleged an estimated loss of 398.21 million euros (about Rs 2,666 crore) to the exchequer due to the deal that was signed on February 8, 2010, for the supply of VVIP choppers worth 556.262 million euros.

The ED, in its charge sheet filed against James in June 2016, had alleged that he had received 30 million euros (about Rs 225 crore) from AgustaWestland. James is among the three alleged middlemen being probed in the case and the other two are Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

#### HM Shah Discusses

which has not been held for the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sinha said a decision in this regard will be taken soon.

"Due to Covid, the Yatra (pilgrimage) could not be held (for last two years). We will review the situation and take a call," he said.

Jammu and Kashmir is currently under central rule. The erstwhile state was bifurcated into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh - after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019.

#### Grenade Attack

soon after the first aid. He said that the entire area was immediately cordoned off to nab the attackers.

However when this report was filed no arrest had been made.

According to reports, the grenade blast triggered panic in the busy marketplace and prompted most of the traders to down their shutters.

#### Covid-19 Cases

Baramulla 20, Budgam 12, Bandipora 6, Kupwara 5, Kulgam 3, Anantnag 2 and Ganderbal 1. The twin districts of Shopian and Pulwama reported no new cases of Covid-19.

In the winter capital, officials said, Doda detected a maximum of 42 fresh cases of Coronavirus, Jammu 41, Ramban 12, Kathua 10, Reasi 5, Poonch 4 and one case each in Udhampur, Rajouri, Samba and Kishtwar.

"Moreover, 577 more COVID-19 patients have recovered and been discharged from various hospitals including 269 from Jammu Division and 308 from Kashmir Division," they said.

Also, the officials said that one more

person died of Covid-19 related complications in Jammu division on Friday, raising the death toll due to the pandemic to 4,746 in J&K-2324 in Jammu and 2422 in Kashmir.

The officials also said that no new cases of Mucormycosis were reported today, thus the total number of confirmed cases remains 51 across J&K.

#### PM Modi Praises

on such an important agreement in less than three months though it takes years for this type of pact to conclude.

The government said the agreement will provide significant benefits to businesses from both sides including enhanced market access and reduced tariffs and the pact is expected to increase bilateral trade from the current USD 60 billion to USD 100 billion in the next five years.

The trade pact was signed by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and the UAE's Economy Minister Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri.

Another highlight of the virtual summit was the unveiling of a joint vision statement titled "Advancing India and UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: New Frontiers, New Milestone" that seeks to significantly enhance overall cooperation.

"The statement establishes a roadmap for a future-oriented partnership between India and the UAE and identifies focus areas and outcomes," the statement said.

"The shared objective is to promote new trade, investment and innovation dynamics in diverse sectors, including economy, energy, climate action, emerging technologies, skills and education, food security, healthcare and defence and security," it said.

Asserting that the trade pact reflects the deep friendship, shared vision and trust between the two countries, Modi said, "I am sure this will usher in a new era in our economic relations. And our business will grow from USD 60 billion to USD 100 billion in the next five years."

Modi also said that both countries can encourage start-ups through joint-incubation and joint-financing, adding there was scope for cooperation in the skill development of people as well.

"We strongly condemn the recent terrorist attacks in the UAE, India and UAE will stand shoulder to shoulder against terrorism," he said.

Both leaders also expressed deep satisfaction at the continuous growth in bilateral relations in all sectors, the statement said.

"Two MoUs signed between Indian and the UAE entities were also announced during the summit. These are, MoU between APEDA and DP World and Al Dahra on Food Security Corridor Initiative and MoU between India's Gift City and Abu Dhabi Global Market on cooperation in financial projects and services," it said.

"Two other MoUs -- one on cooperation in climate action and the other on education have also been agreed between the two sides," it added.

The two leaders also released a joint commemorative stamp on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of India's independence and the 50th year of the UAE's foundation.

#### Govt To Issue

under good governance initiative of the Government, the spokesperson said that the department in tune with the statute laid has also framed the

Jammu and Kashmir Land Passbook Rules-2022 for online issuance of Land Passbook.

"The Land Passbook is progressive in the sense that it is in tune with e-governance, and for the convenience of citizens issued in trilingual form which will make these as an easy and simple document for reference and record," he said.

He maintained that Land Passbook is an evidently valid entity carrying same evidentiary value as if being certified copies of Record-of-Rights for all intents and purposes before courts and financial institutions.

"It is an authoritative document for grant of financial assistance by a financial institution," he said.

The spokesperson said that each Land Passbook has a unique ID and QR code as an additional security feature. He said that with the help of QR code any institution, individual or an agency can verify the credentials and authenticity of the Land Pass Book.

"It is going to be a tool for redressal of various grievances, litigations, disputes at various forums and for reference," the spokesperson added.

#### NIA Arrests IPS

his stint at NIA.

Negi, who was promoted to the IPS in 2016, was also awarded the Police Medal for meritorious service after investigating the Hurriyat militant funding case. (With inputs from PTI)

#### J&K Govt Finalizes

more child welfare committees in each district of J&K. "There shall be one or more committees in each district to be constituted by the government of Jammu and Kashmir through a notification in the

official gazette," the Rules state.

The chairperson and members of these committee shall be appointed by the government of Jammu and Kashmir on the recommendation of the selection committee to be constituted under these rules.

According to the Rules, no First Information Report (FIR) shall be registered except where a heinous offence is alleged to have been committed by the child, or when such offence is alleged to have been committed jointly with adults.

According to the Rules, when the child alleged to be in conflict with law is apprehended, he shall be produced before the Board within twenty-four hours of his being apprehended, along with a report explaining the reasons for the child being apprehended by the police-(KNO)

#### Why're Flames Erupting

Sanat Nagar and Chanapora were calling us to enquire about the fire. This choking situation needs to be checked and curbed as soon as possible."

#### Burglary Attempt

on reaching the branch for daily duties spotted that the rear wall of the building had been broken.

Meanwhile police officials on reaching the spot have started the investigation into the matter.

"It was an attempt to loot the branch, but burglaries have failed in their attempt, a case has been registered and investigations are underway," police official added.(GNS)

#### Wildlife Dept Guard

complaint alleging therein that a Guard in Wildlife Department namely

Tariq Ahmad Sofi posted at Washkura, District Ganderbal was demanding Rupees 5000/- as bribe for releasing the belongings of the complainant seized by the Wildlife Department," reads a statement issued here.

"Upon receiving the instant complaint prima facie offence U/S 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 was found made out. Consequently, case FIR No. 06/2022 was registered at P/S ACB Srinagar," the statement reads.

During the course of investigation, as per the statement, a trap team was constituted. The trap team laid a successful trap and caught Tariq Ahmad Sofi R/o Zanakote Srinagar, a Guard in Wildlife Department while demanding and accepting bribe of Rupees 5000/- through a broker namely Mohammad Yaseen Bhat from the complainant. Both of them were arrested and taken into custody by ACB Team. The bribe money was also recovered from their possession in presence of independent witnesses.

"Further investigations of the case is going on", the statement said.

#### Minor Girl Drowns

spread, the villagers rushed to the site and retrieved the girl in unconscious condition. The locals took the minor girl to Sub-district hospital (SDH) Sogam, where doctors declared her dead, reports added.

#### Shopian Labourer

the slope of a hillock while doing the job" they said adding that Khan suffered serious injuries and was declared dead by doctors on arrival in a local hospital in Himachal Pradesh. Police have registered a case in this regard. (KDC)



25<sup>th</sup> year OF PUBLICATION

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OR SCAN



## YS&S Pulwama Organises Interblock, District Level Kho Kho Contests

Observer News Service

**PULWAMA:** In the ongoing Youth Services and Sports (YS&S) tournament, Kho-Kho contests were played at multiple venues of the district Pulwama.

During the tournament hundreds of boys and girls participated in the 2nd level of YS&S Cup.

Besides, various sports teams from different panchayats of

the district are taking part in the Inter-Panchayat Block Level competitions.

YS&S Cup is aimed to tap sports talent in young boys and girls at panchayat level with a special focus on youth by providing them the best possible opportunities.

The first phase of level 2 of YS&S cup was held at Sports Stadium, Pulwama.

## DYS&S Shopian Organises Kabaddi Tournament



Observer News Service

**SHOPIAN:** The District Youth Services and Sports Department, Shopian Organised Inter-Block District Level Kabaddi Tournament under the banner of Youth Services and Sports Cup 2021 today at Sports Stadium Batapora Shopian.

The DYSSO, Gurmukh Singh Dutta was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

The final match was played between Panchayat Mashwara and Panchayat Sindoo Shirmal and won by Panchayat Mashwara.

Speaking on the occasion, District Youth Services and Sports Officer, Shopian, Gurmukh Singh Dutta said that it is an effort to promote the game in the district.

He added that Kabaddi was not so popular in Kashmir valley but the Kabaddi pro attracted youths towards this game and teams from all over the region took part in the tournament.

Dutta said that the winning team will get a chance to participate in nationals.

Kabaddi serves as a platform for youth. The players also get good exposure to meet other teams and share their experiences with them and get some tips from the other players that help them to give the best performance in this game, Dutta, added.

Later, medals and trophies were distributed among the players.

Officers and officials of DYSSO and other officers were present.

## Hockey J&K To Hold State Championship



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Hockey J&K President Mr. Rajeev Sharma convened a meeting of Hockey clubs of Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur, Rajouri districts at KK Hakku stadium Jammu. The meeting was attended by the office bearers of the clubs.

Mr. Sharma assured the clubs all possible help to them to promote the activities of Hockey. He urged the clubs to start activities on war mode because already big loss is done due to different reasons since 2019 and due to Covid-19 pandemic. He asked the member clubs to gear up and start registering players and officials on MU Portal of Hockey India because no unregistered player can participate in any championship organized by Hockey India. He further said that he will provide the assistant of expert for uploading the forms on MU Portal.

Earlier Dr. Taran Singh Secretary general of Hockey J&K informed the clubs that next few months will be the most busy period as Hockey J&K will organize state championships of different age groups. The District championships are already in progress. He stressed upon the club to step up practice to improve the performance at National level. He thanked Secretary J&K sports Council Ms. Nuzhat Gul for her whole hearted support to hockey in J&K.

## Bhaderwah: 3-Day Snow Skiing Festival Held First Time In 10 Years

Chairman DDC, DC inaugurate mega event



Observer News Service

**DODA:** A 3-day Snow Skiing festival took off at picturesque Jai Valley for the first time in 10 years, here on Friday amid strict adherence to Covid protocol.

The event, organised by District Administration Doda in coordination with BDA, Indian army and Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering, forms part of measures being taken by the stakeholders to tap huge tourism potential and attract major tourists football to the district.

The festival was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Chairman District Development Council Doda, Dhananther Singh Kotwal in presence of Guest of honour

Deputy Commissioner Vikas Sharma and SSP Doda Abdul Qayoom.

Speaking on the occasion, the DDC Chairman said that the Snow Skiing event has been hosted at such a grand scale for the first time after a decade to boost the tourism potential of the district, especially in the Bhaderwah area. He expressed his gratitude to the district administration, BDA and Indian army for their efforts.

He also said that such events will not only amuse the locals and tourists who come from all over the district, but will also provide employment opportunities to the unemployed youth of the area in the coming days.



BEGINNER'S PRACTICE SKIING in Gulmarg on Friday.

Pic: Abid Bhat/KO

## Beijing Olympics Get Political With Taiwan, Uyghur Questions

Agencies

**BEIJING:** For two weeks and more, China's stance on questions about its politics and policies has been straightforward: It's the Olympics, and we're not talking about these things.

That changed Thursday at the Beijing organizing committee's last regularly scheduled daily news conference, three days before the end of the Games. The persistent and polite refusal to answer such questions gave way to the usual state of affairs at news conferences with Chinese officials — emphatic, calibrated answers about the country's most sensitive situations.

Taiwan? An indivisible part of China. The Uyghur population of the Xinjiang region? Not being pushed into forced labor. China's sovereignty? Completely unassailable under international norms.

"What I want to say is that there is only one China in the world," organizing committee spokeswoman Yan Jiarong said, calling it "a solemn position" for China. She referred to other assertions about China's treatment of Uyghurs and living conditions in the northwestern region of Xinjiang as "based on lies."

President Thomas Bach said IOC officials had talked with the Chinese about the statement, but he used measured words to explain it.

"This problem we did not ignore," Bach said Friday at a news conference. "Both organizations — BOCOG (Beijing organizers) and the IOC — have restated their unequivocal commitment to remain politically neutral as is it is required by the Olympic charter."

It was only a matter of time before these topics burst at the seams. The run-up to the Games was overshadowed by a diplomatic boycott led by the United States, which centered on China's human rights record; China was determined to keep the focus only on sports but is also very committed to vigorously defending its stances publicly.

In the final regularly scheduled briefing before the Games close on Sunday, Yan and IOC spokesman Mark Adams were peppered with questions about Taiwan,



Xinjiang, and the safety of Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai.

Following up on a question about Taiwan's reported attempt to skip the opening ceremony, Yan asked for extra time to address the status of the self-governing island, which China views as its sovereign territory.

She often opened in English but switched to Chinese to make key points, rendered in English by an interpreter.

"Mark, could I just make some supplementary remarks?" Yan said in English. Then, shifting to Chinese: "Taiwan is an indivisible part of China and this is a well recognized international principle and well recognized in the international community. We are always against the idea of politicizing the Olympic Games."

Adams was immediately questioned by a non-Chinese reporter who suggested that Yan, herself, had "politicized" the Games by raising China's stance on Taiwan. Adams dodged the question.

"There are views on all sorts of things around the world, but our job is to make sure that the Games take place," Adams said.

A Games volunteer, a young Chinese graduate student, got a question she did not expect when a reporter asked if she knew who Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai was and, further, did she believe Peng was safe.

Peng, once the world's top-ranked doubles player, three months ago accused a former high-ranking politician of sexual assault. Peng's comments were immediately scrubbed from China's censored internet.

"Well, I am sorry," the young woman replied. "I don't really know that."

One reporter asked Adams di-

rectly about the IOC's position on the reported existence of "concentration camps" in Xinjiang, and whether China was using forced labor there. Adams suggested the question was not "particularly relevant" to the briefing, and then went on to praise the power of the Olympics to unite people.

Yan again made sure China's view was heard.

"I think these questions are very much based on lies," she said. "Some authorities have already disputed this false information. There is a lot of solid evidence. You are very welcome to refer to all that evidence and the facts."

Yan had a similar response when a reporter asked Adams if IOC uniforms and other IOC garments were produced by Uyghur labor — or from Xinjiang cotton.

"None of the production took place in Xinjiang, nor any of the input of raw materials comes from that region," Adams said.

Yan added: "I think the so-called forced labor in Xinjiang are lies made up by deliberate groups. And the relevant organizations have provided a large amount of facts to dispute that. And we are against the politicization of sports."

For the second straight day, details were also sought and not given about a Japanese reporter's assertion that she was prevented by an organizing committee staffer from asking questions to an Alpine skier from Hong Kong. China is actively suppressing pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong.

The Olympic Charter ensures athletes' right to express opinions in venue interview areas. Yan maintained that Beijing organizers would "protect the freedom of speech of all participants." (AP)

## Indian Football Team Looks To Seal Asian Cup Berth During June Qualifiers In Kolkata

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Indian football team head coach Igor Stimac and the players are excited about playing their third round qualifiers matches of the 2023 Asian Cup at home in June this year, saying they will aim to seal a berth in the main tournament.

The third round qualifiers of the 2023 Asian Cup will be played in six centralised venues and the group matches involving India will be held at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata across three match days on June 8, 11 and 14 this year.

The other five group matches will be held in Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia and Uzbekistan. The six group winners and the best five second-placed teams earn a ticket to the Asian Cup, which is slated to kick-off next year on June 16 in China.

Stimac is hoping that spectators will be allowed to watch

the matches by that time.

"We are very happy ... we need to prepare in the best possible fashion, and pray that the fans get an opportunity to be with us at the stadium, and cheer us to victory," Stimac said in a release from the All India Football Federation.

AIFF Player of the Year and central defender Sandesh Jhingan said it was a "huge bonus" for the team to get to host the final round of the qualifiers in India.

"Playing such important games in your own backyard is always an added advantage, and that makes me happy. I hope the fans get to through the stadium, and root for us."

"It will be an extra motivation for the players. We will do everything possible in our might to get the job done to provide happiness and pride to the fans. We are looking forward to it, Jhingan said.

In preparation for the quali-

fiers in June, the Blue Tigers are playing two international friendlies against Bahrain and Belarus on March 23 and 26, respectively.

Goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu echoed the same feelings, saying it's an advantage to play at home.

I am extremely happy that we are to play the qualifiers in Kolkata. It will give us immense inspiration playing on our home soil. I just can't wait to get with the team, and start preparing. I pray that everyone stays free of injuries."

Gurpreet's goalkeeper colleague Amrinder Singh said, "It will be quite an achievement for India to qualify for Asian Cup in consecutive editions as it hasn't ever happened before."

"In that sense, winning the bid, and organising it in Kolkata is so encouraging. Playing at home is always an added advantage. We need to make the most of it, he added.

## Unhappy Katich Resigns From SRH Assistant Coach's Post Over Baffling Auction Big Buys



Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Premier League franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad is once again in news for all the wrong reasons after former Australian batter Simon Katich resigned from the post of assistant coach after reportedly being unhappy with some of the side's hefty auction buys.

Katich, who along with West Indies legend Brian Lara and former India batter Hemang Badani, were added to the SRH coaching group headed by Tom Moody and Muttiah Muralitharan, resigned immediately after the auction.

The SRH management, headed by Kavya Maran, hasn't yet issued any public statement whether Katich's resignation has been accepted or if he will be requested to reconsider his decision.

The Australian reported that Katich's resignation was primarily due to the fact that the pre-auction strategy discussed wasn't followed at the two-day auction where SRH had some whopping big buys like Nicholas Pooran (Rs 10.75 crore), Washington Sundar (8.75 crore) and Rahul Tripathi (8.50 crore).

Some of the SRH big buys have been baffling although it's not always a player's quality but the auction dynamics that determines the final price of a player.

Left-handed spin bowling all-rounder Abhishek Sharma's Rs 6.75 crore deal also grabbed eye balls.

Abhishek is being looked as a po-

tential opener for this edition of IPL.

The 21-year-old hasn't done anything in his four seasons in the league which would warrant such a steep price and many were shocked at Pooran's bid after he had endured one of the worst IPL seasons in the UAE last time round.

SRH's three retentions have also come under scanner as they couldn't convince their best performer spinner Rashid Khan to stay back while keeping New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, who has a recurrent elbow condition.

Add to that, they kept two Kashmiri youngsters, pacer Urman Malik, more for his raw pace and Abdul Samad for his big hitting prowess for Rs 4 crore each.

Even Romario Shepherd, who might not get a start, was bought for over a million dollars (Rs 7.75 crore), based on his CPL exploits.

The SRH management was embroiled in the controversy last year when they stripped David Warner from captaincy and then unceremoniously dumped him from the playing eleven during the second phase in the UAE.

The Australian, who led SRH to its only IPL title in 2016, was also not allowed to sit in the dug-out.

Coach Trevor Bayliss and assistant coach Brad Haddin were not retained after the season but Moody, who was the 'Director of Cricket' back then is now head coach and Muralitharan stayed back as the premier brains in the team management.

## Multan Sultans Record Biggest Win In PSL History



Press Trust of India

**LAHORE:** Defending champion Multan Sultans recorded the second-highest total in the history of Pakistan Super League to set up a record-breaking 117-run win over Quetta Gladiators on Friday.

Led by captain Mohammad Rizwan's (83 not out) fifth half-century this season and a whopping 71 off just 26 balls from Rilee Rossouw, Multan racked up 245-3 after Rizwan had won the toss and opted to bat first.

The total fell just short of Islamabad United's PSL record total of 247-2 against Peshawar Zalmi at Abu Dhabi last year.

Quetta folded meekly for 128 in 15.5 overs against the pace and spin of Multan with Umar Akmal scoring a rapid 23-ball 50 while Jason Roy (38) and captain Sarfaraz Ahmed (17 not out) were the only other batters to reach double figures.

Fast bowlers Shahnawaz Dhanani and David Willey finished with identical figures of 2-22 while left-arm spinners Khushdil Shah and Asif Afridi also picked up two wickets apiece.

Ruthless Multan held the previous record of largest victory in the PSL when they beat Quetta

by 110 at Abu Dhabi last year.

Multan's impressive run in the tournament continued as they've lost only one game out of nine and have 16 points. Quetta are in the bottom half of the table with six points from nine games with just one game remaining against last-place Karachi Kings on Sunday.

The in-form opening pair of Rizwan and Shan Masood, who made 57, laid the foundation of a big total with a century-stand in the first 10 overs.

South Africa's left-hander Rossouw then hit boundaries at will after Masood was trapped leg before wicket in the 12th over by tall Pakistan international fast bowler Mohammad Irfan in his first PSL game this season.

Rossouw smashed nine fours and four sixes and Multan blasted 81 runs off the last five overs against expensive fast bowlers Sohail Tanvir (0-52) and Ghulam Mudassar (1-56). Spinner Noor Ahmed was also not spared, finishing with 0-52.

In the later game, Lahore Qalandars face a Karachi Kings team led by Pakistan skipper Babar Azam but who are still searching for their first win after losing eight consecutive games.

## 4th T20I: Australia's 4th Consecutive Win Over Sri Lanka

Press Trust of India

**CANBERRA:** Player of the match Glenn Maxwell scored 48 runs from 39 balls to pace Australia to a six-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Friday at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the home team's fourth consecutive win in the five-match Twenty20 series.

Maxwell brought up the winning runs with a powerful pull shot that raced to the long MCG square boundary to seal the victory with 11 balls remaining.

Josh Inglis chipped in with 40 runs from 20 balls to help Australia reach 143 for four in reply to Sri Lanka's 139 for eight. Inglis and Maxwell put on a match-winning 71-run stand for the fourth wicket.

## Schools Can Collect Normal Fees From Feb 16 As Physical Classes Resume: Calcutta HC

### Agenceis

**KOLKATA:** The Calcutta High Court on Friday ordered that schools and other educational institutions will be permitted to charge fees according to their policy and arrangement with the students owing to remission of the Covid-19 pandemic and substantial normalisation of life.

The court directed that with prospective effect from February 16, its earlier order permitting deduction of 20 per cent of school fees will stand vacated.

It also noted that the West Bengal government has allowed physical classes even in primary and upper primary schools with effect from Wednesday.

"The schools and other educational institutions shall be permitted to charge fees according to their policy and arrangement with the students," a division bench comprising justices I P Mukerji and Moushumi Bhat-tacharya ordered.

Acting on a PIL and several other related petitions in which parents of students and around 145 schools were involved, the high court had on October 13,

2020, directed that the institutes could only charge fees for essential services rendered online, with a 20 per cent deduction.

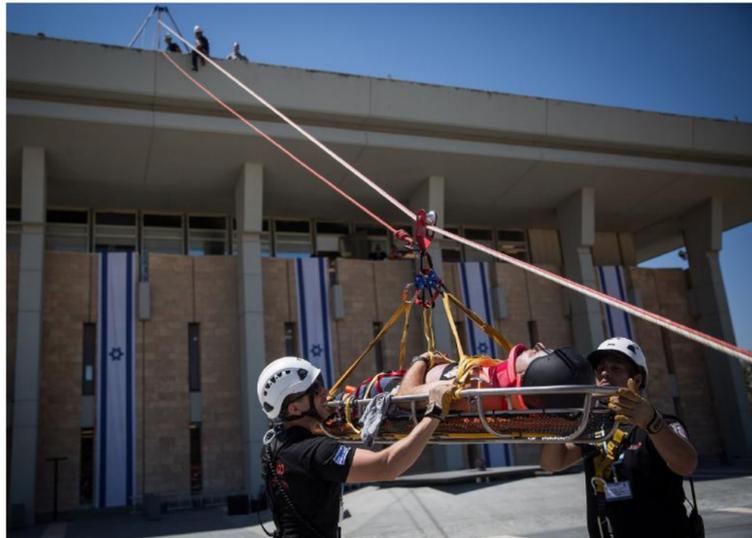
Noting that there is substantial remission of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the division bench observed that life in all spheres has become substantially normal.

"Therefore, from now, education in all the schools and other educational institutions covered by this public interest litigation would be physical," the bench said.

The court ordered that in case of any dispute between the school fees claimed and that payable according to a student for the period up to Friday, 50 per cent of the demand by the school or the admitted amount by the student, whichever is higher, has to be paid by March 15.

The bench further directed that no coercive action like expulsion of any student from the school, withholding of admit card to board or school examination, holding back mark-sheets or certificates on the ground of default in payment of school fees, will be taken by the institutions covered by the litigation against any student till March 31 or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

## A Major Earthquake May Devastate Israel, Warns Military



### Agenceis

**NEW DELHI:** A massive earthquake killing thousands of civilians is expected to hit Israel at some point in the future, the Jewish states military command has warned. "A strong earthquake is expected to occur in the State of Israel, which will cause a mass disaster accompanied by thousands of dead and injured and extensive destruction of buildings and infrastructure," the civil defense agency said, according to Haaretz newspaper.

"The fact that there has not been a strong earthquake in a long time increases the chance that a strong earthquake will occur in Israel soon," agency was quoted as saying. However it cautioned that while experts believe that "a strong earthquake will occur in Israel, but it cannot be predicted" with any certainty.

The Facebook post came in re-

**THE FACT THAT THERE HAS NOT BEEN A strong earthquake in a long time increases the chance that a strong earthquake will occur in Israel soon."**

sponse to concerned comments following a series of minor earthquakes felt in northern Israel over the past months.

On Wednesday morning, less than a day after the army's on-line statement, another small earthquake with a magnitude of 3.1 struck in northern Israel, 14 kilometers northeast of Beit She'an. The quakes on Tuesday and Wednesday were the fourth and fifth to strike Israel since October.

Last month, Israel was struck by two earthquakes within 12 hours. The first measured a 3.7 on the Richter scale and was felt throughout the north of the country. Israel's Geological Survey said that the epicenter of the quake was 16 kilometers (about 10 miles), northeast of Beit She'an. Later that day, an additional earthquake, measuring 3.5 on the Richter scale, was felt in the same location.

In October, an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.8 took place near Crete. The epicenter of the quake was south of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. Last week, Israel formally launched the long-promised nationwide Truaa ("trumpet blast") Early Earthquake Warning System while, while not predictive, can warn that a quake is happening, giving people living relatively far from the epicenter a precious number of seconds to protect themselves.

## Saudi Job Ad for 30 Women Train Drivers Gets 28,000 Applicants

### Agenceis

**RIYADH:** A job advertisement to recruit 30 female train drivers in Saudi Arabia has attracted 28,000 applicants, highlighting the scale of pent up demand as the kingdom opens up more opportunities to women.

Spanish railway operator Renfe said on Wednesday that an online assessment of academic background and English language skills had helped it to reduce the number of candidates by approximately a half, and it would work through the rest by mid-March.

The 30 selected women will drive bullet trains between the cities of Mecca and Medina after a year of paid training.

Renfe, which said it was eager to create opportunities for women in its local business, currently employs 80 men to drive its trains in Saudi Arabia, and has 50 more under instruction.

Job opportunities for Saudi women have until recently been limited

to roles such as teachers and medical workers, as they had to observe strict gender segregation rules. Women were not even allowed to drive in the kingdom until 2018.

Female participation in the workforce has nearly doubled in the last five years to 33 percent amid a drive by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to open up the kingdom and diversify the economy, and women are now taking up jobs once restricted to men and migrant workers.

But the proportion of women working in the kingdom was still about half that of men in the third quarter of last year, at 34.1 percent, and female unemployment was well more than three times higher than for men, at 21.9 percent.

Saudi Arabia is highlighting progress on gender issues at a time of scrutiny in the West for its human rights record, including a crackdown on dissent that ensnared dozens of women's rights activists and the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

## Tirupati's Lord Venkateswara Temple Gets ₹9.2 Crore Donation



### Agenceis

**Tirupati:** A 76-year-old devotee from Chennai, who died recently, made a donation of Rs 9.2 crore to the ancient hill shrine of Lord Venkateswara near Tirupati.

On behalf of the woman, Parvatham, her sister handed over documents of immovable property valued at Rs 6 crore along

with a demand draft for Rs 3.2 crore to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Board Chairman YV Subba Reddy at the hill temple this morning, the temple official told PTI. They requested the TTD to utilise the cash offering of Rs 3.2 for the construction of Children Super Specialty Hospital being built by the board that governs the shrine, he added.

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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