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P3 CITY

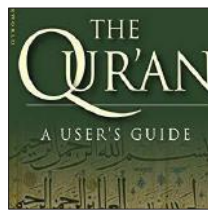
110 STUDENTS FROM NIT SRINAGAR QUALIFY GATE EXAM

A topper among 110 students of National Institute Technology Srinagar have qualified GATE exam 2022 (Graduate Aptitude Test for Engineering) of which results

P5 THINK

THEMATIC STUDIES ON THE QUR'AN: 10 SIGNIFICANT BOOKS

In continuation with the previous column (dated 13th march 2022), below is presented an assessment of five (5) more important books on the 'thematic' study and interpretation of the Qur'an. These books are: Farid Esack's The Qur'an:



P7 STATE

MERCURY SOARS TO ALL-TIME HIGH IN PAHALGAM, QAZIGUND

The maximum temperature shattered all time high record for the month of March in Pahalgam and Qazigund as mercury soared to 24.3°C in the world



Widom! Quote!

Imagination is more important than knowledge

- Albert Einstein

NEWS DIGEST

LG Grooms People On Shab-E-Baraat

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Friday extended his greetings to the people of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on the eve of Shab-e-Baraat. According to an official spokesperson, the LG in his message said that observance of the auspicious occasion endorses **More on P6**

Soldier Dies Of Suspected Heart Attack

SRINAGAR: A soldier on Friday died of suspected heart attack in this capital city, official sources said. Naib Subedar Tezpal Singh of army's 53 RR complained of chest pain to his colleagues at a camp in Kaner village of Budgam, sources said. The soldier, they said, was **More on P6**

15 New Corona Cases In J&K

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir on Friday recorded 15 new COVID-19 cases, raising its tally to 4,53,520, officials said. They said no death due to the disease was reported in the union territory in the past 24 hours. Of the fresh cases, eight were reported from Jammu division and seven **More on P6**

6 'Militant Associates' Held In Pulwama

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday claimed to have busted a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) module by arresting six militant associates of the outfit in south Kashmir's Pulwama district. A police spokesperson identified the alleged militant associates as Rouf Ahmad Lone alias Amjid, Sajad Ahmad Dar and Javid Ahmad Dar, **More on P6**

HM Reviews Kashmir Situation At High Level Meet



Home Minister Amit Shah handing over appointment order to the kin of a slain policeman in Jammu on Friday.

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Amid heightened security arrangements, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reached Jammu on the eve of CRPF Raising Day parade to be held at Maulana Azad Stadium here the first time outside Delhi-NCR, its usual venue. Shah landed at the Jammu airport late in the evening and was straightway escorted to Raj Bhawan, where he chaired a high-level meeting to review the security situation in the union territory, officials said. Union Minister Jitendra Singh shared on his Twitter handle a picture of him receiving the

home minister at the airport. The officials said Singh, MP from Udhampur constituency here, was accompanied by other prominent BJP leaders, including Lok Sabha MP Jugul Kishore and the party's Jammu and Kashmir president Ravinder Raina. The officials said Singh, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, top officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Jammu and Kashmir Police, officials of the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF), intelligence agencies and the civil administration took part in the security review meeting, which assumes significance

in view of the recent spurt in militant activities in Kashmir. Three Panchayat members and two security personnel were killed in separate attacks by militants in the Valley this month, while security forces neutralized 11 militants in different encounters over the past nine days. Shah is scheduled to address the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Raising day at M A Stadium on Saturday before taking stock of the developmental activities at a high-level meeting in the afternoon, the officials said. They said the home minister is also likely to visit **More on P6**

Social Media Activity Govt Serves Show Cause Notice To Its 2 Employees

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday issued show cause notice to two employees for criticising the administration on social media. These two employees are working in the UT's Education Department and one of them is a teacher in middle school in Daptyar in Anantnag district and the other a junior assistant at government high school at Ring Payeen Machil area of Kupwara district. Director, School Education, has issued show cause notice to them, stating that both of them are involved in objectionable activities on social media and that their behaviour and conduct is **More on P6**

Meters Soon To Curb Water Misuse in J&K

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Aimed to stop misuse of tap water, the Jammu and Kashmir government is likely to start work on installation of water meters across the Union Territory starting from the capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar. The water meter installation is a part of the government of India's project which was supposed to be implemented in a phased manner years ago. A senior official said that work on installation of water meters is expected to begin from April this year. "Srinagar and Jammu cities will be covered in a first phase. The other districts will also be covered later," the official said. Users from all categories will be covered under the project, including the residential, commercial,



industrial areas and institutional establishments. "We will first complete the installation of water meters to the commercial establishments then go to other sectors. The installation of water meters is to bring an end to the imprudent use of drinking water and yield revenue to the government as a significant portion of the daily consumption of water is used for non-potable purposes like gardening and washing of vehicles. **More on P6**

Leh Highway Likely To Reopen Today

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The strategic 434-km Srinagar-Leh National highway is likely to be opened for vehicular traffic on Saturday in a record time of 74 days after its closure for winter months in January, a senior official of the Border Roads Organisation said. Director General of BRO Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhary also said the ongoing renovation and repair work on Jawahar Tunnel along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway will be completed this year to provide a world class experience to the commuters. The BRO chief was speaking to media after reviewing the upgradation work and other projects being undertaken by the construction executive force that develops and maintains road networks in border areas. We will make an attempt to open Zojila pass **More on P6**

Rs 800 Crore Loan Case CBI Books Ex-J&K Bank Chairman, 18 Others



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The CBI has booked former J&K Bank chairman Mushtaq Ahmad Shaikh and 18 others for a Rs 800 crore loss to the bank caused due to loans to REI Agro, which were issued in violation of guidelines, without tangible security and on fake documents, officials said. In addition to officials of the bank, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has also booked REI Agro chairman Sanjay Jhunjhunwala, and vice president and managing director Sandeep Jhunjhunwala, they said on Friday. The case was earlier probed by the anti-corruption branch of Jammu and Kashmir and it had found during its preliminary inquiry that loans worth Rs 800 crore were sanctioned to the group on the basis of fake documents between 2011 and 2013 and in violation of guidelines, the officials said. This caused a loss of Rs 800 to the bank, they said. The Mumbai-based Mahim branch of the bank had sanctioned Rs 550 crore of loans while the Vasant Vihar branch in Delhi had sanctioned Rs 139 crore in their favour against the supplier bill discounting facility and takeovers. The company had approached the bank's Mahim and Vasant Vihar branches for sanctioning of advances for making payment to farmers as per terms and conditions laid down in the loan sanction order of the bank. "The farmers **More on P6**

THESE LOANS AND ADVANCES WERE sanctioned and disbursed by the officials of the J&K Bank branch in Mahim, Mumbai, and Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, in connivance with and under patronage of then chairman, J&K Bank, Mushtaq Ahmad Sheikh under single conspiracy spread over several years...."

HC Directs Govt To Set Up Online RTI Portal Within 90 Days

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The High Court of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh has directed the Union Territory administration to establish an Right to Information (RTI) portal within a period of 90 days, where the residents can file RTI applications and appeals online. The directions came on Thursday in response to a public interest litigation filed by Mohammad Turyab Malik & Mohammad Khuram Qureshi seeking the court's direction to the government for developing an online portal for RTI reports said. The petitioners, appearing in person, submitted before the Division Bench of the High Court, headed by the Chief Justice, that the residents of J&K are facing extreme difficulties in filing and following up on the applications and appeals filed under the Right to Information Act, 2005. According to the petitioners, the Central Government has already developed the source codes required to implement the mechanism by **More on P6**



RIGHT TO INFORMATION

CRPF To Buy US Scanner To Curb Arms Smuggling In J&K

Agencies

NEW DELHI: With the aim of preventing arms shipments in the Jammu and Kashmir, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is ready to import vehicle scanning machines from the US, officials said. The Multi-Mode Passive Detection System (MMPDS) is an advanced version of the non-X-Ray-based scanning system that can monitor all vehicles entering the union area. The MMPDS is a secure, efficient and reliable automated scanning system that quickly detects, detects and identifies explosives, weapons, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, people, other smuggled goods, as well as unprotected against heavily protected



radiological and nuclear threats. Officials also said it was a Muons-based static scanner technology for 'Full body scanning of vehicles' for hidden (or otherwise) smuggled goods, all kinds of firearms (including unmounted), ammunition, explosives, components used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices, various telescopic sights, **More on P6**

J&K Records Second Highest Unemployment Rate At 46.3 %

At 67.3 Percent, More Women Jobless Than Men
Zaid Bin Shabir

SRINAGAR: Despite defying the non-governmental reports on rising unemployment in J&K, on Monday, the Government of India's Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation published its latest Periodic Labour Force Survey stating that the grueling unemployment figures among educated youth in J&K has reached 46.3 percent, second highest in India. A report titled "Periodic Labour Force Survey April-June 2021" released by the Ministry



of Statistics and Programme Implementation shows that urban unemployment rate jumped to 12.6 percent in April-June 2021 from 9.3 percent in the previous quarter. As per the report, a copy

of which lies with Kashmir Observer, J&K's urban unemployment rate for 15-29 age group has reached 46.3 percent from the 44.1 percent in the previous quarter. As per the data, J&K's unemployment

in the educated category is the second highest unemployment rate after Kerala where the percentage stood at 47 percent. The urban unemployment rate in J&K for persons aged 15 and above was 17.6 percent in April-June 2021, same as the January-March quarter, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) said. The report has also noted that in J&K, the unemployment in the 15-29 age-group was highest among women compared to men. "The joblessness among women in J&K was recorded at 67.3 percent in April-June 2021 while the unemployment rate for men was noted at 39.1 percent." The PLFS report said. Unemployment among the youth in J&K has **More on P6**



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Monday - Saturday (9am - 6pm)

No 5- Dal Lake Boulevard Srinagar, 190001, Kashmir

Tooth Decay: The 'Healthy' Foods That Can Make Teeth 'More Susceptible To Decay Over Time'

Harriet Whitehead | Express

The NHS explains brushing your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and having regular check-ups with a dentist can help to keep your teeth healthy. Nonetheless, there are some foods which can damage your teeth. Indeed, the health body explains: "Diet, smoking and drinking alcohol also have an effect on dental health."

Dr Khaled Kasem, Chief Orthodontist at orthodontics chain Impress says citrus can damage your teeth.

He said: "Oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruit are all tasty as both fruits and juices and are known for being packed with Vitamin C. "Just make sure to keep an eye on the amount you're consuming, however, as they are very acidic and can erode enamel, making your teeth more susceptible to decay over time."

Other foods can also have negative impacts. Indeed, it is well known that limiting the amount of sugar you eat and drink is important to prevent tooth decay.

The NHS warns a lot of the sugars we eat and drink are in food and drinks such as fizzy drinks, fruit juice, jams, marmalades, and dried fruit.

The health body says: "Sugars oc-



cur naturally in foods such as fruit and milk, but we don't need to cut down on these types of sugars." But it warns that when fruit is juiced or blended, as in smoothies, the sugars are released from the structure of the fruit. "Once released, these sugars can damage your teeth, so it's best to drink fruit juice or smoothies at mealtimes," it says. Further to this, there are foods

which can stain teeth. The NHS says wine, cigarette smoke, tea and coffee are all teeth-staining culprits. Keep them to a minimum to stop your teeth becoming stained.

It says: "Your dentist or hygienist can give your teeth a professional clean, which may help reduce the staining."

The American Dental Association (ADA) says: "Your mouth, teeth,



and gums are more than just tools for eating. They're essential for chewing and swallowing—the first steps in the digestion process.

"Your mouth is your body's initial point of contact with the nutrients you consume. So what you put in your mouth impacts not only your general health but also that of your teeth and gums. In fact, if your nutrition is poor, the

first signs often show up in your mouth."

The ADA says for dental health, it's recommended that people limit eating and drinking between meals.

The organisation says: "Of course, sometimes eating between meals must happen.

"Unfortunately, most people choose foods like sweets and chips for snacks; foods that harm teeth by promoting tooth decay.

"If you do snack, make it a nutritious choice—such as cheese, yoghurt, fruits, vegetables or nuts—for your overall health and the health of your teeth."

Fortunately, there are also foods that can help with your dental health.

Dr Khaled Kasem said: "Blueberries have very low sugar content and are known for their antioxidant properties, which helps to prevent our gums from suffering from diseases such as gingivitis or periodontitis."

He added: "A firm favourite for snacking, chocolate actually helps to fight tooth decay because its grain contains strong antibacterial agents.

"That doesn't mean you should eat chocolate in excess, though, but a small amount is enough to keep the decay at bay."

Great Barrier Reef Suffers Widespread Coral Bleaching

Associated Press

Australia's Great Barrier Reef is suffering widespread and severe coral bleaching due to high ocean temperatures two years after a mass bleaching event, a government agency said on Friday. The report by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority, which manages the world's largest coral reef ecosystem, comes three days before a United Nations delegation is due to assess whether the reef's World Heritage listing should be downgraded due to the ravages of climate change.

"Weather patterns over the next few weeks will be critical in determining the overall extent and severity of coral bleaching across the Marine Park," the authority said.

"Bleaching has been detected across the Marine Park — it is widespread but variable, across multiple regions, ranging in impact from minor to severe," the authority added.

The reef has suffered significantly from coral bleaching caused by unusually warm ocean temperatures in 2016, 2017

and 2020. The previous bleaching damaged two-thirds of the coral.

The environmental group Greenpeace said the severe and widespread coral bleaching suffered during a La Niña weather pattern that is associated with cooler Pacific Ocean temperatures was evidence of the Australian government's failure to protect the coral from the impacts of climate change.

"This is a sure sign that climate change caused by burning coal, oil and gas is threatening the very existence of our reef," Greenpeace Australia Pacific Climate Impacts Campaigner Martin Zavan said in a statement.

In July last year, Australia garnered enough international support to defer an attempt by UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural organization, to downgrade the reef's World Heritage status to "in danger" because of damage caused by climate change.

But the question will be back on the World Heritage Committee's agenda at its next annual meeting in June.

A UN delegation will inspect the reef's health next week.



This is a sure sign that climate change caused by burning coal, oil and gas is threatening the very existence of our reef

Office of The Regional Transport Officer Kashmir

NOTICE



Whereas, a joint application has been received from Shri Muzaffar Qadir Bhat S/o Ghulam Qadir Bhat R/o New Theed Harwan (Transferor) and Mohammad Yasin Ganie S/o Gh Hassan Ganie R/o



New Theed Harwan (Transferee) for transfer of Innova car-rage route Permit No 1172/AR/2015 Covering Vehicle No JK01X-4466.

Now, therefore, it is notified for general information that objections, if any to the proposed transfer of the said route permit / vehicle shall be filed 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 JK Road Way Namely Mohammad Yasin

NO: JK/RTOK /2602

Dated: 18/03/2022

Sd/-
Regional Transport Office,
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 11th under Below mentioned particulars

Name : Suhail Ahmad Mir
S/o Sonaula Mir
R/o Pijooria



Details of Marks Certificate lost

Higher Secondary School Examination (class 12th)

Roll No 32404489 Session /Year Annual Bi-Annual 2021

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

bmg

Sub Office Magam

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM KASHMIR

NOTICE



Where a application for transfer of ownership has been recieved from one, Shri : Javid Ahmad Bhat S/o: Ghulam Mohammad Bhat R/o: Qanungopora Chadoora Budgam (Transferor)



of M Cycle. Vehicle bearing registration number JK04E - 2965. Chasis number 11969 Engine no. 53133 Model 2018, in favour of Shri. Ashiq Hussain Hajam S/o. Abdul Hameed Hajam R/o Checki Samad Rather Anantnag (Tranferee)

Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any to the proposed transfer of ownership shall be filed in writing in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport officer ARTO Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Kashmir Observer.

Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

No. ARTO/ BUDGAM.7035

Dated 18/03/2022

mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Shadab Ahmad Sheikh S/O Mohammad Sidiq Sheikh R/O Ellahi Bagh Bupchpora District Srinagar have applied for enlistment as "DEE" Class Contractor . Objections , if any in this regard, must reach in the office of the superintendent engineer PWD (R&B) circle srinagar within seven days after which objections will not be entertained.

inf

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my DOB certificate somewhere. Now I am applying for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the ISLAMIC HANFIA HIGHER SECONDARY INSTT ANANTNAG within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

NAME: FATIMA JAN
D/O IRSHAD AHMAD MOCHI
MOTHERS NAME RAFIA AKHTER
R/O CHAHLAN KULGAM

DOB 15/10/2016

ma

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Sannat Nagar Srinagar

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Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Construction Division, Srinagar.

Gist of Fresh Notice Inviting e-Tender
e-NIT No. MICD/140 of 2021-22 dated: 17-03-2022.

For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of UT of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders are invited in two cover from the reputed, registered and experienced Automobile workshop holders/contractors with relevant experience for following works respectively. The bidding process shall be completed online in two covers viz. Cover '1st' –Tender fee and Earnest Money details, Deposit, fulfillment of prequalification criteria, technical specifications and acceptance to terms and conditions of the tender. Cover '2nd' - Financial Bid in the prescribed BOQ.

e NIT No.	Name/Particulars of the work	Name of Division	Quantity.	Cost of document/ tender fee (In Rs.)	Earnest money (In Rs.)	Validity of Rates
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
MICD/140 of 2021-22 Dated: 17/07/22.	Repairs to Departmental vehicle bearing Registration No JK01AF-5429 (Maruti Ciaz) deputed with Chief Engineer I&FC Department Srinagar Kashmir.	Mechanical Irrigation Construction Division, Srinagar	As per requirement	Rs 200/-	Rs. 1700/-	90 days

Position of funds: Available
AAA Accorded vide Superintending Engineer Mechanical Circle I & F.C Department Srinagar's Order No: -59-MCO of 2021-22 dated: -02.11.2021

Key/critical Dates:

Date of Hosting In Website/ Publish date	17/03/2022 (1600Hrs)
Document download/sale start date	17/03/2022 (1600 Hrs).
Bid submission start date	17/03/2022 (1600Hrs)
Bid submission end date	23/03/2022 (1400 Hrs)
Bid opening date	23/03/2022 (1600 Hrs)

declaration Form/Cost of tender document in the form of as detailed above, pledged to the Executive Engineer MICD Srinagar In absence of Bid declaration form, the Tenders shall be rejected out rightly.
Other details can be seen in the bidding documents from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>.
Any information regarding the tenders can be had from this office on all working days.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Mech. Irri. Const. Division,
DIPK-19756/21

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

MECHANICAL HOSPITAL & CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR

(Phone No: 0194-2496089, E-mail id: xenmhchdk@yahoo.in) Website: www.medkmr.or

NIT No: MHCHD/TS/2021-22/368
Dated: 17-03-2022
SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Date of sale of tender documents.	From 17-03-2022 to 25-03-2022 (2.00 P.M)
Last date of receipt of Tenders.	26-03-2022 upto 2PM.

For & on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir ,sealed tenders affixed with Rs.5/- revenue stamps are invited from the registered firms/Govt. Contractors for the below mentioned work:

S. No	Description of work.	Estimated cost in Rupees	Cost of Tender document in Rs.	Time of completion	AA Accorded Vide	TS No.
1.	Rewinding of Water Lifting pumps at Sarai of Govt. SMHS Hospital, Srinagar.	22000/-	100/-	03 Days	48GMCS of 2021, Dated: 13-09-2021	147 of 03/2022 (AEE 1st)
2.	Repairs/Rewinding of Pumping Units of Central heating System at GMC Anantnag.	21000/-	100/-	03 Days	GMCA/Plg/98/2700-04, Dt: 21-10-2021	237 of 02/2022 (AEE 3rd)

The tender document can be had from the office of the undersigned during working hours against cost mentioned above, in the form of IPO/Demand Draft or Cash Payment. Tender documents shall be issued subject to production of certificates to the following effect:

- Latest Sales tax clearance certificate/or as applicable as per new GST rules.
- J&K State Sales Tax Registration Certificate/ GST registration certificate.
- Documentary proof of similar nature of work in any Govt./Semi-Govt. Department.

The tenders should reach the office of undersigned on 26-03-2022 up to 2 P.M and shall be opened on the same day or any subsequent date convenient to the undersigned in presence of the tenderers who may be present on the spot.
The envelope containing tender should properly be superscripted with Tender Notice no, Name of work and Name of tenderer.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division,
Srinagar.
Dated: 17-03-2022

DIPK-19751/21
NO: - MHCHD/TS/12596-603
2022

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Twitter Talks



“This year we have jumped straight to Summer”
@rjnasir

“All choices, freedoms seem to be reserved for the
'ecosystem' “
@shammybaweja

“I'll be honest, some of you are Islamophobes but
you're Islamophobe with a good vocabulary so
nobody calls you out”
@akhmxt

ADVENTURES IN ARCHIVES

Schools For
Scandal

The unfortunate tendency of being captivated by gloss and losing sight of the dross, howsoever glaring the latter might be, has engendered a crippling sense of self-satisfaction that threatens to choke the very blood-streams of social progress in Kashmir. Indeed, the signs have been more than evident for a long time in the most critical sector of school education. If, on the surface, the results of high school examinations expose the absolute incompetence of the massive government apparatus engaged in imparting primary and secondary education, a closer look reveals a much more disturbing scenario – even the students cleared by the state-run system barely make the grade in rudimentary literacy. The classes that have been, and are, ruling Kashmir, both in the bureaucratic and the political spheres, cloak their abysmal performance on this front in the achievements of a handful of private schools, totally ignoring the colossal waste of public funds in running a vast network of under-performing institutions. Howsoever sound the system may appear on paper, on the ground it is as rickety and run-down as the school houses spread all over rural Kashmir that are chronically starved of staff and proper equipment. Reports of under-manned schools, particularly at the primary level, are a routine feature from rural Kashmir, while institutes in the city appear to bursting at the seams with unneeded staff, making a mockery of the department of education which has grown bloated and unwieldy down the years. Schools in far-flung areas function at the sweet discretion of their often lone teachers, and instances of just one or two tutors handling multiple classes and hundreds of students are common. The standards of such schools and the education they impart can well be imagined. The large-scale recruitments the government makes for teachers posts make such a situation incomprehensible, unless of course it is done pure on political considerations with absolutely no thought to the quality and the suitability of the manpower engaged for a highly sensitive and critical enterprise. By an ironic twist of circumstance, the teaching profession has been turned into the very last resort of the capable and the destination of choice for those who are unable to fit in anywhere else. When the screening process for entry into this vital sector - on which the entire social edifice rests - should have been highly stringent, it has been turned into a hit-and-trail exercise with the barest minimum regard to the talent, skill and temperament required of a teacher. Societal trends guided by the political elite have shorn the teaching profession of its status and sanctity, turning it into just another vocation with little to distinguish it from, say, hawking garments on the streets. The adventurous, glamorous and challenging enterprise of kindling, illuminating and enlightening tender young minds has become a lack-luster and uninspiring activity devoid of a sorely-needed missionary spirit, mainly because successive leaderships (if they deserve that name) have been too occupied with other, more lucrative, concerns to bother about what is the corner-stone of the well-being of a people. This has had a direct bearing on the condition of our schools and their performance.

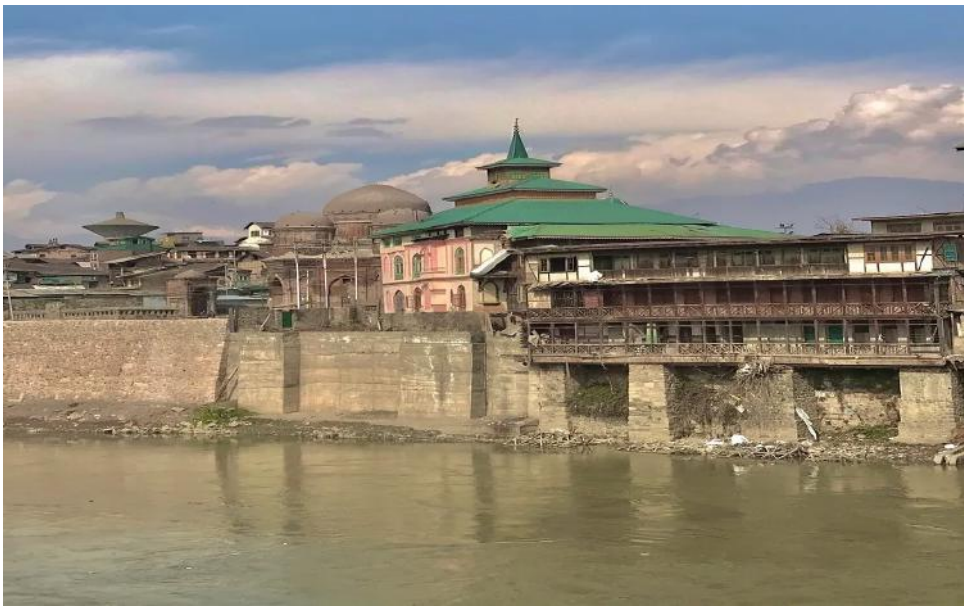
Having been active partners in ruining the state-run school system, the ruling classes now abdicate all responsibility by dumping the educational sector into the private lap. This is seen in the lavish support to fashionable and prohibitively expensive private schools and the mushrooming of lesser copycats who are making a financial killing in the absence of a dependable and affordable public structure. It is nothing short of a scandal that parents should avoid sending their wards to government schools on account of the latter's dismal record, and prefer seedy and crowded private options no matter how mercenary they are.

The authorities are preying on the vulnerabilities of the public by letting the situation drift in the hope that with time the growing, engineered preference for private schools would phase the government system out of existence. This is a classic case of the government abdicating its basic responsibility towards a society comprised largely of low-income, rural and agrarian classes for whom state-run schools were the mainstay of hope.

Any government worth the name would take immediate remedial steps to improve the standing and image of government schools by engaging trained and motivated manpower, and allocating generous funds to equip them with the wherewithal to deliver quality education. Strict, uncompromising monitoring of schools coupled with adequate deployment of manpower even in remote areas is essential to raise the standard of teaching and restore public confidence in the system.

The article is an editorial from KO Archives and was originally published on 12 June 2010

IN MY OPINION



Shallowing Mystical
Heritage Through
Oriental Views

Shoaib Mohammad

I was once asked by a friend of mine if I had read the famous novel '40 Rules of Love' by Elif Shafak. I replied in the negative. He praised the work for its 'beautiful portrayal of Sufism' and insisted that I read it too. I did read it eventually, after the circulation of its praises felt overwhelming, only to feel utterly betrayed. This sense of betrayal is not something I believe was exclusive but in fact, is the same for anyone who is familiar with the subject in its authenticity. The only thing that errs us though is that we don't want to seek authenticity anymore.

Our land Kashmir is often hallmarked as 'peer-i waer' or 'resh waer' –the valley of saints', for the history of its close and interwoven relation with mysticism. Even before the advent of Islam, it had the influence of Trika Shaivism which shared its resemblance with Islamic mysticism in its monistic philosophy. We can trace its history from Lal Ded, the most remembered Shaivite mystic of 14th century, to Syed Mirak Shah Kashani, a revered 20th century Sufi saint. This history doesn't only entail a mere abundance of mystics, or of their literary contribution to our language but most notably, it entails their interwoven relation with the people and how that relation has shaped our ethos and culture. Mystics have been at the locus of religio-ethical sphere of our society. Their position in history is seen as that of personages of harmony,

Instead of being conscious of such realities, we give in to the orientalist tropes that are perpetuated by popular authors time and time again. We have forfeited our literature, and the wisdom that it would entail now only remains in the memories of the past. The thirst of spiritual readings now is being quenched by readings of orientalist works

mutual-understanding and love among the people of diverse faiths. One of the reasons of Islam's flourishing in Kashmir was because of the emphasised perpetuation of its spiritual dimension –tasawwuf by the early Sufis that came to Kashmir in the 14th century, the earliest of them being Syed Sharf-ud-din Abdul Rahman Shah or, as commonly known, Bulbul Shah. He is credited as the earliest missionary of Islam to Kashmir who invited and converted the then ruling king Rinchen Shah to Islam.

This spiritual fecundity and with that the knowledge, canons of art and literature that followed is what we are home to. The literature produced by poets and mystics alike is nothing short of remarkable. Lal Ded's 'vaakh' that impart esoteric truths and advices, Noor-ud-din Noorani's 'shru'ik' which address and advise people collectively, Rasool Mir's unparalleled eloquence in romantic poetry or Wahab Khaa'r's profound expounding on Sufi thought; all of these are examples of a rich and bounteous canon of literature produced over the centuries, inspired by tasawwuf, the reality which connects us with the central Asian and other Muslim regions.

Instead of being conscious of such realities, we give in to the orientalist tropes that are perpetuated by popular authors time and time again. We have forfeited our literature, and the wisdom that it would entail now only remains in the memories of the past. The thirst of spiritual readings now is being quenched by readings of orientalist works. The fact that a novel like '40 Rules of Love' is highly encouraged and entertained among our young generation speaks of our orientalist mentality. We are so distant and detached from our own history, culture and identity that we can't

discern what Shafak has produced in the novel, which is nothing short of a watered-down version of Islam and Sufism to match the appetite of western readership. Two of the most respected figures in the history of Sufism, Mawlana Rumi and Shams Tabriz are reduced down to mere agents of 'love' in a 'feel good' manner while they're de-contextualised from their religious foundations. Any taste for Islam is strongly negated and we, as deficient as we are, play along the whole narrative like mindless minions. The cover of the book every now and then circulates in a Dal lake reel or a Naseem Bagh photo-shoot in an attempt to please the aesthetic vocations of a severely attention deficient society. While Shafak does claim no expertise on the subject of Sufism, we still subliminally sketch a skewed image of the subject in the process of reading her. Therefore, the main problem lies not with the author but with the readership, especially the readership which shares some identity with the subject.

Shafak is only one of such authors that are among the perpetrators of the 'New Age spiritualism' –the secular attempt of replacing the spiritual aspect of religion without having to deal with the religion itself. Although this wave has seen momentum in the West, it's unfortunate that its fringes are caving in the eastern world as well. Coleman Barks, an American Poet revered for his 'translations' of Rumi's Masnavi has helped in making Rumi the 'best-selling poet of America'. [1] Although the contribution is commendable, he is often severely criticized for the misrepresentation of Rumi's ideas. Regarding these new age 'translations' Omid Safi, a professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Duke University states that he views it as a type of 'spiritual colonialism', an ongoing process of erasing, and occupying a spiritual landscape lived by Muslims from Bosnia to South Asia.[2] Not so surprisingly, Barks who wrote for the American readership, has found his works being read and championed in the Muslim world too. This includes Kashmir as well. Just like '12 Rules of Love', Barks' translations have found a good wave of readership among the young generation here. The idea of 'Hoor', which originally had much deeper and diverse meanings in religious context will now exclusively mean 'a perfect satisfaction of all our sexual wanting'. [3] The reality of Sufism is now being moulded away from its bedrock foundation, i.e. Islam into the 'new age spiritualism' and clearly, even we Kashmiris, the inhabitants of 'resh waer' are aiding in the process.

The spiritual and the religious has lost meaning for us. What now remains of them is their aesthetic symbolism. We have reduced our places of spiritual meaning and healing, khanqas, dargas, to mere props in the frames of our social media posts. The devotion, longing and emotions of devotees mean to us only as much as it would to create a 'beautiful', 'woke' and 'meaningful' frame on the internet. Their essential significance now remains in the memories of our ancestors and we are deliberately replacing the essential with the aesthetic, denying ourselves the spiritual legacy we rightfully inherit. If anything, we like our spiritual ethos only for its 'love and kindness' while we ignore its emphasis on self-purity, submission and devotion to religion –just like the New Age spiritualists.

The reasons for this untoward leaning of ours can be much explored and debated. However few things remain clear: that we are the active agents in the erasure of our Mystical Heritage and that we have adopted for ourselves, either knowingly or unknowingly, the outsider's gaze upon our much nurtured reality.

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

M Miftah

TODAY'S is an age of images and Kashmir has been participating in the culture of quick-clicks as well. The valley has controversially been a favourite of foreign frames. This trend has now found new participants from among Visual and brand story telling of Kashmir by Kashmiris

Coming from Downtown Srinagar, sacred spaces like Dargahs, Khanqahs, Imambaras, local temples, gurdwaras and Astaans serve as not just places of worship for us an active space in the public sphere where one engages with our environs and circumstances in terms of social, political, religious and the cultural. Primarily, these are intimate spaces for healing in the context of our fractured past and turbulent present. When these sacred healing places are invaded in the name of art, storytelling by woke and socially conscious 'Kashmir-centric brands and picturisation of a 'Happy Valley' fallacy, we display a systemic conscious callousness towards our own indigenous spaces that hold reverence for large sections of our brethren. We 'other' our own familiar spaces by approaching them with the lens of strange, far-away and unfamiliar.

Are we becoming perpetrators of the outsider gaze? The imagination of 'Kashmir' and sacred spaces, being deliberately chosen, placed and framed by the photographer and brands in a manner that divorces them from their historical, religious, social and cultural context creates her rather than savour and respect her.

Recently, a whirlwind of politics, hate and criticism revolved around the recent photoshoot of a model in the courtyard of Gurudwara Sahib Kartarpur, Pakistan. It is relevant as it raises a very relevant question of sensitivity, sacredness and the 'gaze'. Are we being too judgemental? What is so problematic? It's just a photograph? Isn't it a positive connotation, spreading awareness, increasing visitation?

Just a small sample of the flood of questions being raised and coming to our mind, isn't it ! The primary concern remains exoticisation and the 'way we view or engage' with a space. Reducing a highly sacred space for the believers to an aesthetic prop for the brand 'storytelling' and content for social media feeds, is problematic. It is just the legacy of the Orientalist Gaze, we are propounding and manifesting in our local spaces, without the desire to engage and create a mutual dialogue of interest.

Similarly, re-visualising a couple relaxing against the juxtaposition of a revered graveyard, doing campaign shots in the inner sanctum of the women's section of Khankah Maula, using persons from socially underprivileged sections as backdrop for a 'bright heavily embellished traditional



outfit' and staging shots of veiled women in public spaces, is reimagining spaces and people without an ounce of respect and ignorance of the stake in the community they are photographing. Doesn't this amount to violation of intimate spaces and undermining the dignity of the believers and subjects as we caricature them to suit our commercial and artistic interests?

Retellings and reimaginings of the same accounts, stories and circumstances under a more glossy, glittery and fashionable name sells rather than the authentic, true and blatant accounts which remain hidden away in the attics of the booksellers.

An image of the 'East' and Kashmir in particular has long existed in the Western and South Asian imagination through literature, art, cinema and photographs. A reinforcement of the existing stereotypes through visual storytelling, literature and business interests, is a representation of the values and ideals of the narrator, indicative of an inherent bias and detachment in their work. The socio-cultural identity and background of the narrator, whether consciously or subconsciously, inevitably helps shape his or her telling of the story and which parts they will blot out from 'public memory' forever.

Sharbat Bibi, who has recently been granted asylum in Italy is yet another case in point. How does Steve McCurry's photograph of Sharbat Gula, the 'Afghan Girl' in 1984 come across as problematic and oppressive? She is forced to unveil her face in front of a stranger, the photographer, so that he can capture the haunting image of her to be splashed across the world stage for close to five decades, under a different story, one that suits McCurry's interest, rather than her own of fear and discomfort to being exposed to a stranger. He continued to earn millions from the photograph till recently when he was pressured to share some portion of the proceeds with Sharbat Bibi. In an age, where our local talented visual storytellers are openly using the template of Steve McCurry as inspiration, are we headed to an idea of an exotic, unrealistic, phantom known as Kashmir.

It is time we question our idea of aesthetic perfection over the realities of the places we represent in our work. In a world of increasingly interwoven networks, myriad audiences and increased public exposure, we must attest to our responsibilities as a brand, a photographer, a content creator, a filmmaker or a storyteller.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer
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Thematic Studies on the Qur'an: 10 Significant Books (Part Two)

Thematic Studies on Qur'an is a significant and recurring theme in the literature on the Qur'an and things Qur'anic

Tauseef Ahmad Parray

IN CONTINUATION WITH THE PREVIOUS COLUMN (dated 13th March 2022), below is presented an assessment of five (5) more important books on the 'thematic' study and interpretation of the Qur'an. These books are: Farid Esack's The Qur'an: A Beginner's Guide (2005/2007); Ziauddin Sardar's Reading the Qur'an (2011/ 2015); Massimo Campanini's The Qur'an: The Basics (2007/ 2016); Abdel Haleem's Exploring the Qur'an: Context and Impact (2017); and the present author's Towards Understanding Some Qura'nic Terms, Concepts, and Themes (2017)/ Exploring the Qur'an: Concepts and Themes (2019).

FARID ESACK'S THE QUR'AN: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE (2005/ 2007):

Farid Esack, a South African academic, has an international reputation as a Muslim scholar, speaker, and human rights activist. A prolific author, he has authored Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism; On Being a Muslim; and The Qur'an: A Beginner's Guide. Drawing on both classical and contemporary sources, Esack outlines some key themes and explains the historical and cultural context of this unique work whilst examining its content, language and style, and the variety of approaches, including fundamentalist, feminist, and modernist, that have been used to interpret it. For him, the Qur'an has spoken to Muslims for over one thousand years; it is seen as law-maker, moral code, and the word of God. Other areas covered in this significant book include: the Qur'an as evocative oral experience; understanding and interpreting the Qur'an; the major themes of the Qur'an, including such issues as truth, justice and gender relations. A look on its contents gives a clear glimpse of what it covers: Introduction; The Qur'an in the Lives of Muslims; The Word Enters the World; The Qur'an as Written Word; Gathering the Qur'an; The Prophet and the Begotten-not-Created Qur'an; Understanding and Interpreting the Qur'an; Belief in the Qur'an; and Righteous Conduct in the Qur'an. Besides the book is, as Esack claims, "a first attempt to present various views and trends in Qur'anic

scholarship in a critical manner without forcing a particular position" (p. 10).

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT AND SUBSTANTIAL ADDITION TO THIS GENRE IS ZIAUDDIN SARDAR'S READING THE QUR'AN—THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE SACRED TEXT (2011/ 2015) WHICH INCLUDES A THEMATIC INTERPRETATION/ COMMENTARY ON FIRST TWO SURAHs OF THE QUR'AN, MAJOR THEMES AND CONCEPTS OF THE QUR'AN AS WELL AS CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THE LIGHT OF THE SACRED TEXT.

By looking at 'the Qur'an as a whole, an integrated text', the major themes and key concepts, explored by Sardar, range from Prophets and Revelation, time and history, truth and plurality, humanity and diversity, individual and community, to reason and knowledge, crime and punishment, rights and duties, nature and environment, ethics and morality, and reading and writing. Similarly, he also brings forth some of the 'pressing issues of our time', which range from 'the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) to suicide bombing, politics and democracy, sex and homosexuality, science and evolution, to freedom of expression and the veil', etc. By reading any part, section and topic of Sardar's work, one can get an idea of what Sardar believes; and how he interprets the Qur'an and things Quranic in this second decade of third millennium. Though one may disagree with his interpretations of certain (core or contemporary) concepts, but one cannot stop appreciating his understanding and interpreting, in 21st century, the themes and concepts like time, history, ethics, modesty, knowledge, reason, science and technology, nature and environment, etc. In sum, Reading the Qur'an is a work to be read, re-read and worthy to reflect by every common Muslim, especially youngsters, and by those who have little or no knowledge of Arabic.

MASSIMO CAMPANINI'S THE QUR'AN: THE BASICS (2007; 2ND EDITION, 2016)

Originally published in Italian—is a concise and accessible introduction to the Qur'an. It includes an essential updated reference guide, including a

chronology of the revelation, links to internet resources, and suggestions for further reading. Exploring the reception of the Qur'an through history, its key teachings, and its place in contemporary thought and belief, the main contents of this book are: Islam and the Qur'an; Structure and composition; God, humanity and faith; The Qur'an and the Qur'anic sciences; and Contemporary approaches to the Qur'an. The major themes and issues highlighted are the Qur'an as the word of God; its reception and communication by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh); the structure and language of the text; conceptions of God, the holy law, and jihad; and Islamic commentaries on Qur'anic teachings through the ages. Mustafa Shah (University of London, UK) has described it in these words: "With an emphasis on clarity and concision, Campanini has produced an accessibly informative introduction to the Qur'an"; while as Dr Orhan Elmaz (University of St Andrews) has praised it in high terms and has described it as "a good basic introduction to Qur'an", full of "brevity", and is "very impressive", and is thus "most suitable for introductory courses on Islam or the Qur'an" and equally helpful for the general readers.

ABDEL HALEM'S EXPLORING THE QUR'AN: CONTEXT AND IMPACT (2017) IS ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT WORK IN THIS GENRE, WHICH IS AN EXTENSION OF HIS PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP.

In this book, he 'challenges misinterpretations of particular Qur'anic verses from whatever quarter', and 'challenges the image of the Qur'an put forward by many Western and Muslim authors'. It explores what is conveyed by the 'Arabic text of the Qur'an itself, rather than [the diverse] view[s] expressed in imperfect tafsirs [tafseer] or translations, or polemical readings of the text'. Divided into three major parts, Teachings (chapters 1-4), Style(chapters 5-10), and Impact (chapters 11-13), it specifically addresses these issues/ topics: The 'Sword Verse' Myth; Qur'anic Jizya: Tax Defaulters; Qur'anic Jihad; Qur'anic [view of] Paradise (in part-I); Legal Style: Qur'anic Shari'a—Avoiding the Application of the Ultimate Penalties;

Euphemistic Style: Sexual Etiquettes; Narrative Style: Repeating Stories—Noah [AS]; Coherent Style: How to Read the Sura; Evidential Style: Divine Oaths in the Qur'an; Rhetorical Style: Arabic of the Qur'an (in Part-II); and The Arabic Qur'an in the Muslim World; English Translations of the Qur'an: The Making of an Image; and Translations of the Qur'an and Interfaith Relations. These chapters are preceded by an Introduction and followed by Conclusion. The work is praised, in high terms, by scholars like Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Asma Afrasuddin who are of these opinions, respectively: This work is 'a major addition' to the Qura'nic Studies literature, which 'reflects mastery of the material as well as deep faith in the sacred nature of the Qur'an itself'; and 'a learned yet accessible work born of deep erudition and familiarity ... underlying spirit of Islamic thought and tradition. [It provides] careful and insightful engagement with some of the most important Qur'anic verses that are being deliberately misconstrued today'.

THE PRESENT AUTHOR HAS ALSO ATTEMPTED TO MAKE A HUMBLE CONTRIBUTION IN THIS GENRE/ AREA OF SCHOLARSHIP BY PUBLISHING TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING SOME QUR'ANIC TERMS, CONCEPTS, AND THEMES (PUBLISHED BY QIR-TAS PUBLISHERS, FROM KARACHI, 2017) WITH A REVISED EDITION AS EXPLORING THE QUR'AN: CONCEPTS AND THEMES (BY KITAB MAHAL, LAL BAZAR, SRINAGAR IN 2019).

It is a collection of twenty-two (22) topics/ essays which reflects on various key terms, basic concepts, vital and vibrant themes of Qur'an and things Qur'anic, and some (much-debated and constantly-contested) contemporary issues. With a Foreword by Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai (a renowned academician and a specialist in the field of Qur'anic studies, from Aligarh Muslim University, India), the work is divided into two sections, viz: 'Key Terms and Basic Concepts' and 'Vital Themes and Some Contemporary Issues'. The topics covered in the first section are: Concept of Human Life (Hayat al-Dunya and Akhirah), Worship ('Ibadah), Sincerity (Ikhlash), Piety (Taqwa), Virtuousness

(Salih), Love (Hubb), Excellence (Ihsan), Intellect ('Aql), Thinking (Tafakkur), Knowledge ('Ilm), and Time and Dynamics of Change (in the light of Surah al-Asr, Q. 103).

In the second section, themes and issues dealing with different aspects of human life—ranging from ethico-religious, socio-political, to historical and contemporary aspects—discussed in the light of Qura'nic perspective, are: human nature and psyche, ethics and morality, modesty and indecency (Haya and Fahisha), social ethics, individual-society relationship, concept of history, rise and fall of nations, moral corruption and its Qura'nic solution, (and among the contemporary issues discussed are) Ijtihad (as a dynamic tool for reformation), Shura-Democracy nexus, and Religious Pluralism. To put it briefly here, the contents and subject-matter of this book touches some of the significant concepts and themes, topics and issues; those aspects, themes, and issues which have either been overlooked, or are newly emerged (and thus fiercely debated), or have been misunderstood (and misread) due to the diverse interpretations, altered evaluations, and varied versions: examples include Salih, Hubb, Ihsan, 'Aql, Tafakkur, Haya, Ijtihad, Shura, and Pluralism. The book is written in a concise, succinct, lucid and persuasive manner. Blending the scholarship of past and present (produced by Muslims and non-Muslims), and reflecting on the major themes and issues of diverse nature, this book is a valuable addition in the field of Qur'anic Studies in general and in the thematic studies of the Qur'an in particular.

From this assessment, it becomes evident that the "Thematic Studies of the Qur'an" is a significant and recurring theme in the literature on the Qur'an—the Timeless "Guidance Unto Mankind" (Q. 2: 185), "explained on the basis of true knowledge" (Q. 7: 52)—and things Qur'anic which has indeed seen a surge in the 21st century.

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Laylat al-Bara'ah: Night of Salvation

Shabaaan is the 8th month of the Islamic calendar and the month in which the holy night of Shab-e-Baraat is celebrated.

KO Web Desk

Mid-Sha'ban is the 15th day of the eighth month (shaaban) of the Islamic lunar calendar. The preceding night is known as Laylatul Bara'ah or Laylatun Nisfe min Shaban in the Arab world, and as Shab-e-barat in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and India. These names are translated to the night of records, the night of assignment and the night of deliverance, and the observance involves a festive nightlong vigil with prayers. In some regions, this is also a night when one's deceased ancestors are commemorated.

In South Asia, Muslims make sweets to be given to the neighbours and the poor on the evening prior to the 15th of Sha'ban. This custom of distributing sweets is also practiced in Bosnia on the 15th night of Sha'ban, as well as on three other days of Laylatul Qadr, Laylatul Mi'raj and Laylatul Raghaib.

According to the Hadith, 15th night of Shabaaan is special as the night attains its name of Laylat al-Barakah, meaning the Night of Salvation, Seeking Freedom from torture and calamity, is that in this night the Barkaah and acceptance of repentance may be accomplished.

All the deeds that are against Shari'ah must be totally avoided so that our Dua and Istighfaar, hopefully, will be accepted. Muslims should check themselves and Imam Ahmad Riza has given a beautiful advise in this regard. Imam said: □Verily the auspicious night of Shab-e-Bara'a is drawing near when the deeds of the slave will be presented to the Almighty Allah. I humbly supplicate in the Darbar-e-Aqdas of the Almighty Allah that through the Wasila-e-Uzma of Sayyiduna Rasoolullah (pbuh) He forgives the sins and transgressions of all Muslims. Aameen.

On this occasion, it should be the duty of all Muslims to forgive one another and to make sure that whatever debts owed to one another is settled. The importance of Huqooq al-Ibaad cannot be over-emphasised as this is among the pre-requisites for proper Ibaadat. I pray that all Muslims humbly remember this night and try as much as possible to perform Ibaadat and other pious deeds so that their Record of Deeds be presented in all dignity.

"Finally, I pray that the Almighty Allah assists you and I and the Muslim Ummah wherever you may be. Muslims should be aware of sincerity and honesty in all their deeds. May Almighty Allah forgive all of us. Aameen." - Ahmad Riza Qaderi

COUNTLESS MERCIES

Sayyiduna Rasoolullah (pbuh) has stated: "Verily! Almighty Allah directs His Special Grace on the world on this Night. He forgives my Ummah more than the number of wool that is found on the sheep of the Bani Kalb." We should remember that in those days the Bani Kalb possessed the most number of sheep that any other tribe.

THE VISITORS OF THIS NIGHT

It is narrated that the departed souls (Arwaah) of the Muslims visit the houses of their friends and relatives on this night and proclaim: "O people of the house! You stay in our houses and enjoy the wealth that we have left behind. You use our children and take work from them, please perform our Esaale Sawaab. Verily our deeds have become complete, while your record of deeds is still spread."

VISIT TO THE CEMETERY

Hadrat Ayesha Siddiq (RA) reports: "One night, which was the 15th of Shabaaan, I did not find the Beloved Prophet (pbuh) in the house so I went in search of him. After a long search, I found him in Baqiah (the cemetery of Madinah) offering Du'a for the deceased and praying for their forgiveness". (Baihaqi)

A special point must be made to visit the cemetery during this night and pray for the deceased buried therein, as the Most Beloved Prophet (pbuh) is being reported as having visited the cemetery on this night and spending a long time therein, lamenting, reading and praying for the deceased.

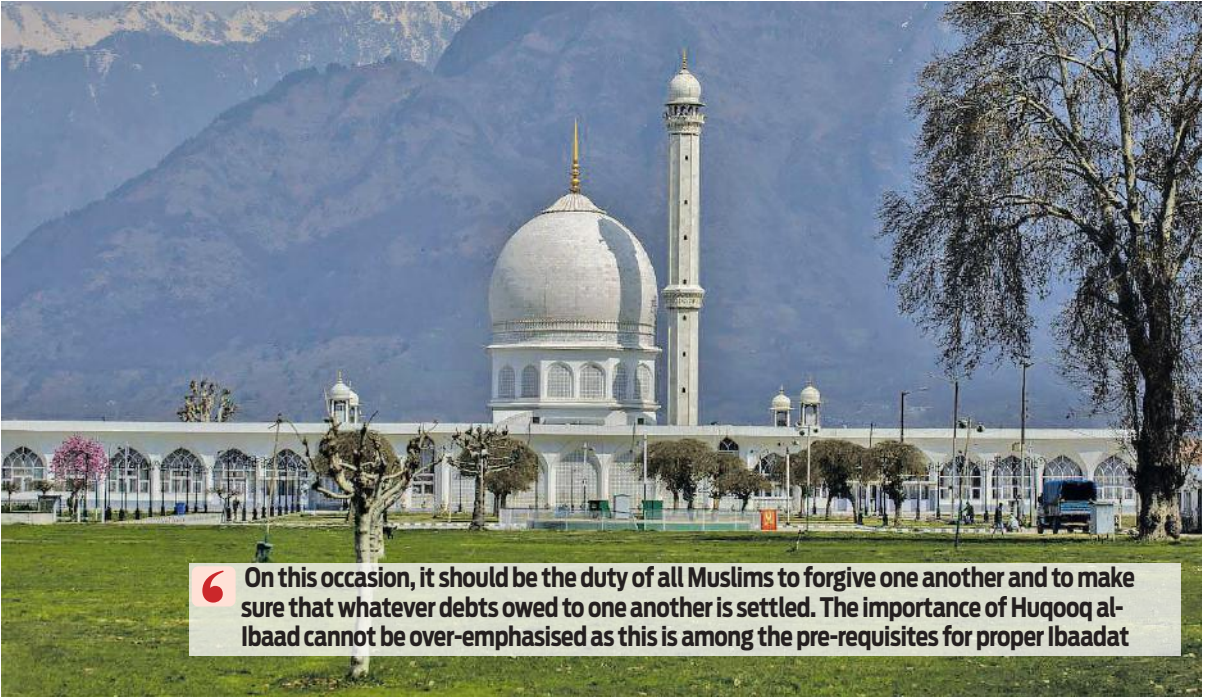
DO NOT BE AMONGST DEPRIVED OF MERCY

Sayyiduna Rasoolullah said: "Almighty Allah forgives all Muslims on this night, besides the fortune tellers, the magicians, the alcoholics, those who disrespect their parents and those who take part and encourage adultery".

In another narration, the following people have also been mentioned:

- One who deals in usury (Riba),
- One who wears his trousers below his ankle with pride and arrogance (In Arabia, people displayed their wealth and boasted in this manner),
- One who creates disunity among two Muslims,
- The person who unjustly takes away the right and property of another Muslim and has not yet rectified himself.

All these persons are not shown Mercy on this auspicious Night.



A HUMBLE APPEAL TO SEEK PARDON AND ASK ALLAH'S FORGIVENESS

Dear Muslim brothers, the Bountiful Allah in His Infinite Mercy has provided us with such an auspicious night so that we may take advantage of it and repent for our sins, and thus obtain His Grace and Favour. It is for us to take full advantage of it. During this night, offer special prayers and repent sincerely for our past sins and ask for His forgiveness.

Also on this night the Doors of Mercy and Forgiveness are opened wide, and those who sincerely grieve over and repent for their past sins and seek forgiveness from Allah are pardoned and forgiven by the Grace of Allah the Merciful.

Hadrat Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (RA) has mentioned in his famous "Gunyaat-ut Talibeen" that the month of Shaban according to some narrations is related to Rasoolullah (pbuh). So, it is our duty, as the Ummah of Rasoolullah to love and respect this month more than any other month (besides Ramadan). We should also offer abundantly salutations upon the Most Beloved Prophet (Salla Allahu ta'ala alayhi wa Sallam).

While we are praying and asking for ourselves and family, we should also remember in our Du'as the Muslim Ummah facing ca-

lamities in many parts of the world, that may Allah grant them the strength and Istiqamat (steadfastness) in Deen.

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANCE

Day Of Imam Mahdi

Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (ca. July 29, 869 (15 Shaaban 255 AH) - 874) is believed by Shia Muslims to be the Mahdi an ultimate savior of humankind and the final Imam. Shia of Jafari school believe that al-Mahdi was born on 15th of Sha'ban in 869 and did not die (like Prophets Jesus and Khizr) but rather went into occultation in 941 and will later emerge with Jesus Christ in order to fulfill their mission of bringing peace and justice to the world.

SUNNI VIEW

The Sunnis view Imam Mahdi as the successor of Prophet Mohammad. The Mahdi is expected to arrive to rule the world and to reestablish righteousness. The appearance of the Prophet was also proposed unto the Mahdi. An enormously influential tradition attributed to AbduAllah ibni Masud has Mohammad predict the coming of a Mahdi coined in his own image: "His name will be my name, and his father's name my father's name."

Prophet (pbuh) said:

The world will not come to an end until the Arabs are ruled by a man from my family whose name is the same as mine and whose father's name is the same as my father's. Sunan Abu Dawud,

Said Ummul Momineen Umm Salama: I heard the Messenger of Allah say: "The Mahdi is of my lineage and family [...]". Sunan Abu Dawud, 11/373; Sunan Ibn Maajah, 2/1368.

A typical modernist in his views on the Mahdi, Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979), the Pakistani Islamic revivalist, stated that the Mahdi will be a modern Islamic reformer/ statesman, who will unite the Ummah and revolutionise the world according to the ideology of Islam, but will never claim to be the Mahdi, instead receiving posthumous recognition as such.

-Syed Maududi, Tajdeed-o-Ahya-a-e-Deen, Islamic Publications Limited, Lahore, Pakistan, Chapter: Imam Mehdi

Abu Dawud also reported a hadith about the Mahdi that Prophet said:

The Mahdi will be of my stock, and will have a broad forehead, a prominent nose and a mark on his right cheek. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled

with oppression and tyranny, and he will rule for seven years.

At-Tirmidhi reported that Prophet said:

The face of the Mahdi shall shine upon the surface of the Moon.

SHIA VIEW

In Shia Islam "the Mahdi symbol has developed into a powerful and central religious idea." Twelver Shia Muslims believe that the Mahdi is Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam, who was born in 869 and was hidden by God at the age of five (874). He is still alive (like Jesus & Khizr) but has been in occultation, "awaiting the time that God has decreed for his return," When it comes he promised that no one who wanted happiness would be denied and no one who had believed will be left behind.

Shia traditions state that the Mahdi be "a young man of medium stature with a handsome face" and black hair and beard. "He will not come in an odd year [...] will appear in Makkah between the corner of the Kaaba and the station of Abraham and people will witness him there.

The Twelfth Imam will return as the Mahdi with "a company of his chosen ones," and his enemies will be led by the one-eyed Antichrist and the Sufyani. The two armies will fight "one final apocalyptic battle" where the Mahdi and his forces will prevail over evil. After the Mahdi has ruled Earth for a number of years, Isa will return.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAW) SAID:

The Mahdi is the protector of the knowledge, the heir to the knowledge of all the prophets, and is aware of all things.

Jafar al-Sadiq, the Sixth Imam, made the following prophecies:

Abu Bashir says: When I asked Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, "O son of the Messenger of God! Who is the Mahdi (qa'im) of your clan (ahl al-bayt)?", he replied: "The Mahdi will conquer the world; at that time the world will be illuminated by the light of God, and everywhere in which those other than God are worshipped will become places where God is worshipped; and even if the polytheists do not wish it, the only faith on that day will be the religion of God.— Bihar al-Anwar

Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq said:

"... During that time (the period of the occultation), await the advent (of the Imam) every morning and evening ... " Usul al-Kafi, Volume 1, Page 323

Centre Asks States To Restart Monitoring ILI, SARI Cases Amid Covid Surge In Southeast Asia



Agenceis

NEW DELHI: Citing the resurgence of coronavirus cases in southeast Asia and parts of Europe, the Centre has asked the states to restart monitoring influenza-like illness and severe acute respiratory infections so that no early warning signals are missed and Covid is controlled.

Testing for influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) cases has been the pillars of Covid management for the government.

However, the testings were stopped recently as India has been recording a steady decline in COVID-19 cases.

As part of intensified surveillance, patients being hospitalised with ILI and SARI will again be tested for COVID-19 and positive samples will be sent for genome sequencing.

In a letter, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan has asked all states and Union Territories to ensure an adequate number of samples are submitted to the INSACOG network for timely detection of new Covid variants.

He also stressed on maintaining testing according to protocols, observing all precautions and not letting the guard down while resuming economic and social activities.

"Effective surveillance by monitoring of emerging clusters of new cases, if any,

testing as per norms and monitoring of ILI and SARI cases shall be taken up on a continued basis to ensure no early warning signals are missed and spread of infection can be controlled," Bhushan said in the letter.

He further said the state machinery should create required awareness and ensure adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour and practise effective hand and respiratory hygiene.

With a spike in COVID-19 cases across Southeast Asia and some countries of Europe, a high-level meeting was chaired by Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on March 16 where the states were advised to focus on aggressive genome sequencing, intensified surveillance and overall vigil on the Covid situation, Bhushan said in the letter.

He also emphasised continued focus on the five-fold strategy of test, track, treat and vaccination and adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour.

"All the states and Union Territories must observe all precautions and not let the guard down while resuming economic and social activities," Bhushan stated.

"It is also vital that states may ensure all eligible people are motivated to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as per the recent expansion of vaccination drive," he added.

Azad Meets Sonia, Says No Question On Leadership; Pitches For 'United' Fight In Upcoming Polls

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: G-23 leader Ghulam Nabi Azad met Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday, after which he said leadership change is not an issue as the Congress Working Committee unanimously decided that she should continue as party chief till internal polls.

After meeting Gandhi at her 10, Janpath residence here, Azad told reporters that he gave her suggestions to strengthen the party and held a discussion on how to take on rivals "unitedly" in the forthcoming assembly polls.

The meeting comes days after the Group of 23 pitched for an "inclusive and collective leadership" in the Congress.

Kapil Sibal, another G-23 leader, had said recently that the Gandhis should step aside and pave the way for someone else to take over the reins of the party.

Asked about Sibal's call for the leadership change, Azad said, "There is no question of leadership (change). When Mrs Gandhi had offered (to quit) at the CWC, then all of us asked her to continue. There will be a discussion on that when the elections take place in the party."

Party workers will decide at that time who will be the president, Azad said, adding, "The post of the party president is not vacant today."

In the working committee, when she had offered to quit, "all of us, be it from any group or thinking, said Mrs Gandhi you continue, we have no problems, but there are some suggestions we had given to strengthen the organisation," Azad said.

"Nobody has said Mrs Gandhi should just quit, let me tell you very clearly that we had decided in the working committee," he told reporters.

His remarks assume significance and indicate a softening of stance of the G-23.

Azad said he had a very good meeting with the party president and the discussion centred on how to prepare and fight unitedly the forthcoming assembly polls to take on rival parties—national or regional.

Playing down the meeting, he told reporters that it "may be news for you but we keep meeting the Congress president at various intervals".



"Mrs Gandhi keeps having discussions with leaders to strengthen the organisation. A few days ago, the working committee had met and suggestions were asked as to how to strengthen the Congress party and what were the reasons for the defeat (in five assembly polls). I had also given my suggestions," he said.

However, it is not possible to record and remember all suggestions, he added. The members of the G-23 have held a flurry of meetings over measures to revamp the party.

After the Group of 23 pitched for an "inclusive and collective leadership" in the Congress, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, one of its members, had met Rahul Gandhi on Thursday and the two leaders were learnt to have discussed a revamp of the party organisation, a key demand of the dissenters.

The meetings held by Rahul with Hooda and Sonia with Azad are seen as an attempt by the Gandhi family to reach out to the G-23, which had shown signs of increasing aggression on the leadership issue after Congress' abject loss in the assembly elections in five states.

Earlier on Friday, Azad also met veteran Congress leader Karan Singh and said he greeted him on Holi.

Rahul Gandhi, a former Congress president, had called Hooda for a discussion on the political situation in Haryana. However, the discussion spilled over to

the party's abysmal performance in the elections.

Sonia Gandhi had earlier reached out to Azad on Wednesday ahead of the G-23 dinner meeting at his residence.

The leaders of the grouping have since held a series of meetings at Azad's residence.

The party leadership wants to resolve the differences with the G-23 and is reaching out to its leaders. It is learnt to have deputed some senior leaders for parleys with the dissenting group to resolve the differences, according to sources.

Amid calls by a section of Gandhi family loyalists for action against Kapil Sibal, who had said the Gandhis should step aside, Hooda is learnt to have conveyed to Rahul Gandhi that such a step will be unacceptable as the dissident leader had only spoken about strengthening the Congress.

The G-23 has been persistently seeking a restructuring of the organisation since it first wrote to Sonia Gandhi in 2020 about it after a string of electoral losses.

The grouping had, in a statement on Wednesday, said, "The only way forward for the Congress was to adopt a model of inclusive and collective leadership and decision-making at all levels."

The group insisted they want to strengthen the Congress and "not to undermine it in any way".

Soldier Booked For Attempt To Rape; Fir Against 4 Officers For Trying To Protect Him

Press Trust Of India

JODHPUR: An Army man has been booked on charges of attempting to rape a colleague's wife while four officers have been named in the FIR for allegedly trying to threaten the couple and hush up the matter.

The victim also alleged that the Army police, which was sent to them by the officers, instead of taking action against the accused, harassed them and forced them to give a wrong statement in order to protect him.

Two days after the alleged incident, the victim and her soldier husband lodged a complaint against the accused and four officers two of the rank of Colonel and two Majors at the Ratanada police station here.

The Army said it has initiated an internal inquiry by military authorities and also assured cooperation and assistance to Ratanada police in a fair investigation.

The victim, in her complaint, stated that she lived in the cantonment area with her husband, who serves in the Army as a soldier.

On March 14 evening, a subedar came to her house when she was taking a bath and tried to molest her. When she raised the alarm, her husband, who was around, came to her rescue. Both of them tried to catch the subedar, but he managed to flee, station house officer Bharat Rawat said, citing the victim's complaint.

According to Rawat, the complaint further stated that the couple immediately informed the seniors in the Army, who not only discouraged them against raising the issue but also forced them to keep mum. The victim also alleged that the officers tried their best to keep her and her husband confined to their house so that did not venture out seeking action against the accused.

Also, the victim complained that the five people should be held responsible if anything untoward happened to them.

Defence spokesperson Lt. Col. Amitabh Sharma said, The Indian Army has taken cognizance of a case in which the wife of a serving soldier staying in Jodhpur Military Station has filed an FIR making serious allegations against another serving soldier and other personnel.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

HM Reviews

Kathua to meet CRPF personnel at Mahanpur, where a high security prison is being built, before returning to Delhi in the evening.

This is Shah's second visit to Jammu and Kashmir in the past five months. The home minister had toured the union territory in October last year, his first after the Centre revoked the erstwhile state's special status and bifurcated it into two union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh -- on August 5, 2019.

BSF Chief

also given an impressive guard of honour.

The DG extended his greeting to the troops and their families on the occasion of Holi.

CBI Books Ex- J&K

were supposed to provide paddy to the company, in turn the company had to sell the produce (paddy) and the remittance thereof had to be deposited in the bank as instalments against advances received by the company," the FIR in the case

The bank authorities and the company knew that the loan amount had to be disbursed among farmers for production of paddy.

But this was brazenly violated by the company in connivance by the bank authorities who allowed disbursement of loan through joint liabilities groups (JLGs), though the company had already received paddy and was not entitled to disburse the loan under such circumstances.

"As per probe conducted during PE, the JLGs were in fact non-existing entities whose credentials and antecedents had never been verified by the bank. The objective was to facilitate the company to divert the loan amount for its own benefit, the FIR said.

"The bank also violated NABARD guidelines in which members of JLG's (which is a group of farmers) should be from the same area/village but this aspect was deliberately and with mala fide intentions ignored by the bank's officers," the FIR alleged.

The preliminary enquiry findings of the anti-corruption bureau state that it was surprising that there was no tangible security taken by the bank in these cases.

"These loans and advances were sanctioned and disbursed by the officials of the J&K Bank branch in Mahim, Mumbai, and Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, in connivance with and under patronage of then chairman, J&K Bank, Mushtaq Ahmad Sheikh under single conspiracy spread over several years....," the FIR said.

The FIR said it was done in a planned and pre-designed manner by misuse and abuse of their authority as public servants of the bank, just to serve the interest of the promoters of the company -- Sanjay Jhunjhunwala and Sandeep Jhunjhunwala.

Govt Serves Show

in violation of Jammu and Kashmir Government Employees (Conduct) Rules of 1971, as envisaged under Rule 18 (i).

The two have been asked to explain their position within ten days or face action under the rules.

Meters Soon

The proposal for installation of water meters was framed years ago but was kept on hold as the previous elected government's feared backlash in the elections," the official said.

However, the official said that installation of water meters was not to put any burden on consumers.

"After installation of water meters, there will be 24x7 tap water to all consumers. Besides, it will also stop misuse of water as many people use tap water for gardening and also washing their vehicles resulting in many areas facing shortage of tap water. The water shortage problem can only be resolved if people are willing to change their attitude towards water consumption," he said.

Many states and cities in India have already installed metering of domestic as well as commercial water connections including Chandigarh, Mumbai, and Delhi. The residents in these areas have opted for smart water meters linked to phones that provide updates on consumption data and the bill. (KINS)

Leh Highway

(Srinagar-Leh National Highway) tomorrow (Saturday). We were able to keep Zojila pass, which attracts heavy snowfall during winter, open till January 4 this year which is a record, Lt Gen Chaudhary told reporters at Jawahar Tunnel near Banihal after reviewing the ongoing repair and renovation work.

He said the highway used to close by November-end, but the efforts of the Beacon force unit in Kashmir and Vijayak force unit in Ladakh in 2020 saw the highway remaining open till December 31 before it was closed. The highway was opened on April 21 last year.

This time we are making further efforts to bring down that 110-day period so that the vital road connecting Srinagar and Leh is made trafficable to ensure smooth transportation

of goods, including medical and other supplies, to Ladakh, Lt Gen Chaudhary said.

He said the purpose of his visit was to oversee the repair and maintenance work on Jawahar Tunnel besides taking stock of roads and other infrastructure.

The renovation and upgradation work on the twin tubes of Jawahar Tunnel on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was taken up early last year after it was bypassed by the opening of 8.5 km Navyug tunnel, connecting Banihal town in Ramban district with Qazigund in south Kashmir's Anantnag.

This project will be completed this year. This is the oldest tunnel, which was taken over by BRO in 1963. The upgradation of the tunnel with state-of-the-art ventilation, fire-fighting and intelligent traffic control systems is progressing smoothly, the Director General of the BRO said.

Lt Gen Chaudhary, who was earlier briefed by the officers on the progress of work on the tunnel, said the traffic which cannot be allowed through the newly constructed Navyug tunnel will go through this tunnel. These include oil tankers carrying fuel to the Valley.

Jawahar Tunnel, having two tubes with a length of 2.85 kms each, was constructed in 1955-60 by a German company. Last time, the tunnel was renovated in 1997.

About Rs 80 crore was being spent on modernisation of the two tubes as the government is planning to develop the area as a tourist destination.

Beig Construction Company (BCC) is undertaking the renovation and upgradation work which include improving electromagnetic design, lining pavements, road surface work and its safety features like unmanned-monitoring, state-of-the-art fire fighting system, ventilation system, including lighting, intelligent traffic control system and various other allied works.

HC Directs Govt

the states and is ready to provide the necessary technical support for the same.

Reports said that the petitioners highlighted before the court that one of the important provision i.e. section 7(1) of the RTI Act which states that "information sought for concerns the life or liberty of a person, the same shall be provided within 48 hours of the receipt of the request" is not effective under the existing system and it severely affects the life and liberty of citizens.

"The petitioners further highlighted that the applicant is forced to incur extra costs/ fee for printing/ stationery/ transit to and from the post offices

etc. This, in comparison to the opportunity cost of submitting the requests for information and the follow-up processes thereof, all at minimal costs if done online through RTI-MIS, which would encourage the applicants to seek information by saving their time and money. The implementation of the same would be in line with the spirit of the transparency laws in general, the RTI Act in particular, as well as the Constitutional mandate," reports added.

It is to be noted that the online RTI portal will enable the residents to file RTI applications without going through the physical process of posting the applications physically or having to visit the offices to get the desired information. This will facilitate the speedy dispensation of the information sought by the applicants.

CRPF To Buy US

night vision devices, radio equipment, counterfeit currency, precious metals etc.

"Currently, after correspondence, presentations and technical discussions with M / S SSSI Ltd and OEM, the dates for demonstration of MMPDS system at OEM's R & D facility and on-site installation at US were sought and awaited by the firm," CRPF Director-General Kuldip Singh said.

He also said that many other manufacturers of vehicle scanning systems made submissions to Force officials, but they did not meet the requirements.

"Once the initial presentation has been made before us, a team of CRPF officials will visit the manufacturer in the US to evaluate the actual performance of the system."

Muons-based technology can help detect hazardous nuclear material and look into damaged nuclear power plants.

Scientists use muons for archaeological purposes to peek inside large, dense objects such as the Pyramids in Egypt.

It is pertinent to note that weapons are transported in the Kashmir Valley in large vehicles, especially in trucks transporting goods to the trade union area from other parts of the valley or from the International Border with Pakistan.

There have been cases where in the goods-laden trucks were used to transport even militants from one place to another in the valley, officials said.

Once these vehicle scanners are installed in Jammu and Kashmir's major intersections, including highways, it will help the security forces to look at what is being brought into the trucks and other vehicles.

and to cope up with pandemic related restrictions.

The details of unemployment rate came to light in the periodic labour force survey (PLFS) conducted by National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) during October-December in 2020. The survey is organized every three months to evaluate the unemployment in urban areas.

LG Greets People

the spirit of forgiveness, benevolence, hope and good deeds.

"May the auspicious occasion further strengthen the foundation of synthetic culture and promote progress, peace and prosperity in J&K and well-being of all," Sinha said.

Soldier Dies Of

immediately brought to the army's 92 Base hospital here for treatment. However, the doctors declared him dead.

Sources said that after necessary medico-legal formalities, the soldier's body will be shifted to his native village for final rites. (KDC)

15 New Corona

from Kashmir division, the officials said.

They said Srinagar district recorded the highest of four cases.

Twelve of the total 22 districts in the union territory did not report any fresh cases, they added.

There are 133 active cases in J and K, while the number of recovered patients was 4,48,637, the officials said.

The death toll in the union territory due to the pandemic was 4,750, they said.

6 'Militant Associates'

all residents of Kakapora, Aqib Maqbool Bhat of Pampore, Arshid Ahmad Mir and Rameez Raja of Parigam.

During preliminary investigation, he said, it was revealed that these arrested militant associates were involved in providing logistics, shelter, managing and transferring "terror finance and motivating youth to act as hybrid terrorists".

The investigating team, according to the spokesperson also learnt that they were working for LeT militant commander Reyaz Ahmad Dar alias Khalid alias Sheeraz and were in constant touch with him besides, on his directions were instrumental in perpetuating militancy in the district.

"Accordingly, a case FIR number 19/20222 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Kakapora and investigation has been initiated," he added.

Toll Post Employees Cut Driver's Ear Cartilage

Police Registers Case, 2 People Arrested

SRINAGAR: Police on Friday arrested two people after a driver was allegedly beaten up and his ear cartilage was cut by some employees at NHA1 toll post at Banihal in Ramban district.

Deputy Commissioner Ramban assured investigation into the matter.

Actually a video of the incident is in circulation on social media groups in which cut on ear cartilage of driver, Nazakat Ali, son of Mohd Shafi from Bhallar Kanthi in Reasi, can be seen. Some people, apparently fellow drivers, can be heard saying that it's "hooliganism" and that the particular driver's ear cartilage was cut using a knife. In the video, the injured driver can be seen lying down on the road and he holds the injured

ear with some cloth. When somebody lifts the cloth momentarily, the deep cut in ear cartilage is clearly visible.

SDM Banihal said that a police party rushed to the spot and after "medical", necessary legal action is being taken.

Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mussarat Islam, told a local news agency GNS two persons have been arrested. Sources said that arrested two employees include Rakesh and Sunil.

They are employees of CPPL—Choudhary Power Projects Private Limited, the company which has got the present contractor for toll collection.

"A case (FIR 51 of 2022) has been filed and necessary action under law will be taken," he said.

Shopian Admin Cracks Down On Spurious Pesticides, Fertilizer Dealers

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: The District Administration Shopian on Friday launched a major crackdown against the sale of spurious pesticides/ Fertilizers in the district.

Enforcement team headed by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Shopian, Mushtaq Ahmed Simnani along with SDM, Zainapora, Mushtaq Ahmad, Tehsildar, Shopian, Chief Horticulture Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Law Enforcement Officer, South and Fertilizer Inspector made surprise inspection of retail outlets/ warehouses of pesticides and seized on spot 750 bags of different fertilizers either without Batch Number or without sampling.

During the inspection, many pesticides/fertilizers sale outlets and warehouses were inspected and registration documents were checked and some samples were also lifted for laboratory testing.

The teams instructed the dealers to strictly comply with guidelines in vogue.

Regarding the surprise inspections, the ADC said that every single pesticide/fertilizers outlet/warehouse in the district shall be inspected for quality check of pes-

ticides/fertilizers in future also and punitive action under law shall be initiated against unregistered/ illegally operating units or those compromising with quality of the pesticides/fertilizers in the district.

He said that the District Administration is vigorously working and pursuing an endeavour to ensure that only the genuine quality products (insecticides/ pesticides/fertilizers) reaches the consumer (farmer).

Simnani said that the Govt. has also constituted district wise law enforcement teams comprising District Law Enforcement Officer, District Agriculture Officer, Law Enforcement Inspector and concerned Horticulture Development Officer for strict implementation of Insecticide Act (1968) and Rules (1971) thereof. People can register their grievances with these officers for immediate action, he added.

The ADC stressed upon the need to eradicate the menace of sale of spurious pesticides in the district for bumper apple crop. He assured the public that criminal action shall be initiated against such dealers who are involved in this racket of selling spurious pesticides thereby causing damage to the apple crops.

Bandipora Admin Inspects School Buses For Safety Norms

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Dr. Owais Ahmad, ARTO Bandipora, Bilal Ahmad on Friday inspected buses of various private schools to check safety and other regulatory norms.

The inspection was carried out as a part of a special drive to check all school buses and vans to ensure and check the safety, regulatory norms, and other required documents, especially the fitness certificates.

The DC said that the drive has been launched to ensure that the vehicles that carry the students are technically safe and adhere to regulatory norms. He said it is a matter of safety for school kids, and violators shall be strictly dealt with under law.

Dr. Owais asked the concerned to conduct a special audit of buses used by various schools to check fixing of grills on the windows, installation of GPS, installation of fire extinguishers and facilitating first-aid boxes with necessary medicines and equipment in the vehicles.

Providing Sustainable Livelihood to Village Women, DG HK Hails SEEDS



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Scores of women farmers were felicitated at a function on Friday with Director General Horticulture, Kashmir, Ajaz Ahmad Bhat hailing the efforts of members of social enterprises "Seed Solutions" (SEEDS) for their work.

The event was organised by SEEDS at Tumlihal in Pulwama district to felicitate its women farmers and DG Bhat distributed the training certificates and awards amongst them.

Bhat interacted with the members of SEEDS and also congratulated its founder Sanna Masood for the work she has done for the economic and social upliftment of women of the village by providing them sustainable livelihoods through various trainings and Resource Centres.

Bhat also visited a hi-tech sustainable Strawberry Farm developed as a pilot project by Seed Solutions and praised Dr. Nayeema Jabeen Chief Horticulturist SEEDS for her innovative approach and dedication.

DG expressed full support for the work being carried out in the farm and said that he is hopeful that these type of projects will inspire and encourage others as well to earn their livelihood from the cultivation of strawberry.

Director General also expressed his solidarity with women farmers and entrepreneurs who are working in the state and also highlighted the importance of collective farming

He said that social, economic and educational upliftment of rural women is the need of the hour in the state.



DEVOTEES OFFERING CONGREGATIONAL Friday prayers on a warm sunny day in Srinagar.

KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Mercury Soars To All-Time High In Pahalgam, Qazigund

Nearly Breaches Records Elsewhere In Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The maximum temperature shattered all time high record for the month of March in Pahalgam and Qazigund as mercury soared to 24.3°C in the world famous resort and 27.8°C in the gate way town of Kashmir respectively on Friday.

The mercury also nearly breached all-time records for other parts of the Valley with Srinagar recording maximum of 27.4°C which is highest in more than last decade barring 31 March 2018 when the summer capital recorded highest ever temperature of 28.3°C, a meteorological department official said. The maximum temperature was almost twice than the normal in Srinagar, the official said.

Similarly, he said, Gulmarg recorded maximum of 16.5°C which is also the second highest ever maximum temperature recorded for the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir. Gulmarg had the highest ever temperature during the month of March in 31st day in 2018 when

it recorded maximum of 17.6°C, the official said. Previous highest temperature for Pahalgam and Qazigund was 23.9°C and 26.5°C respectively, the official said.

Also night temperatures increased at most places across Jammu and Kashmir, settling above normal by 7.3°C Gulmarg.

The meteorological department official said that Srinagar recorded a low of 8.5°C against last night's 7.6°C. The night temperature was 3.8°C above normal for Srinagar during this time of the year.

Qazigund recorded a low of 7.0°C, same as on the previous night. The temperature was above normal by 3.4°C for the gateway town, he said.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded maximum of 26.1°C and a low of 8.4°C against 7.7°C on the previous night. The minimum temperature was 4.9°C more than normal during this time of the season, the official said.

Pahalgam recorded a low of 2.0°C against 2.1°C last night. The temperature was 1.9°C above

normal, he said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of 5.0°C against 4.8°C on the previous night, the official said. While minus 2.3°C is normal there, the temperature was 7.3°C above usual for the place in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, he said.

Kupwara town in north Kashmir recorded maximum of 27.3°C and a low of 6.2°C against 5.6°C on the previous night. The temperature was 3.1°C more than normal, the official said.

Jammu recorded maximum of 33.1°C. It recorded low of 24.0°C against 16.9°C on the previous night, the official said. The temperature was 9.1°C above normal for the J&K's winter capital during this time of the year, he said.

Banihal recorded a low of 8.8°C, Batote had a minimum of 13.1°C while Bhaderwah recorded a low of 9.4°C, the official said.

Ladakh's Leh recorded a minimum of 1.4°C against 1.4°C previous night while automatic Kargil station recorded a low of minus 2.8°C. Mainly dry weather is expected over Jammu and Kashmir for now, the official added. (GNS)

Omar Abdullah Calls 'The Kashmir Files' A 'Concocted Story'

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The National Conference on Friday broke its silence on 'The Kashmir Files' and said the movie was far from the truth as the movie makers have ignored the sacrifices of the Muslims and Sikhs who had also suffered from militancy.

Vice President of the party and former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah said that if 'The Kashmir Files' was a commercial movie, no one has an issue, but if the film makers claim that it is based on reality, then the facts are the other way round.

"When the unfortunate incident of Kashmiri Pandit migration took place, Farooq Abdullah was not the chief minister. Jagmohan was the governor. It was V P Singh's government at the Centre which was supported by the BJP from outside," Abdullah told reporters in Damal Hanji Pora of Kulgam district of

South Kashmir.

Abdullah wondered why this fact was kept away from the movie.

"Don't manipulate the truth. It's not the right thing. 'If Kashmiri Pandits have fallen victims to terrorism, we have utmost regret about that, but let us not forget the sacrifices of Muslims and Sikhs who were also targeted by the same gun,' he said.

Abdullah said that some of those from the majority community were yet to return.

"Today, there is a need to create an atmosphere where we could bring back all those who had left their homes and not create a communal divide," he said.

The former chief minister said an atmosphere would be created for the return of Kashmiri Pandits.

"But I do not think that those people who have made this movie, want them (Kashmiri Pandits) to



return. Through this picture, they want Pandits to remain outside always," he said. Earlier, in his address, Abdullah said attempts were being made to defame a community across the world.

"A common Kashmiri is not happy with what happened 32 years ago, that people were made to leave the Valley. Today, an impression is being created that all Kashmiris are communal, that all Kashmiris do not bear the people from other religions. What will be achieved by this? Will it make the road easier for their return? 'I am afraid that the hatred which is being created against Kashmiri Muslims today, God forbid, our children studying outside the state, should not bear its brunt,' he said.

Showcasing Bloodshed For Political Gains Dangerous: Tarigami

SRINAGAR: The migration of Kashmiri Pandits is a tragic chapter of Kashmir's history, but showcasing bloodshed for "political gains" is dangerous for the country and the people, CPI(M) leader M Y Tarigami said on Friday. His remarks come in the wake of controversy over the recently-released movie "The Kashmir Files", which is based on the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley in the 1990s.

Talking to reporters here, Tarigami said there is a need to objectively project the tragedies suffered by the people in Kashmir.

"It is our misfortune that Kashmir has been for the last so many decades continuously going through a tragic situation, and the most shameful incident which has caused a dent to the identity of Kashmir is the migration by a very important part of our society the Kashmiri Pandits, who left their homes because of fear. There is no doubt that is a tragic chapter of our history," he said.

The CPI(M) leader, however, said the fact is also that the violent forces did not single out people of any particular religion.

"I only have one thing to ask to those elements who are trading in the Kashmiri blood by selling it in various markets, that please stop. Whoever was killed, whichever

religion he belonged to, but he was a Kashmiri," he said.

Referring to various incidents of killings in the Valley in the past, Tarigami said while in the 1998 Wandhama massacre, 23 Pandits were killed, the Gaw Kadal massacre in 1990 cannot be forgotten.

He called for establishing a truth and reconciliation commission.

"While our innocent brothers and sisters from the minority community were killed in Budgam, who killed the passengers of a bus in Kupwara? If an innocent sister from Pandit community was raped and killed in Sopore, then what happened in Kunan Poshpora?" Tarigami said.

"If Hindus and Muslims were killed, our brothers and sisters from Sikh community were killed in Chattisinghpore (in 2000) as well. I want the PM to show boldness and constitute a truth and reconciliation commission like after apartheid in Africa to know who was killed and by whom. While those killed will not return, but accountability will be established. Their families will come to know who killed them," he said.

The CPI(M) leader said that "to showcase the bloodshed for political gains is dangerous for the country, the people and for Kashmir".

'Mumkin' Transforming Lives In Jammu And Kashmir

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Muzafar Wani, a resident of Ramsoo village in Jammu and Kashmir's hilly Ramban district, wanted to own a commercial vehicle as he could barely make ends meet in the 12 years of his career as a driver for other vehicle owners.

Thanks to the Jammu and Kashmir government's 'Mumkin' scheme, Wani now owns a pickup truck and says he is able to provide enough for his family and also educate his children.

A customized employment generation scheme for those aged between 18 and 35, 'Mumkin' assists the unemployed in procuring small commercial vehicles at a subsidized cost and earning a sustainable livelihood.

Sometimes, I would not get work for many days. Many a time, I decided to stop my daughters from going to school. I always wanted to educate them but financial constraints forced me to look the other way, Wani, who has four children, including two daughters, said recalling his days as a driver for different vehicle owners.

Wani says he learnt about 'Mumkin' through a friend last October and he then contacted the officials of the government's Mission Youth.

Riyaz Raqeeb of Khonmoh in Srinagar, another beneficiary of the scheme, said he learnt to drive at a young age as he was compelled to lend a helping hand to his family of six, includ-

ing his four siblings.

He worked as a driver for private companies and other vehicle owners on a daily basis, however, he struggled to earn enough to look after his family.

I was not earning enough to fund the education and other needs of my four younger siblings. Though I worked for 12 to 14 hours a day, I earned little, Raqeeb says.

He stumbled upon the government's initiative on social media in August last year, and he soon found himself at the District Employment and Counseling Centre in Srinagar.

I am thankful to the government for providing me a source of livelihood with a subsidy, Raqeeb says.

Under 'Mumkin', small commercial vehicles are being provided to the beneficiaries, with the banking partner extending the loan facility up to 100 per cent of the vehicle's on-road price.

Mission Youth, Jammu and Kashmir, provides Rs 80,000 or 10 per cent of the vehicle's on-road price, whichever is lesser, as an upfront subsidy and the vehicle manufacturers, whom the government has partnered with, provides an upfront special discount, not less than the subsidy amount.

Officials said a module has been developed on the JK State e-Services Application to run the scheme digitally and ensure transparency. Till date, 1,882 applications for self-

Div Com Visits IDTR, ICC Proposed Sites At Budgam



Calls For Paper Work Completion In Two Weeks' Time

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: The Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole on Friday visited Budgam and inspected the proposed site for the development of Institute of Driving, Training and Research (IDTR) and Inspection and Certification Centre (ICC) facilities at SIDCO Ompora.

The Div Com was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Shahbaz Ahmed Mirza, CE R&B, MD JKPC, RTO Kashmir and SSP Traffic Rural. ARTO Budgam, R&B, Tehsildar Budgam, DySP Traffic Budgam and other concerned officers were also present during the inspection.

On the occasion, the DC and MD

JKPC apprised the Div Com about the overall project and its facilities and land profile of the site.

The Div Com deliberated on the importance of facilities and called for speedy completion of design, approval and preparation of land papers for early start of work on both facilities. Followed by works including leveling and development of tracks be also carried out on war footing.

He instructed concerned to ensure that number of required facilities be established as common for both IDTR and ICC for best cost management during the work execution.

The facilities shall include office building, hostel building, workshop, reverse block for LMV, H block for HMV, LMV, V block, 8 track HMV, LMV, 3 turn points, hill track, reverse and parallel parking facilities.

Announcement (Under the MCI Ethics & Regulations 6,1)

ANNOUNCEMENT

KASHMIR CLINICS WELCOMES THE
SR.CONSULTANTS FROM APOLLO HOSPITALS

INDRAPRASTHA APOLLO HOSPITALS

SUPER SPECIALITY OPD AT: Kashmir Clinics

CONSULTANT	SPECIALITY	DATE & TIME
Dr. Sameer Kaul	Sr.Consultant- Clinical Oncology	26 MARCH .11:00 AM TO 05:00 PM 27 MARCH .02:30 PM TO 05:00 PM
Dr. Sudheer Tyagi	Sr.Consultant- Neuro Surgery	26 MARCH .11:00 AM TO 02:30 PM
Dr.Sandeep Guleria	Sr.Consultant Kidney Transplant Surgeon	26 MARCH .11:00 AM TO 02:30 PM
Dr. Syed Uzair	Consultant Gastroenterology ,Hepatology & therapeutic Endoscopy	27 MARCH .11:00 AM TO 02:30 PM

VENUE:262-64 NURSING GARH,BEHIND 3 PETROL PUMPS,BATMALOO,SGR.

FOR REGISTRATION PLEASE CONTACT: PH: 7006416429,911943516861

FOR ENQUIRIES CONTACT: APOLLO INFORMATION CENTER, JABBAR COMPLEX, BATWARA

MOB: 7889676832,9419076944. (DILEEP KAPOOR PH:9419281963)

Abbas Ads: 7006444730

South Africa Leave Out IPL-Bound Players From Bangladesh Series Test Squad



Press Trust of India

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa have expectedly left out the IPL-bound players from their 15-man Test squad for the two-match home series against Bangladesh starting March 31. South Africa will be without their entire first-choice pace attack comprising Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen as well as batters Aiden Markram and Rassie van der Dussen as they chose the IPL over the Test series.

Cricket South Africa had said it would be leaving it to the players to make the decision whether to play in the IPL or in the series, which the Test captain Dean Elgar had called a "litmus test of loyalty".

Middle-order batter Khaya Zondo got his maiden Test call-up and uncapped quick Daryn Dupavillon also found a place in the squad. Meanwhile, Anrich

Nortje once again missed out on selection with a longstanding back and hip issue. That also means there is no clarity about his availability in the IPL, where he is part of the Delhi Capitals side. Nortje last played in November 2021, at the T20 World Cup in the UAE.

The IPL-bound players are set to fly to India for the tournament, which begins on March 26, at the conclusion of the ongoing ODI series.

According to CSA's current MoU with the South African Cricketers' Association (SACA), the board cannot refuse players the opportunity to take part in the IPL, as both organisations look to balance the livelihoods and opportunities of players and their duties to the national team.

The first Test starts on March 31 in Durban and the second on April 7 in Port Elizabeth.

England Pacer Mark Wood Out Of IPL Due To Injury

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: England pacer Mark Wood has been ruled out of the upcoming IPL with an elbow injury.

A report in 'Espancricinfo' said that Wood will not represent Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL beginning March 26 after picking up a right elbow injury during the first Test against the West Indies last week.

New entrants Super Giants had paid Rs 7.5 crore for Wood at the IPL auction last month.

Wood could only bowl 17 overs in the game against West Indies in North Sound.

The Super Giants will be led by K L Rahul and coached by Andy Flower.



PAK Vs AUS

PCB Moves ODI Series Out Of Rawalpindi



Press Trust of India

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has shifted the white ball series against Australia from Rawalpindi to Lahore on the advice of the government.

Federal Minister for Interior, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed confirmed on Friday that the three ODIs and lone T20 would be played in Lahore instead of Rawalpindi.

"Due to political activities and scenario we have decided it would be better to have the matches in Lahore as there will be a lot of movement and activities in Islamabad and Pindi during the time frame the matches are scheduled," he said.

The ODIs are scheduled to be held on March 29, 31 and April 2 followed by the T20 on April 4.

Australia are already in Lahore preparing for the third Test at the Gaddafi stadium, which starts on Monday.

An Australian team official said the PCB had spoken to them and they had no issues as it only meant less travelling for the players.

The Australian squad since its arrival in Pakistan has enjoyed an incident-free tour despite a major suicide bomb attack in Peshawar but due to the political scenario heating up after the opposition filed a no confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan, political activities have picked up in the twin cities.

Several political rallies by the government and opposition have been planned ahead of the national assembly session in the coming days.

Law enforcement agencies expect thousands of people to enter Rawalpindi and Islamabad from next week.

Australia and Pakistan squads had stayed in Islamabad when they played the first Test in Pindi earlier this month.

Manchester United To Field Cricket Team In UAE T20 League

Agencies

DUBAI: Manchester United will have a cricket team that's set to roll out from 2023 on the UAE T20 Cricket League. Dubai Sports Council chairman Sheikh Mansoor Bin Mohammed confirmed the news through a tweet.

"I met with Avram Glazer, Co-Chairman of Manchester United, today and discussed ways to work together to further raise Dubai's profile as a global sporting hub. We also discussed the UAE T20 Cricket league's launch in Jan 2023 featuring Manchester United cricket team & other teams," Sheikh Mansoor tweeted late on Thursday.

Glazer, United's co-chairman, purchased one of many six groups in the UAE T20 League, which is ready to be launched in January subsequent 12 months. Of late, the United house owners have been displaying an eager curiosity in cricket.

Martial Arts C'ship Under 'Play For Drug Free Srinagar' Begins



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad on Friday inaugurated a Martial Arts championship under the banner "Play for Drug Free Srinagar" here at Government Boys Higher Secondary School Rawalpura.

The event was organised by District Youth Services & Sports in collaboration with Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Department.

Under the overall supervision of District Administration Srinagar in which Sqay Martial Art and Taekwondo competitions/demonstration were conducted.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner stressed

upon the need and importance of holding such programs that keep youth engaged with creative activities and to create awareness about evils of Drug Abuse. He asked the young participants to carry forward the message to completely curb drug addiction from society.

The DC further stressed upon them to work voluntarily in their respective communities and raise their voice against such unlawful activities that ruin the career of youth. He said the District Administration has launched MISSION WAAPSI to save and rehabilitate the youth affected from the social evil of drug menace. He reiterated that all possible efforts shall be made to eradicate such nuisance to make Srinagar a Drug

Free City.

The DC said that various initiatives are being taken to further upgrade the sports infrastructure in the District to provide a better sports platform to budding talent so that they can exhibit their hidden talent to compete at national and global level sports competitions.

After inaugurating the event, young girl participants displayed brilliant talent through Sqay Martial Art, Taekwondo and other games.

Programme Officer, ICDS, Zeenat Ara, District Youth Services & Sports Officer, Balbir Singh, Principal BHSS Rawalpura, Mrs Tanveera and other senior Officers, Officials, Staff members, school children were present on the occasion.

YSS Cup 21 To Begin From March 29

Host districts directed to make all necessary arrangements well in advance: Gazanfar Ali

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Department of Youth Services and Sports is all set to organise inter district competitions of YSS Cup 21 in the disciplines of Kho-Kho, Kabaddi and Volleyball under phase 1st.

The UT level competitions in all the three games are expected to start from 29th of the current month till 2nd April 2022 as per the schedule annexed.

Pertinently the Cup was declared Open in a well attended function at Khel Gaon Nagrota Jammu on December 16 last year by the Principal Secretary to Govt. Youth Services and Sports Department J&K Alok Kumar along with Director Sports Gazanfar Ali.

Nearly 9076 Panchayat/Block teams drawn from all twenty districts of the Union territory in four sports disciplines namely Cricket/Kabaddi/Kho-Kho and Volleyball were registered for this historic and first of its kind sports extravaganza.

As per an official communiqué, Director YSS has directed all the DYSSOs of J&K to deploy their teams well in time un-



der proper escort of the game knowing officials for taking part in the inter district level competitions being organized by the department at different venues.

"The Host districts are directed to make all the necessary arrangements of venues, equipment, transport, boarding-lodging and arrangements of refreshment for the smooth

conduct of the competitions," the communiqué reads. "The Joint Director Kashmir, Deputy Director (Directorate) and Assistant Director Jammu of the Department have been directed to monitor the activities personally and ensure that preferably NIS qualified technical staff is engaged for the smooth conduct of the competitions," the communiqué added.

National SnowShoe Championship To Begin At Gulmarg From Today

Around 100 athletes from 11 teams participating in the championship

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The National SnowShoe Championship 2022 is going to commence on Saturday at Gulmarg.

Director Tourism Kashmir, Dr G.N Itoo flagged off the teams from TRC here. The teams from various parts of country who are participating in the championship reached Srinagar on Friday.

Around 100 athletes representing 11 States and HAWS team are going to participate in the event.

During the two day event,



competitions of Long Distance and Sprint events would be held in both male and female section on both senior and junior categories.

The event is being organised by J&K SnowShoe Association in collaboration with Directorate of Tourism Kashmir and SnowShoe Federation of India.

First-Ever Snow Skiing Course Organised At Gurez

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: In a first, the District Youth Services and Sports department Bandipora in collaboration with District Administration, Bandipora has organised a Snow Skiing course at Gurez.

The course began earlier this month, and 50 students have been trained so far with basics of Snow skiing and around 100 boys and girls are expected to be trained during the skiing course, which will last until the favorable snow accumulation remains on the ground.

The Deputy Commissioner



(DC) Bandipora, Dr. Owais Ahmad said that this is the first ever programme organised in Gurez for training students in the basic Snow skiing course. He said that adequate arrangements have been made for the successful conduct of the course.

Dr.Owais said such events for youth engagement will be

organised in future also and urged the youth to take part in such activities to showcase their talent.

The training programme has generated huge enthusiasm amongst the students and locals alike and has been able to promote Gurez as the upcoming skiing destination.

Russia Loses Bid To Freeze Ban From World Cup Qualifying



Agencies

NYON: Russia's request to freeze a FIFA ban on its football teams ahead of next week's World Cup qualifying playoffs was denied Friday.

FIFA said the Court of Arbitration for Sport dismissed the Russian football federation's bid for an urgent interim ruling to freeze the ban pending a full appeal, which could come within weeks.

The CAS decision means Russia will not be able to play Poland in World Cup qualifying on Thursday.

The latest ruling follows a similar CAS refusal on Tuesday to freeze UEFA's ban on Russian national and club teams in European football.

Russian athletes have been

banned from competing in multiple sports because of the country's invasion of Ukraine. Belarusian athletes have also been banned because their country has been an ally of Russia.

The Russian football federation could still get the FIFA ban overturned before another round of international games in early June. A Russian victory at CAS could then force this month's playoffs to be replayed.

Ukraine is also in the World Cup playoffs, and its scheduled game on Thursday against Scotland was postponed by FIFA until June. Ukraine or Scotland will advance to face either Wales or Austria — who play in Cardiff next week — with a place at this year's World Cup in Qatar at stake. (AP)

Oil Protester Ties Himself To Goal Post At Premier League Fixture



Agencies

LIVERPOOL: The Premier League fixture between Everton and Newcastle United was held up for eight minutes on Thursday after a protestor tied himself to the goal post at the Gwladys Street end of Goodison Park.

The incident happened just after halftime, with the invader wearing a jersey with the words "Just Stop Oil".

The group claiming responsibility for the protest on Twitter said: "Our government is betraying us by funding new oil fields in

the North Sea. New oil means destruction of our children's future.

"It means war on small island states. And it means suffering now for the poorest and most marginalised in all regions." Newcastle are owned by a consortium involving the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia, and comes in the week that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has visited that country.

It took a number of stewards and security staff to remove the intruder after he was cut free from the post, and had to be carried out of the stadium as he refused to leave on his own. (Reuters)

Chelsea Gets Real Madrid In Champions League Quarterfinals

Agencies

SWITZERLAND: Defending champion Chelsea was drawn Friday to play record 13-time European champion Real Madrid in the Champions League quarterfinals.

The first pairing drawn at UEFA headquarters sent Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti back to the London club where he won a league and cup double a year before being fired by then-owner Roman Abramovich.

Abramovich, a Russian billionaire with ties to Vladimir Putin, gave up control of the club before having his assets in Britain frozen this month in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

All three English clubs avoided each other in the draw, as did all three Spanish teams.

Manchester City and Atlético Madrid were the next teams paired, while Liverpool was drawn to face Benfica and Bayern Munich will play Villarreal.

In the semifinals, Manchester City or Atlético Madrid will

play Chelsea or Real Madrid, and Benfica or Liverpool will face Villarreal or Bayern Munich.



Villarreal is the only team left in the draw that has never reached the final.

The first legs of the quarterfinals will be played on April 5 or 6, with the return games the following week. The semifinals will be played between April 26 and May 4. The final is scheduled for May 28 at Stade de France in the Paris suburbs.

The Stade de France was a late replacement for original host St. Petersburg. UEFA stripped the Russian football federation of the right to host the final after the invasion of Ukraine.