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P3 CITY

TOURISM DEPARTMENT ROLLS OUT 'HOT AIR BALLOON' IN CITY

Amid huge tourist influx in Kashmir, the tourism department has rolled out first-ever hot air balloon rides at Zabarwan Park in Srinagar to woo and entertain tourists and local

THINK

A GENTLE STROLL THROUGH RAMAZAN

WHEN it comes to Kashmir, every season wears its own colours and ingredients; talk of spring and fluttering butterflies, flowers, greenery and idyllic sunshine comes to mind, winter means snowflakes, icicles and frozen water,



P7 STATE

BUDGAM VILLAGERS CLAIM PESTICIDE POT CAUSED FOOD POISONING

A day after 52 persons were hospitalized after consuming poisonous food in central Kashmir's Budgam district, the locals on Saturday made a



Widom Quote!

He who has courage and faith will never perish in misery

- Anne Frank

NEWS DIGEST

Bus Falls Into Gorge In Doda, 2 Dead

JAMMU: Two men were killed and another got injured when a mini-bus skidded off the road and fell into a gorge in Doda district here, police said on Saturday. The vehicle was on its way to Jammu from Parnoo Bhalla area. The incident took place near Bhagar **More on P6**

Militant Arrested In Anantnag

SRINAGAR: The government forces on Saturday claimed to have arrested a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant from Bijbehara area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district. An official said that a joint naka was laid by security forces in **More on P6**

Village Level Worker Falls In ACB Net

SRINAGAR: The sleuths of anti-corruption bureau (ACB) on Saturday arrested a Village Level Worker, Rural Development Department (RDD) for demanding and accepting a bribe from a man for processing case under the centrally sponsored PMAY(G) Scheme. According **More on P6**

No New Corona Cases In Ladakh

LEH: No new COVID-19 case was reported in the Union Territory of Ladakh, where the number of active infections dropped to five with one more patient recovering from the disease, officials said on Saturday. Ladakh recorded a total of 28,223 COVID-19 cases since the outbreak of the pandemic. Among them 228 people -- 168 in Leh and 60 in Kargil -- succumbed **More on P6**

Moon Sighted, Ramazan Begins Today

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: With the Ramazan moon having been sighted devout Muslims will follow a new routine from today for the next 30 days, shunning all intake of food and water from sunrise to sunset.

"The moon marking the beginning of the holy month of Ramazan has been sighted. The holy month will begin from April 3," Grand Mufti Nasir al Islam announced on Saturday.

Mufti Nasir also urged people of Kashmir to pray for peace and prosperity of the Valley and to spend time in seeking repentance for sins and freedom from hellfire from Almighty Allah in the blessed month of Ramazan.

In a statement, Muslim body Imarat-e-shariyah-Hind said a meeting of Ruyat-e-Hilal Committee was held today at 1, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and it was verified that moon was seen sighted in several parts of the country.

Maulana Asaduddin Qasmi, Convenor of **More on P6**



Dry fruit dealers have put up different varieties of dates on display with the onset of holy month of Ramazan: KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Illegal Arms License Case

ED Attaches Assets Of Babus, Arms Dealers



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Assets worth Rs 4.69 crore have been attached under the anti-money laundering law in a case related to issuance of alleged illegal arms licenses in Jammu and Kashmir between 2012 and 2016, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Saturday.

A provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been issued for attaching bank deposits, plots, flats and residential houses, it said in a statement.

After carrying out raids against an IAS officer, some Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS) officers and

government officials, and arms dealers last month, the agency had said it seized "incriminating" documents that allegedly indicate transactions between weapon dealers and bureaucrats in issuance of illegal arms licenses in Jammu and Kashmir between 2012 and 2016.

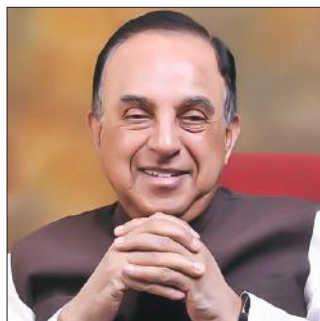
"Government functionaries of J&K in connivance with many arms dealers, brokers of J&K have brazenly flouted the norms, procedure and rules for issuing arms licenses in lieu of monetary considerations by abuse of their official position as public servants and generated huge proceeds of crime," the statement said. The ED alleged **More on P6**

VP Singh, Mufti Responsible For KP Exodus: Swamy

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: BJP leader Subramanian Swamy on Saturday said it was not the then chief minister Farooq Abdullah, but the then prime minister VP Singh and his home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, that were responsible for the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley.

Swamy's remarks come in the midst of a controversy over the movie 'The Kashmir Files', which depicts the exodus of



Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley. Several **More on P6**

Demands Special Force For Protection Of KPs

BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy on Saturday said a special force of ex-servicemen be created for the protection of Kashmiri Pandits so as to enable them to return and live in the Valley without fear. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines **More on P6**

THE RAJYA SABHA MP, HOWEVER, SAID he has not watched the movie. The BJP leader also recalled the kidnap of Sayeed's daughter Rubiya Sayeed, saying it is still not clear how she was abducted, forcing the government to release some of the arrested JKLF militants.

School Teacher Held For Molesting Minor Student

Auqib Javed

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Saturday arrested a school teacher for allegedly molesting a minor student in Vichar Nag area of Srinagar city.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rakesh Balwal told Kashmir Observer that a 30-year old private school teacher was arrested after a complaint was received from a parent that his daughter was molested.

"We registered a complaint and arrested the accused within time on the same day," Balwal said.

He said an FIR number 27/2022 under section 376 and POSCO Act has been registered by police station Soura.

On Saturday, scores of residents and family members of the minor staged a protest demanding punishment for the accused. Many protesters alleged that it was a case of rape. However, the **More on P6**

AMARNATH YATRA

All Security Arrangements Will Be Put In Place: DGP

Says Absconding Ex-Minister Babu Singh Will Be Traced Soon

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Dilbag Singh on Saturday said all necessary security arrangements will be put in place for the successful conduct of the pilgrimage to the

cave shrine of Amarnath, scheduled to begin on June 30.

On the sidelines of a function in Udhampur district, the DGP also told reporters that absconding former minister Jatinder Singh alias 'Babu Singh', wanted in connection with the recent seizure of Hawala money that was meant for subversive activities, will be traced soon and questioned. The police chief **More on P6**



reference MSC

portant that we keep the flames of fire away from our region.

Pakistan continues to believe in using dialogue and diplomacy to resolve all outstanding issues including the Kashmir dispute and is ready to move forward on this front if India agrees to do so, Gen. Bajwa said.

His proposal for peace with India had a wider meaning as he indirectly suggested to have some sort of **More on P6**

When Sting Of Street Scorpions Became Sad Song Of A Kashmiri Student

Aayat Tramboo

SRINAGAR: The voice got louder and started to echo: "Why're you crying? Don't be scared, I'm not a creep!"

The man started walking towards her while she was tied in ropes. Just when he was about to grab her arm, Inam screamed with her eyes shut, only to realize that it was a dream, again.

She found herself sweating and gasping for breath. As it got darker outside, the darkness within her heart kept growing.

Inam did not try to forget what had happened to her that day, instead, she played it again and again in her head, trying to figure out different and better possibilities of what could've happened, what could've been done and what could've been avoided.

In an attempt to comprehend

her own emotions, she picked up a pen, inked it black and started to write her mind out in middle of the night: "Today, I got to know why people cry at the birth of a girl child. They don't cry because girls are a burden, they cry because girls are ill-fated, they cry because they know what this world offers women, they cry out of fear that their daughter may have the same fate as thousands of women who are beaten, killed and humiliated every day. I am sure they cry because they know that women in this world are eaten up alive."

It was a bright Monday morning, Inam, a 20-year-old grad student

stood at her bus stop waiting for her ride to college. As she waited, she noticed a black Mahindra Scorpio at rest close to her. It felt like the person in the car had come to pick someone up.

She looked at the car for a few seconds and then switched her attention to the tangled earphones in her hands that she inattentively was trying to detangle.

That whole day at college, Inam would talk to her friends about a new romantic movie she had watched. She wouldn't

6

I WANT TO TELL SOMEONE WHAT I FEEL, what happened to me but no one would care, why would they? I was killed, kidnapped or burnt down after all. My misery isn't a misery because I am alive. This world only cares about bringing justice to the dead."

stop talking about how lovingly the guy in the movie would look at his wife. Her friends would call her a hopeless romantic for believing in a form of love that they thought no longer existed.

They said she could talk about love all day without her lips even drying up.

But who would've thought that a time would come in her life when the idea of love would scare her and trigger her anxiety. Later in the afternoon as Inam and her friends left college, she was surprised to see a black Mahindra Scorpio a stone's throw away from her. She was startled and told her friend about the weird coincidence.

"Do you know how many people in Kashmir own a black Mahindra Scorpio? My late uncle Idrees had one," her friend jokingly said and they both broke into laughter.

The next morning, as Inam stood at the bus-stop, the black car stopped a few steps away from her. She felt a little nervous and scared like any girl would be.

A couple minutes later, two young men came out of the car and stood beside her. She knew something was wrong. They looked harmless but she instinctively stopped an auto rickshaw to leave the situation as soon as she could.

A n a u t o rickshaw stopped at her feet and as she was about to get in, she felt a grip around her wrist. She tried to free herself but the grip was too strong for her to fight. She

grew anxious. No man had ever made her feel like she had no power over her own self before.

His world is capable of understanding what it feels like to be humiliated and treated like you have no life. None can understand what it does

to a person to have to submit out of fear. No man would ever dare to grab another man by the arm

and intimidate him, he'd be missing a tooth before he even knew," the contents of her mid-night letter read. The man asked the auto

More on P6

IT WAS THE HARDEST FOR ME to stand there and listen to two strangers talking about doing dreadful things to me."



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Scientists Finally Finish Decoding Entire Human Genome

Associated Press

Scientists say they have finally assembled the full genetic blueprint for human life, adding the missing pieces to a puzzle nearly completed two decades ago.

An international team described the first-ever sequencing of a complete human genome the set of instructions to build and sustain a human being in research published Thursday in the journal Science.

The previous effort, celebrated across the world, was incomplete because DNA sequencing technologies of the day weren't able to read certain parts of it. Even after updates, it was missing about 8% of the genome.

Some of the genes that make us uniquely human were actually in this dark matter of the genome' and they were totally missed, said Evan Eichler, a University of Washington researcher who participated in the current effort and the original Human Genome Project.

It took 20-plus years, but we finally got it done.

Many including Eichler's own students thought it had been finished already. I was teaching them, and they said, 'Wait a minute. Isn't this like the sixth time you guys have declared victory?' I said, 'No, this time we really, really did it!'

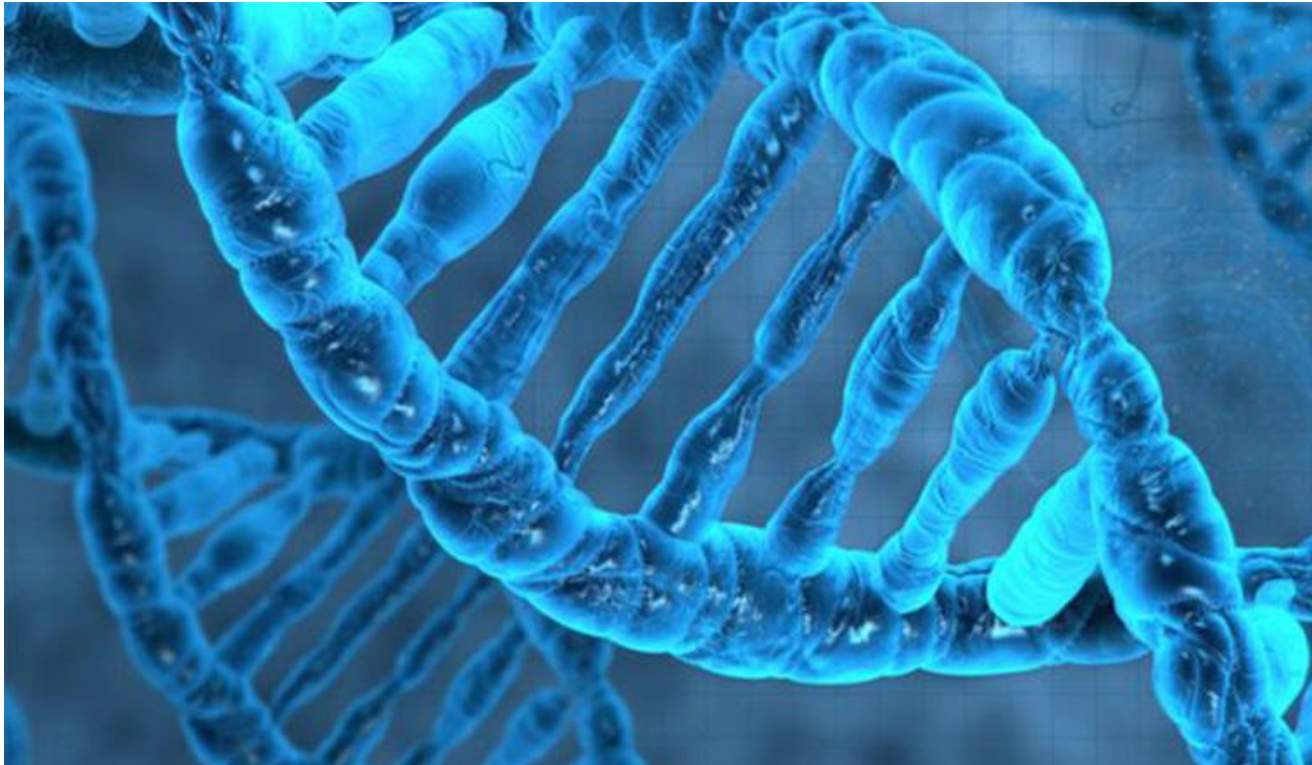
Scientists said this full picture of the genome will give humanity a greater understanding of our evolution and biology while also opening the door to medical discoveries in areas like aging, neurodegenerative conditions, cancer and heart disease. We're just broadening our opportunities to understand human disease, said Karen Miga, an author of one of the six studies published Thursday.

The research caps off decades of work. The first draft of the human genome was announced in a White House ceremony in 2000 by leaders of two competing entities: an international publicly funded project led by an agency of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and a private company, Maryland-based Celera Genomics.

The human genome is made up of about 3.1 billion DNA subunits, pairs of chemical bases known by the letters A, C, G and T. Genes are strings of these lettered pairs that contain instructions for making proteins, the building blocks of life. Humans have about 30,000 genes, organised in 23 groups called chromosomes that are found in the nucleus of every cell.

Before now, there were "large and persistent gaps that have been in our map, and these gaps fall in pretty important regions, Miga said.

Miga, a genomics researcher at the University of California-Santa Cruz, worked with Adam Phillippy of the National Human Genome Research Institute to organise the team of scientists to start from scratch with a new genome with the aim of sequencing all of it, including previously missing pieces.



The first draft of the human genome was announced in a White House ceremony in 2000 by leaders of two competing entities: an international publicly funded project led by an agency of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and a private company, Maryland-based Celera Genomics.

The group, named after the sections at the very ends of chromosomes, called telomeres, is known as the Telomere-to-Telomere, or T2T, consortium.

Their work adds new genetic information to the human genome, corrects previous errors and reveals long stretches of DNA known to play important roles in both evolution and disease. A version of the research was published last year before being reviewed by scientific peers.

This is a major improvement, I would say, of the Human Genome Project, doubling its impact, said geneticist Ting Wang of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, who was not involved in the research.

Eichler said some scientists used to think unknown areas contained junk." Not him. "Some of us always believed there was gold in those hills," he said. Eichler is paid by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which also supports The Associated Press's health and science department.

Turns out that gold includes many impor-

tant genes, he said, such as ones integral to making a person's brain bigger than a chimp's, with more neurons and connections.

To find such genes, scientists needed new ways to read life's cryptic genetic language. Reading genes requires cutting the strands of DNA into pieces hundreds to thousands of letters long.

Sequencing machines read the letters in each piece and scientists try to put the pieces in the right order. That's especially tough in areas where letters repeat.

Scientists said some areas were illegible before improvements in gene sequencing machines that now allow them to, for example, accurately read a million letters of DNA at a time.

That allows scientists to see genes with repeated areas as longer strings instead of snippets that they had to later piece together.

Researchers also had to overcome another challenge: Most cells contain genomes from both mother and father, confusing

attempts to assemble the pieces correctly. T2T researchers got around this by using a cell line from one complete hydatidiform mole," an abnormal fertilized egg containing no fetal tissue that has two copies of the father's DNA and none of the mother's. The next step? Mapping more genomes, including ones that include collections of genes from both parents. This effort did not map one of the 23 chromosomes that is found in males, called the Y chromosome, because the mole contained only an X. Wang said he's working with the T2T group on the Human Pangenome Reference Consortium, which is trying to generate reference, "or template, genomes for 350 people representing the breadth of human diversity.

Now we've gotten one genome right and we have to do many, many more, Eichler said.

This is the beginning of something really fantastic for the field of human genetics.



انتقال پر ملال

یہ خبر انتہائی دکھ کے ساتھ دی جاتی ہے کہ سماجی و ادبی اہل قلم آہنگر سارکن میرک آباد شایہار سری نگر موڑ کیمرا پر 04 اپریل 2022ء بروز جمعہ المبارک کو اس دار فانی سے رحلت کر گئے۔ انشا اللہ و انشا اللہ واجتہون مرحوم نیک سیرت، بلند اخلاق اور صوم و سلاطین کے پابند تھے۔ اللہ تعالیٰ مرحوم کو جنت الفردوس نصیب کرے۔

اس سلسلے میں مرحوم کی فاتحہ خوانی موڑ کیمرا پر 04 اپریل 2022ء بروز سوموار صبح 6.30 بجے (6 بجہ 30 منٹ پر) ان کے آبائی مقبرہ واقع شایہار سری نگر میں انجام دی جائے۔ سوگواران

معراج الدین، طارق احمد (فرزند ان)

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Public Notice

i Jahangir Hussain Tinda, S/O; Nazir Ahmed Tinda, R/O; Cheeke Sudarbal, NIT, Hazratbal. Have lost/ misplaced my original Discharge Certificate from Govt. Boys Higher Secondary School Hazratbal Under the Admission No. 222 Date of admission 08/11 /2006. Now I am applying for the Duplicate Discharge Certificate. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Govt. Boys Higher Secondary School Hazratbal within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

fko

از حیثیت کے جی راپنڈو باا اعلیٰ ایگزیکٹو مجسٹریٹ دیوال

مضمون درخواست مخاطب: دادا دہا نو پودہ مہاراجاں ڈار ساکنہ شول واپورہ

بغرض حصول: ڈیپنڈنسی سرٹیفیکٹ

استھارہ روادا گاہی ہر خاص و عام۔

معاملہ کی نسبت پڑاوی علاقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے۔ جنکی رو سے ساکنہ کا شوہر عبدالرحمان ڈار مورخہ 26/07/2021 کو فوت ہوا ہے۔ متوفی کے ڈیپنڈنسی سرٹیفیکٹ پیش کیا گیا ہے۔

نمبر شمار	نام و ولدیت	رشتہ مندرجہ ذیل	پیشہ	عمر
01	دادا دہا نو پودہ عبدالرحمان ڈار	بیویہ متوفی	گھریلو کام	48 سال
02	عبدالرحمان ولد محمد صدیق ڈار	والد	عمر رسیدہ	83 سال

اسطورہ متوفی کے صرف دو ہی ڈیپنڈنسی موجود ہیں۔ ان کے علاوہ متوفی کا کوئی ڈیپنڈنسی موجود نہیں ہے اسطورہ ساکنہ ڈیپنڈنسی سرٹیفیکٹ حاصل کرنے کی خواہاں کرتی ہے۔ اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ دفتر بڑا میں سات دن کے اندر اندر پیش کریں۔ بعد ازاں معیار کرنے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

(تحریک الصدا راپنڈو ایگزیکٹو مجسٹریٹ دیوال) rna

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost the RC of my vehicle ALTO 800 bearing Regd No; JK03G 3625. 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 ARTO Anantnag within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

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Scholarships This Week

Kashmir Observer in association with Buddy4Study. com presents scholarships available for the meritorious students of Jammu and Kashmir



Scholarship Name 1: AICTE Virtual Internship 2022

Description: AICTE Virtual Internship 2022 is an initiative by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) which provides 20,000 virtual internships in cybersecurity through the Cisco Networking Academy program.

Eligibility: Open for candidates who hold B.Tech./B.E. degree and specialisation from any with relevant skills and interests. The 2nd and 3rd year engineering students studying in any engineering institution which is Cisco Networking Academy can also apply for the program.

Prizes & Rewards: INR 10,000 and a virtual certificate

Last Date to Apply: 23-05-2022

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/AEV7

Scholarship Name 2: NASI-Young Scientist Platinum Jubilee Awards 2022

Description: NASI-Young Scientist Platinum Jubilee Awards 2022 is an initiative by the NASI for Indian/Overseas citizens of India below 35 years of age, recognizing promise, creativity and excellence in young scientists.

Eligibility: Open for Indian/Overseas citizen of India working in India below 35 years of age as of April 15, 2022, and have made notable contributions in any branch of S&T recognized by the NASI on the basis of work carried out in India.

Prizes & Rewards: INR 25,000 and other benefits

Last Date to Apply: 15-04-2022

Application mode: via email and post to - 5, Lalpat Rai Road, Mumfordganj, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh - 211002; Email - nasi.allahabad@gmail.com.

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/NIY4

Department of Rural Development & Panchayat Raj Office of the Block Development Officer, Achabal

Pilot Project of Solid Waste Management uner SBM(G)- Expression of Interest District : Anantnag Block: Achabal Gram Panchayat : Khundroo

Expression of Interest (EOI) proposal is invited for conceptualizing and implementing the Solid Waste Management under SBM-(Gramen) 2.0. in Panchayat KHUNDROO Block ACHABAL District ANANTNAG from all the interested scrap dealers, NGOs, youth clubs, Self Help Groups or any other groups of people for carrying out Solid Waste Management in Rural Areas as per the SLRM rules/ guidelines.

The interested agencies/firm/organizations are requested to submit the expression of interest (EOI)/Proposal affixed with Rs 5.00 (Rs five only) revenue stamps addressed to office of the Gram Panchayat, KHUNDROO. The expression of interest (EOI)/Proposals should reach this office by speed post/Registered Post/by hand, by or before 10-04-2022 till 2.00 PM and will be opened on same day at 4.30 PM in the office of Sarpanch of the concerned Gram Panchayat.

The Acceptance and finalization of expression of interest (EOI) proposals will be subject to the following conditions.

Terms and conditions:

- The interested party should have a team of 10 members (Rag Pickers) who shall be working on rotational basis.
- The interested party should have a minimum of one vehicle along with a licensed driver for collection of solid waste from the residential/ Commercial establishments in Panchayat KHUNDROO Block ACHABAL.
- The interested party shall work as per the Solid Liquid Waste Management rules/Guidelines issued By the GOI from time to time.
- The interested party shall be Provided with a working space, segregating tubs and protective gears from the office of the Block Development officers concerned.
- All the pages of the EOI/Proposal's document should be signed by the authorized signatory. The copyright of the work shall vest with the Sarpanch of the concerned Gram Panchayat.
- Work done in this field, showing details of experience in Solid waste Management at any level be enclosed.
- The successful bidder shall be responsible for the overall operation and maintenance of the unit and 10 % of the Profit shall be deposited in the Panchayat Account.
- Self-attested copy of Aadhar card of all the members and driver is to be enclosed along with their mobile numbers.
- Vehicle detail along with the copy of registration Certificate of the vehicle be enclosed.
- The EOI shall be accompanied with CDR/FDR of Rs 100/-pledged to the Sarpanch of the concerned Gram Panchayat, KHUNDROO which shall be released to successful tenderer within 3 months of the allotment of contract of the assigned work.
- The EOI/Proposal Evaluation Committee reserves the right to modify/accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.
- The decision of the Chairman of the constituted Committee about the quality of services will be final and shall not be challenged by the Agency on any ground whatsoever.
- The Area of operation shall be the Panchayat KHUNDROO as per the survey of households/Commercial establishment done by the department of Rural Development.
- The user fee as approved by the committee and Panchayat shall be collected by the contractee with proper GRs and shall maintain all records.
- Sarpanch concerned Gram Panchayat, KHUNDROO, shall hold all rights to cancel the contract if the successful bidder fails to work as per the terms of contract and as per the Solid Liquid Waste Management Rules issued by the GOI from time to time.
- The contract shall be finalized for a period of one year, to be extended based on good performance and shall be evaluated on quarterly basis by the committee, headed by the Sarpanch of the Panchayat Halqa.

Sd/-

SARPANCH Block Development Officer, KHUNDROO Achabal

DIPK-52/22



Pandits Throng Swami Sharika Devi Temple On Navreh

Agencies

Srinagar: After 35 years, the Kashmiri Pandits including those who migrated from the Valley in 1990, on Saturday celebrated Navreh and Navratra with religious fervor and zeal in Srinagar and other parts of the Valley.

The Kashmir Pandits, who thronged the temples, especially at Swami Sharika Devi Temple at Hari Parbat, were enthusiastic to perform the religious duties across the Valley after the gap of 35 years.

"It is a new beginning of the new Hindu year and it was after 35 years that the day was celebrated here in Srinagar," a lady said.

She said that they want to return to their homeland again and live jointly with Muslims, Sikhs as a society.

Another lady said that the situation has improved to a large extent in the Valley as the present atmosphere is quite different from the time when they left Kashmir. "We want to return to our homeland again," she said.

Over 49K Visited Tulip Garden On Saturday

Agencies

Srinagar: In an overwhelming rush of visitors, tulip garden witnessed a footfall of over 49,000 visitors a day ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, which is the highest till date, officials said here.

An official said at least 49,146 visitors thronged the tulip garden on Saturday.

He said that a total of 11,143 visitors visited the garden on the first day of its opening on March 23, which included 4391 locals, 6751 national and one international visitor.

"The total number of tourists who visited the garden so far stands at around 257,706."

Tulip garden, located at the foothills of Zabarwan range with an overview of Dal Lake, was thrown open on March 23.



A vendor selling Dates on a cart at Amira Kadal on Saturday. Demand for dates increases manifold during the holy month of Ramadan. Photo/Abid Bhat KO

Tourism Department Rolls Out 'Hot Air Balloon' In City

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid huge tourist influx in Kashmir, the tourism department has rolled out first-ever hot air balloon rides at Zabarwan Park in Srinagar to woo and entertain tourists and local visitors.

The introduction of hot-air balloon is part of the tourism department's series of new initiatives to attract more and more tourists and give them new means of entertainment and adventure.

This year, March has already created history by registering a record number of tourist

arrivals, the first time in the past 10 years. Srinagar Airport also marked March 28 as the historic day as over 15,000 passenger arrivals and departures were recorded, the first time in the Airport's history. Interestingly, over two lakh tourists also visited the famed Tulip garden in Srinagar during the first 10 days.

Director Tourism Kashmir, G N Itoo said that for the first time, they have started hot-air balloon for tourists and locals in Zabarwan Park. "Some five years ago, a routine balloon was introduced but this time, we have introduced the first ever hot-air balloon for tourists as

well as local visitors at Zabarwan park today," he said.

He said that the hot-balloon goes up in the air and allows a person to enjoy the breathtaking view of Zabarwan Mountains and famous Dal Lake. "This balloon has a capacity of accommodating four persons at a time besides its Captain. There are certain safety measures and rules which are mandatory," he said, adding in the first week, tourists and local guests would enjoy heavy discounts for using hot-balloon.

Asked whether the tourism department is planning to introduce more such initiatives to

attract more tourists, he said to begin with one hot-balloon has been introduced and if its trial goes on successfully, more will be introduced. "I inaugurated it for the trial run and it was a beautiful experience. If all goes well, we will have one such balloon at all the major tourist destinations soon," Itoo said.

He, however, said that for tourists, the Tourism department was mulling to introduce paragliding at all famous tourist destinations that are tourist spots that suit the paragliding. He urged tourists and locals to enjoy the hot-air balloon trip at the Zabarwan Park. (KNO)

Kashmir Se: Mission For Peace

Kashmir Director To Bring Out Story Of Love

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: The Srinagar based Director Hussain Khan on Saturday announced the launch of his new movie Kashmir Se: Mission For Peace.

He said the shooting of the film will begin after the Holy month of Ramadan. He was flanked by other actors and cast members of the movie.

"We will narrate the story of every Kashmiri cutting across religious lines" Hussain said.

"The film is based on fiction and takes everyone on board and we are hopeful that we will narrate the story of peace from Kashmir". He added.

The Film is being produced by Fusion Films and Seven Two Creations and is



supported by Hope Trust & Helping Society.

The film stars Mir Sarwar, Hussain Khan, Shahid Gulfam, Zameer Ashai and other

Actors.

Hussain Khan has previously directed Kashmir Daily and Lines which has been released on Voot an (OTT Platform).

People Need To Learn To Live With Covid-19: DAK

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Saturday said people need to learn to live with Covid-19 and get back to normal life.

"Covid-19 will become yet another infection joining many other diseases that humanity has learned to live with," said DAK President and influenza expert Dr Nisar ul Hassan said in a statement.

Dr Hassan said "we have entered into the endemic stage of Covid-19 pandemic. An infection becomes endemic when the rates become low and stable in a geographical area, meaning that the pathogen causing the disease - Covid in this case - is likely to remain in the circulation without causing large outbreaks as witnessed over the last 2 years."

"The virus is going to stay with us forever and we will be living with the virus for the rest of

our lives, but the impact of the virus in terms of illness will lessen over time," he said.

The DAK President said we will end up with a situation similar to the flu or common cold. He said like the flu, Covid could eventually become a seasonal illness. The 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic could offer a clue about the course of Covid-19.

The H1N1 pandemic was over in about 16 months, but the virus did not disappear. Instead it has turned into a seasonal flu strain that circulates all year, and peaks during winter.

"Covid could ultimately become another seasonal respiratory virus, like the four other coronaviruses that cause a sizable proportion of common colds," he said. "With the transition from pandemic to endemic stage, Covid-19 is not going away. It is going to be with us, but will no longer be a disruptor of daily family and community life," he added.

JKPSC Aspirants Request Admin To Reschedule Mains Exam

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: Aspirants who are set to appear for the Public Service Commission Mains Exams (PSC Mains) have appealed to JKPSC to postpone the exams.

Aspirants say the exam dates clash with the Union Public Service Commission Exam (UPSC interview).

JKPSC Mains exam will begin from April 7, 2022.

As some candidates have to appear in both exams (PSC Mains) and (UPSC interview) they are urging the JKPSC to

postpone the Mains Examination.

"On 8th March, The PSC deferred the exam just 10 hours before the commencement, on the other hand has shocked the aspirants with "5 days ultimatum" before the commencement of examination," said Tahir, one of the aspirants.

The Aspirants say the commission's notice has left them shocked and disturbed as they expected more time for preparation.

"The date sheet which has been published by the JKPSC, has left no gaps before the optional papers, which is the norm for every competitive exam,

On 8th March, The PSC deferred the exam just 10 hours before the commencement, on the other hand has shocked the aspirants with "5 days ultimatum" before the commencement of examination

including UPSC CSE" said Mohammad Imran another aspirant.

"Besides, many of the aspirants are already undergoing the interview phase of UPSC CSE examination, which is clashing with the date," Imran said.

Chairman Public Service Commission B R Sharma said that only one aspirant appeared before the commission to get the exams deferred.

"Those aspirants who have a clash should appear before the commission and register their demands regarding deferment" he said.

DIAL-EMMA

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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
01 Ramazan
1443

PRAYERS

FAJR	4: 52
ZUHR	12:34
ASR	5:04
Magrib	6:55
ISHA	8: 18

This Day In History

- 1513 - Explorer Juan Ponce de León claims Florida for Spain as the first known European to reach Florida
- 1559 - England & France sign 1st Treaty of Le Cateau-Cambrésis
- 1745 - Austria & Bavaria sign peace
- 1917 - US President Woodrow Wilson asks Congress to declare war against Germany
- 1944 - Soviet Army marches into pro-German Romania
- 1945 - Diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Brazil are established
- 1960 - Cuba buys oil from USSR
- 1963 - Explorer 17 attains Earth orbit (254/914 km)
- 1963 - USSR launches Luna 4; missed Moon by 8,500 km
- 1964 - USSR launches Zond 1 to Venus; no data returned

From KO Archives

Basketful Of Apples To Say Thank You

Srinagar - Apple growers of Kashmir have sent a gift of 12 cartons of apples to Pakistani and Indian leaders with a message "From Kashmir with Love." Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Congress party president and Chairperson of the National Advisory Council, Sonia Gandhi will be among the recipients.

Apple growers are sending mix cartons of the world famous apples to Pakistani leaders as a thanksgiving gesture for starting the bus service' between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad on April 7, which will link divided parts of Kashmir for the first time in 58 years.

Six other cartons are being sent to New Delhi for Dr. Singh and Mrs. Gandhi before both leave for Srinagar to inaugurate the historic bus service next week.

The bus service is being seen as one of the most tangible signs of a fledgling peace between the nuclear rivals after decades of enmity. It will travel 170 km on the highway between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad in the Pakistani sector.

Apple growers say a carton each will be gifted to Musharraf and Aziz, while the other four will be given to other political leaders.

Ghulam Rasool, the President of Fruit Growers Association here, said with the opening of the bus service, there it hope it would revive trade links.

"Kashmir is known in, the world for its fruits. So this time we will gift baskets of apple to Pervez Musharraf, Shaukat Aziz and the Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan. When we had a good trade in apples 1947 the wholesale market was in Rawalpindi and we used to send apples to Amritsar, Delhi Karachi etc front there and when we heard about this (the bus service), we decided then itself that we will gift six basket of apples to Pakistan and seven basket of apples for our Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and other leaders which includes Ghulam Nabi Azad and Sonia Gandhi," he said

India had said on Friday it hoped free trade with its nuclear-armed neighbour Pakistan would happen within one to two years, as their sluggish peace process moves forward.

Around 600,000 families' are directly involved in the valley's fruit business and if the market opens for their produce in Pakistan, growers are optimistic that both the countries could overtake Gulf countries. Ghulam Mohamed, a senior member of Fruit Growers Association, said fruit trade via Pakistan could also solve the unemployment problem.

"A lot of unemployment problems will also be solved. More youths will be engaged in the work as there is no other viable industry and only Fruit industry is the living industry," said Rasool. With 1.2 million metric tonnes of apple production, Kashmir is the biggest producer of apples in India. Barriers to commerce cemented by more than a half-century of hostility mean companies selling everything from wheat to tyres to Pakistan are forced to make costly detours into countries like Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates.

Trade is on course to rise more than 150 percent in the financial year which ended in March to about \$500 million, but businessmen predict it could reach 10 billion dollars within five years of signing a free trade agreement.

Pakistan, with 66 million dollars worth of exports to India in the eight months to November, were dwarfed by imports of 315 million dollars. (ANI)

(Kashmir Observer, 03 April, 2005)

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Twitter Talks



“Tulip garden is a quarter million bulbs of a single flower planted in militaristic fashion, as if on a vulgar show of strength parade. It’s monoculture, unhealthy, unsustainable, terrible style. Not to mention the roads leading upto it are single track. Nothing to see”
@nahvijunaidd
“I hate Med Schools for the way they can turn even the best of us toxic and insecure. A lot needs to change. A real lot”
@bintizia
“it is the annual “we-fast-because-there-are-biological-benefits-of-it” month for those embarrassed to claim their religion’s spiritual aspects that don’t sit well with the modern world of indulgence n individual profit”
@tooba_tweets

ADVENTURES IN ARCHIVES

BSNL's Colonial Mindset

The BSNL in Kashmir has never really been able to shake off its tag of an underperforming, delinquent monolith on a variety of counts. Its fits-and-starts operations leave subscribers exasperated, particularly when the mobile phone revolution, which is several years old now, had raised expectations of smooth, trouble-free service. Virtually enjoying a monopoly in the field, the telecom giant appears to be a victim of its own overweening sense of indispensability which has engendered inertia and an unwillingness to get its act together and improve its performance. In comparison to the standards delivered by it and other major players elsewhere in the country, the BSNL’s Kashmir operations are a study in primitive hit-and-trial methods that miss the mark most of the time. Under a more accountable system, the BSNL would have long been convicted of massive breach of contract given the abysmal level of its services for which it charges dues in the full. The corporate body has geared itself to disconnect services immediately on non-payment of dues, but there is absolutely no mechanism to call it to account when it falters on delivery of services, which is more often than not. Undoubtedly, the corporation has tried to broaden the services it provides, like going into broadband and other areas, but bitter experience indicates that such exercises are more motivated by a desire to net an ever greater number of subscribers to generate more revenue than to institute communications regimes comparable to more advanced societies. Access to the internet through the BSNL is plagued by problems of excruciatingly low speed and rampant downtimes, and an increasing number of subscribers that depends on the service for crucial professional and business purposes has no means of redress or compensation. Severely hampered by a lack of options, users have no choice but to stick with an incorrigible entity that takes them for granted. Policies to widen the base of the BSNL’s operations are apparently charted without sufficient forethought about whether the corporation has the wherewithal to support the load. Attractive and seemingly public-friendly policies are launched without a corresponding upgrading and augmentation of the available technology and infrastructure, leading to utter chaos on the airwaves once subscribers are lured to a particular offer. And later, when the system witnesses a large-scale break down, BSNL experts have no clue about what went wrong, or how to rectify it. The telecom giant wants to cultivate a savvy, modern, state-of-the-art image, but is bogged down in the horse-and-buggy age even on as basic a facility as counters for paying landline bills. It inexplicably scrapped its deal with the JK Bank to collect bills – which, with its many hiccups, was still a convenient arrangement for subscribers who today have to spend hours, sometimes days, at the woefully limited number of bill collection centers. To make matters worse, the BSNL has totally abdicated its responsibility in ensuring that bills are delivered to subscribers in time. It has put the onus entirely on subscribers who are duly penalized in case of delay in payment, even when they are not at fault. BSNL authorities obfuscate on the issue by leveling vague allegations at the postal department, and are totally unmindful of their own duty and legal obligation to see that subscribers get their bills without having to face any hassles. Kashmir has not been likened to a dependency of the East India Company for nothing. Had it been otherwise, a centrally-controlled entity like the BSNL would not have been allowed to persist with its low-grade performance for so long. A reality check forces one to conclude that Kashmiris do not figure as equal citizens deserving services commensurate with the costs they incur. The impression the BSNL gives is of an imperious overlord condescending to operate in the remote backwaters of the country, where dignified service to the people is not a priority with the powers-that-be. In many ways, the BSNL could have been regarded as a flag-ship of New Delhi’s heart-winning efforts in the valley, but its depredations betray the real sentiments that govern the center’s approach to Kashmir. The telecom operator has no cause for complaint with Kashmiris as they dutifully pay their dues even if what they get in return is way beyond tardy. The corporate’s operations here are flush with funds earned from a complying clientele, There really is no reason for the corporate not to match standards it upholds elsewhere, unless, of course, Kashmiris do not count as worthy citizens, equal in footing to others in the country. The article is an editorial from KO Archives and was originally published on 12 June, 2010

RAMAZAN: Beyond Transactions, Towards Empathy

Ramazan is Obligatory but it is not a Transaction. It is Also about Empathy

Wajahat Qazi

That fasting in Ramazan is obligatory upon Muslims is to state the obvious. But Ramadan – fasting from dawn to dusk- is also an instructive guide on empathy , which according to Merriam Webster, ‘is the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts and experience of another’ With a specific reference to the month of fasting, the idea, among other things, is to feel and experience what is the quotidian experience of the needy. (I am deliberately avoiding the term ‘poor’ because of both the patronizing and pejorative connotations associated with the term). Before elaborating and laying out my core argument, it may be pertinent to explore the question of ‘poverty’. While reams have been written on the nature of the phenomenon and statistics marshalled for the same, definitions may not detain us here. It may be apposite to point out that ‘poverty’ is real and much of the world lives in its vicious grip — notwithstanding the efforts put in by developmental economics to understand and remedy it. In my opinion, with due regard to the impulse behind modernization, ‘poverty’ is a mystery and those born in it are not responsible for it nor its perpetuation. This is the starting point of my discussion. If those unfortunate to be in the grips of this scourge are not responsible for it, then they cannot cop blame for it. Similarly but on the other end of the spectrum, those fortunate to be born in privilege are not responsible for the same either. They are neither special nor exceptional. Either is a matter of circumstance, good or poor luck. But societies across the world,(Kashmir being no exception), determine and assign status or its converse, lack of it based on the classifications of either poverty or privilege. This is both morally and ethically wrong. But, unfortunately, that’s how it is. Now returning to the theme of Ramazan and empathy, what is the social response to it? Obviously, as of now, my frame of reference is Kashmir. Most people welcome this holy month for its obvious spiritual merit. We wake for sehree (pre -dawn meal), have our meal, offer our morning prayer, sleep for a little while, go to work and then , lo and behold, a sumptuous (or even an extravagant) meal with an assortment of fresh fruits, juices, firnee followed by dinner (the sequence is reversed for some) awaits us. Smug with our bellies filled by fine dining, we then go for taraweeh and night prayers, head to sleep awaiting the next roza. While I am sure some do, but honestly speaking, how many of us actually think of the needy, the deprived and the unfortunate? To illustrate and drive home the point, consider the average day of an autorickshaw driver, a person who earns his wage(s) on a daily basis- maybe on average 400-500 rupees on a good day after deducting petrol and other running expenses. It stands to reason that the work levels dip during Ramazan. This undercuts the auto rickshaw wallahs earnings. With the reduced quantum of money that he makes, the auto rickshaw wallahs have to take care of the family needs, maybe ailing parents, expenses of his children and so on. Basic maths will reveal that there will be hardly anything left for a reasonably energy rich food basket. He and his family then are left to consume basic food stuff as opposed to a middle class family’s nutritious, nourishing one. Most if not all of these daily wage earners are reconciled to their condition. They don’t complain. But what about the conscience of the middle classes and the rich? Should not the hunger pangs faced during Ramazan induce and generate empathy? Maybe it does. But we forget about it when we are busy indulging ourselves with fine and gluttonous meals. These cloud and obscure our



For representational purposes only| Aabid Bhat for KO

Smug with our bellies filled by fine dining, we then go for taraweeh and night prayers, head to sleep awaiting the next roza. While I am sure some do, but honestly speaking, how many of us actually think of the needy, the deprived and the unfortunate?

memory and empathy, defeating one of the purposes of the holy month. Come the end of Ramadan and the festival of Eid, we splurge on conspicuous consumption- fine bakery, condiments, and other forms of consumerism. This time, we don’t have the Ramadan hunger pangs to bother us and consciences. But yet again, what about the needy and their children? It’s their Eid too. Is this condition – the middle classes and the rich- cruising through Ramazan and the poor suffering it irremediable? Or as socially responsible members, can some-

thing be done about it? No. It is not. If not, what can be done about it? In differing and different capacities, those with means can help. Say, find out and determine the needy in a neighbourhood, with due respect to the dignity of the needy, drop off a food bag at the doorstep of the family? Or, figure out the needs of a given needy family, hand a money envelope to it? These are just illustrative examples. Other ways can also be figured out to help the needy. All this is not to generate and thus assuage guilt by giving out a few food packets, clothes or money to the needy. That would defeat the very purpose of empathy that Ramadani must generate in us. Nor is it in the nature of making a transaction with God- that giving would lead to sawaab(reward in the Hereafter). This has its own standalone merit. But for now, the idea is to become socially responsible, ethical and fair. Let us, this Ramazan, make haste slowly, induce in ourselves the aspect of empathy that lies hidden and obscured by conspicuous consumption and aid the needy. An empathetic self can be among the best tributes we pay to the spirit of Ramadan! Views expressed in the article are the author’s own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer The author is a writer and columnist

COVID-19’s Lessons For Democracies

YVES LETERME

B RUSSELS – For more than two years, COVID-19 has taken lives, destroyed livelihoods, disrupted daily routines, and dominated political discussion around the world. As the acute phase of the pandemic comes to an end, we must evaluate what COVID-19 has revealed about the ability of democratic systems to respond to such emergencies. There are several lessons to be learned from a crisis that has caused the death of over six million people and produced the deepest recession since World War II. Over the past year, Club de Madrid’s Global Commission on Democracy and Emergencies brought together former heads of state and government, eminent experts, and civil-society leaders from around the world to discuss what COVID-19 has taught us, and how our countries can plan for future crises. Just as no one ever steps into the same river twice, for it is not the same river and they are not the same person, no country ever experiences the same disaster twice. But learning from one emergency is essential to preparing for the next. Although pandemics are rare, epidemics, natural disasters, financial crises, and industrial accidents are

regular occurrences. Governments, legislative bodies, judicial institutions, civil society, and international organizations must be equipped to promote resilience in the face of crisis. For starters, governments must elevate the status of emergency preparedness and work with their peers to embrace radical transparency, support responsible journalism and media, promote digital literacy, and work with civil-society organizations to debunk disinformation, especially online. They should engage with technology companies to solve problems arising from the digital environment and increase access to digital resources. And, with COVID-19 having revealed serious gaps in social security systems, they also must advocate for better protections for vulnerable minorities, women, and young people. In fact, government leaders should mobilize all available tools of fiscal policy to strengthen democratic resili-

ence and improve equity. This includes not only broadening the tax base combating tax evasion, but also redoubling efforts to fight corruption. At the same time, legislatures should evaluate their governments’ COVID-19 response and recommend measures to improve performance in future emergencies. They should review their country’s legal framework to ensure that how emergencies are defined adequately reflects current risks, and that constitutional provisions for declaring a state of emergency provide sufficient safeguards to mitigate the risk of abuse of power. Legislatures also must ensure that their plans for emergency preparedness are robust enough to allow for effective oversight during future crises. These plans should include flexible rules of legislative procedure and embrace digital technologies to promote resilience and encourage citizen participation. Judicial institutions,

for their part, must ensure that the rule of law guides democracies’ response to future emergencies. When the pandemic ends, courts will be called upon – as some already have – to scrutinize governments’ actions against the criteria of necessity, proportionality, procedural fairness, and respect for fundamental rights. Courts must make sure that their emergency-preparedness plans allow for swift judicial oversight during times of crisis. Civil society and the media bear most of the responsibility in a democracy for preventing the spread of disinformation. They also have the power to bring issues into the spotlight and act as a catalyst for emergency policies that better engage and meet the needs of underrepresented groups. In preparing for future emergencies, civil-society organizations should advocate for more public dialogue about critical risks and preventive action. Lastly, multilateral organizations have a critical role

to play, by coordinating lessons learned from member countries and strengthening shared values. International human-rights monitoring mechanisms can serve as a framework for upholding fundamental rights in countries’ emergency response. Regional bodies that have instruments in place to protect democracy and the rule of law among their member states should reflect on how these tools might be used for regional oversight in emergencies. And global institutions like the International Labor Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and regional development banks should continue to aid efforts to build resilience through social inclusion. Every democracy is different, and every emergency is different. But the most important lesson to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that all democratic states have a responsibility, as they prepare for the next crisis, to safeguard their core values. Views expressed in the article are the author’s own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Project Syndicate

A Gentle Stroll Through Ramadan

Shakir Malik

WHEN it comes to Kashmir, every season wears its own colours and ingredients; talk of spring and fluttering butterflies, flowers, greenery and idyllic sunshine comes to mind, winter means snowflakes, icicles and frozen water, so on and so forth. And talk of Ramadan, these things normally linger around, a mosque full of worshippers, a capsizing 'Kangri' with couple of people clearing the smoldering coal with bare hands—that of course when Ramadan falls in wintry months; throat clearances to signal the 'Imam' to amplify his speed of recital during 'Taraweeh', and in case the 'Imam' is hard headed then taking refuge in short spells of sleep, etc. On a serious note though, when the entire life seems to be a mere repetition of tasks, Ramadan has a way of making you remember a certain past.

One of the Ramadan stories that I remember is from the footsteps of Jama Masjid, Delhi—cliques of people, loitering with fruit platters, samosas, date palms, etc. inviting us to break the fast with them. And the tone of their invitations would just melt your heart, 'Brother, please have 'iftari' with us.' 'Brother, brother, brother...' constant solicitations from all sides. That day, my friends and I had decided to break our fast at Jama Masjid. We finally sat with one group who insisted that we eat as much as we could. And when we left, a person meandering around Gate no. 3 of the same mosque, with a huge container on his back, would offer a cold glass of water to anyone who wanted. To make someone quench a day long thirst in such an enervating heat, while getting yourself drenched in sweat is no mean task by any means. I mumbled to my friends, 'This is the best of humanity.' I felt it very profoundly probably because I had not seen such kind of camaraderie around that city before.

Another 'iftari' that I remember is from a mosque at Khati Talab, Jammu. Tens of people sat along both sides of sheets strewn with fruits, date palms, etc. Everyone was in a fit of silence, some would raise their hands and pray while others very innocuously stared at the food, counting seconds, perhaps feeling the churn in their stomachs. The volunteers were frantically unfolding mats as more people would enter. These community hangouts are very unique to Ramadan.

While growing up one feels the huge

nonnegotiable gap between acts of childhood and adulthood. As a kid, during the last week of Ramadan evenings, I remember watching my sister and other girl children making a big circle and doing rounds while singing the Kashmiri Eid song 'Eid aayi rasi rasi'. And I would also blend in as my sister used to lobby for my inclusion. A chorus of melodiousness would fill the air. Then, we would talk and make plans for the Eid from day one of Ramadan, about the amount of 'Eidi' we would get and toys we would buy. I would rarely keep fast then, but I loved waking up for 'Sehri', not because I hated sleep, but I wanted to see the person called the 'Sehar khan' who still goes round and round in our village beating the drums to awaken the people at that time. But I never saw him. Back then, I would worry that he should not be attacked by some wild animal in the street at that hour. That tradition is still in vogue, though my mobile alarm wakes me now.

These days, I love 'sehri', especially because of the way Muezzins and other 'Naat' singers sing Kashmiri 'naats'. It is not easy to make that hour of the night reverberate, which otherwise stays doomed in silence.

Ramadan of 2020 and this year have been tough. Last year, when the pandemic struck and I was stuck in Delhi at that time. I experienced there how the collective distress caused by a dreadful disease can spoil our most cherished memories. It felt like everything was meaningless in the moment. Hunger and anxiety weighed on me quite heavily. This year, the same feeling is getting somewhat repeated.

And we are supposed to give up on socializing which otherwise is a very important aspect of Ramadan.

The absence of pre-Eid hustle and bustle in markets and mosques makes this Ramadan a solitary affair. In fact, pandemic is forcing us to go against all kinds of definitions of normal and allowing empty streets to take over.

However, we should understand that Ramadan is not a once in a lifetime event. 'Eid-ul-Fitr' will repeat with its promised gusto, probably next year. This year, we would deserve celebrations in a traditional sense only when the virus is brought to its knees and lives of all are secured. And this 'Eid', that would require a slight inaction from our part, that is to restrict our respective celebrations to just a feast of family and to practice social distancing.

“
These days, I love 'sehri', especially because of the way Muezzins and other 'Naat' singers sing Kashmiri 'naats'. It is not easy to make that hour of the night reverberate, which otherwise stays doomed in silence



The Spiritual Checklist Preparing the Heart for the Month of Ramadan

SEEDS OF SELMA

*Sow the seeds in Rajab
Irrigate the crop in Sha'ban
Reap the harvest in Ramadan*

Ramadan well-prepared for can change your life, in fact I have felt the blessings are limitless, we are reminded this through Qur'an and Hadith: "He leaves his food, drink, desire for Me. Fasting belongs to Me and I reward for it." [Bukhari]. The Sahabah (RA) used to prepare for Ramadan six months in advance and we should and can feel inspired to do so too.

The habits that we develop and strengthen in the lead up to and during Ramadan should InshaAllah continue long after the blessed month has ended and according to scholars, this is a sign for us all that our Ramadan will be accepted. We as humans are creatures of habit and the word 'habit' itself comes from the Latin word 'Habitari' which means to live. Indeed, habits make up a lifetime, and it is up to us whether or not they are conducive to our spiritual growth.

The goal is to always start small, and to not feel overwhelmed, with the intention to stay consistent as according to the narration of Aisha (RA), The Prophet ﷺ stated that.

Small pockets of the day can be used to increase us in barakah, protect us from sin, weigh heavily on our scales and keep us connected to our Lord which is the ultimate goal.

The Deen provides us with practical steps to implement, and slowly but surely building yourself up to continue to seek in the path of Allah. If you walk to Him, He comes to you running, all it takes is one step. We often start Ramadan strong and slowly lose momentum over the month, but start working on your spiritual toolkit now, so that your habits will continue long in sha Allah.

WUDHU

Be mindful when you are performing wudhu, in fact, start by visualising the water wash away the sins from each part of what is being cleansed. Aim to stay in wudhu so that it pushes you to be mindful of your actions like speech and thus not using harsh words or listening to idle talk, and lowering your gaze to the faults of others.

SALAH

Prioritise all of your prayers by aiming to complete them on time each day and with khushoo.

Give yourself a few moments before each prayer to stabilise your breath, clear your mind, set your intentions and ease into salah. We often jump into our salah and bring whatever we were doing into that safe space. Ground yourself in this moment with your Lord and be conscious of your recitation and



the movements of prayer. It is a blessing to have another chance to communicate with Allah, to express gratitude and bow in submission and obedience to the Lord of the worlds.

Also aim to pray sunnah as much as possible which help to complete the deficiencies in the fardh prayer; praying the sunnah prayers is akin to building a moat around the fortress of your soul. Go further and seek the blessings and the pleasure of Allah in tahajjud—the blessed time of the last third of the night.

As well as completing more sunnah prayers, aim to complete the sunnah fasts of Monday and Thursday, to seek the reward of Allah and to also prepare your body for the fasting month, these fast can be carried out through the whole year.

DHIKR, SALAWAT AND ISTIGHFAR

Keep your tongue moist and heart open with dhikr and develop these as habits after praying, during the rest of the day through tasks such as preparing food, completing household tasks, walking, and whenever you remember.

Dhikr carries divine healing energy that protects you against the spiritual ills and toxicities of this dunya. It is a shield that keeps you connected to Allah (SWT) in every moment, with whatever you are doing and wherever you are, you are assured that indeed Allah is near. He is listening. He is your guardian and protector.

Think of dhikr as a thread that keeps you in constant communication with Allah and inshaAllah over time will become the anchor that keeps you rooted in your purpose as a Muslim, and allow you

“
The habits that we develop and strengthen in the lead up to and during Ramadan should Insha Allah continue long after the blessed month has ended and according to scholars, this is a sign for us all that our Ramadan will be accepted

to stand strong despite the endless pulling and tugging of this world.

CULTIVATE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALLAH

Devote some time to speak to Allah on a regular basis about everything—your hopes, dreams, worries and fears.

Use the names of Allah, the beautiful names to call upon Him and seek different names based on your needs for Allah loves to give.

Al-Razzaq for sustenance in your life and others Al-Fattah for opportunities and opening doors with

the divine wisdom of Allah

Al-Waduud, Al-Raouf for improving or strengthening relations with family, a spouse, children, the community

QUR'AN

The best advice I ever received was to read and recite Qur'an everyday. Even if it's just one verse a day, start small and it will help to cultivate a habit that is grand. Qur'an can be active and come alive in our lives, as we may interpret the words differently depending on our current situation, and we may even see the answers to our concerns reveal themselves to us, and this is Allah comforting you that everything is unfolding as it should. It will lead to stronger tawakkul, that feeling of trust in Allah's plan.

Listen to your favourite reciters daily, recite with them and develop a love for the words of our Lord. Listen to lectures on Tafseer, you could even explore Qur'an journalism, or take part in online Halaqas or seminars that expand your love for the words of Allah. You slowly start to yearn for the reassurance of the words of Allah and the peace that it brings you and naturally gravitate towards it.

REFLECTIONS AND MINDFULNESS

We experience a lot of excess noise and distraction which can become suffocating, and it becomes harder to sift through the clutter. We are also suffering from too much access to indulgence, which feeds the nafs.

The nafs (lower self) is like a beast that needs to be disciplined but if you constantly feed it – bear in mind

with each time, the desires increase exponentially – it grows and starts to overwhelm and overpower the ruh. In Ramadan we deprive our nafs of the basal desires such as food, intimacy, sleep and instead seek to tend to the ruh which is strengthened by spiritual connection.

Pay attention to what distracts you and leads you away from your spiritual goals and develop mindfulness of your consumption. The heart is a vessel that only pours out what it contains. Ask yourself: what sort of content are you feeding your heart? The heart is the sanctuary of Allah, so protect it.

Spend time in deep reflection, ponder on your blessings, the wisdom behind everything in existence, how nothing exists without the will of Allah and how every creature seeks sustenance from Allah ultimately and Allah alone.

Developing an awe and gratitude for the blessing of Islam can really help to increase love for the deen. For me spending time in nature, where the birds and trees are in constant dhikr allow that connection.

Spending time alone is vital for our emotional and spiritual wellbeing as we rediscover ourselves and this reminds me of the fitrah – the preordained nature of each individual – and the reality that the entire journey of the soul is to rediscover it because it knows Allah.

MUHASABAH. GO INWARD – EVALUATE YOURSELF.

Hold yourself accountable and assess what you're doing well, and what needs work. Umar RA said, "Evaluate yourselves before you are evaluated and weigh out your scales before they are weighed out for you. It's easier for you to evaluate yourself today before the ultimate hisaab tomorrow." Allah is the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful. The mindset of not being 'good enough' is a lure of the shaytan often, who strives to stop you from seeking your lord's forgiveness.

The Deen is constantly empowering us, encouraging us to seek betterment of our souls, of our different roles, and our contributions to society.

INTENTIONS

With all that has been aforementioned, I would like to end on a beautiful note that pulls everything together and that is the necessity and power of good intentions. By constantly assessing what you are doing something for, it helps you develop a deeper awareness and conviction with yourself.

Deeds that are not done with the purpose of pleasing Allah is like planting a tree with rotten roots, there is no goodness. Only with the right intention can the deed grow into something fruitful that will be of benefit to your soul and those around you. Goodness has a ripple effect, it spreads far and wide in your life and into your akhira, as well as into the lives of others.

Ramadan Kicks Off In Much Of Middle East Amid Soaring Prices

CAIRO: The Muslim holy month of Ramadan when the faithful fast from dawn to dusk began at sunrise Saturday in much of the Middle East, where Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sent energy and food prices soaring.

The conflict cast a pall over the holiday, when large gatherings over meals and family celebrations are a tradition.

Many in the Southeast Asian nation of Indonesia planned to start observing Sunday and some Shiites in Lebanon, Iran and Iraq were also marking the start of Ramadan a day later.

Muslims follow a lunar calendar and a moon-sighting methodology can lead to different countries declaring the start of Ramadan a day or two apart.

Muslim-majority nations including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria and the United Arab Emirates had declared the holiday would begin Saturday morning.

A Saudi statement Friday was broadcast on the kingdom's state-run Saudi TV and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and de facto leader of the United Arab Emirates, congratulated Muslims on Ramadan's arrival.

Jordan, a predominantly Sunni country, also said the first day of Ramadan would be on Sunday, in a break from following Saudi Arabia. The kingdom said the Islamic religious authority was unable to spot the crescent moon indicating the beginning of the month.

Indonesia's second-largest Islamic group, Muhammadiyah, which counts more than 60 million members, said that according to its astronomical calculations Ramadan begins Saturday.

But the country's religious affairs minister had announced Friday that Ramadan would start on Sunday, after Islamic astronomers in the country failed to sight the new moon.

It wasn't he first time the Muhammadiyah has offered a differing opinion on the matter, but most Indonesians Muslims comprise nearly 90% of the country's 270 million people are expected to follow the government's official date.

Many had hoped for a more cheerful holiday after the coronavirus pandemic cut off the

world's 2 billion Muslims from Ramadan rituals the past two years. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, however, millions of people in the Middle East are now wondering where their next meals will come from.

The skyrocketing prices are affecting people whose lives were already upended by conflict, displacement and poverty from Lebanon, Iraq and Syria to Sudan and Yemen.

Ukraine and Russia account for a third of global wheat and barley exports, which Middle East countries rely on to feed millions of people who subsist on subsidized bread and bargain noodles. They are also top exporters of other grains and sunflower seed oil used for cooking.

FIR Lodged Against Unidentified' People Over Defacement Of USA Embassy Signboard In Delhi

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police has registered an FIR against unidentified people for alleged defacement of a signboard of the United States of America embassy here by pasting a poster over it warning the Biden administration against bullying India, officials said on Saturday.

A right-wing outfit called Hindu Sena' has claimed that it pasted the warnings on the signboard.

The poster read, Unreliable Biden Administration...Stop bullying India We don't need you... USA need(s) India against China. We are proud of all disciplined and brave Indian Armed forces "

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Amrutha Guguloth said, "On Friday, information (about the defacement of the signboard) was received at around 10.15 pm. Our



police team rushed to the spot and found the alleged poster on the said signboard. The poster was removed immediately.

Later, a case under the Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act was registered, she said. Technical surveillance is being carried out to identify and nab the culprits, the DCP said. In a statement issued on

Friday by Vishnu Gupta, national president of Hindu Sena, he claimed that members of his outfit protested against the "continuous bullying of India by the US President Joe Biden administration."

He also alleged that the Biden administration has failed to revive the American economy hit by the Covid pandemic and has been actively involved in escalating the Ukraine-Russia Crisis.

"India doesn't need a history lesson from a country who invaded Yugoslavia and Iraq without even a United Nations' approval and has destroyed at least a dozen countries for not bending their knee to American Imperialism", Gupta said.

He further alleged that the Biden administration is not in favour of giving Veto power to India in the UNSC.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Moon Sighted,

Ruyat-e-Hilal Committee, Imarat-e-Shariah-Hindi, has therefore declared that 1st Ramazan falls on Sunday, it said.

Muslims across the world follow the Lunar calendar and each month starts with sighting of the crescent.

The fasting month -- which can be 29 or 30 days -- will end with the sighting of Eid moon.

Muslims have been observing the fasting month in the past two years in the shadow of the Covid pandemic. This year, many of the Covid curbs have been lifted following dip in cases and vaccination of people. (With agency inputs)

Bajwa Bats

trilateral dialogue involving India, Pakistan and China to create an inclusive peace, as he said that apart from the Kashmir dispute, the India-China border dispute is also a matter of great concern for Pakistan and we want it to be settled quickly through dialogue and diplomacy.

I believe it is time for the political leadership of the region to rise above their emotional and perceptual biases and break the shackles of history to bring peace and prosperity to almost three billion people of the region, Gen. Bajwa said.

He, however, said that the adamant behaviour of the Indian leaders was a hurdle.

Bilateral ties with Pakistan deteriorated further after India announced withdrawing the special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcation of the state into two union territories in August, 2019.

India has repeatedly told Pakistan that Jammu and Kashmir "was, is and shall forever" remain an integral part of the country. India has told Pakistan that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Islamabad in an environment "free of terror, hostility and violence".

Talking about last month's missile incident, he said that India's accidental missile firing created doubts regarding its ability to handle high-end weapon-systems, which was compounded by its unwillingness to share details with Pakistan.

The missile fired on March 9 fell in the Mian Channu area of Khanewal district and it came to light a day later when the Army shared details of the Indian "high-speed flying object".

India, in a statement on March 11, termed it an accident.

Gen. Bajwa said it was a matter of "serious concern" and "we expect India to provide evidence to assure Pakistan and the world that their weapons are safe and secure."

"Unlike other incidents involving strategic weapons systems, this is the first time in history that a supersonic cruise missile from one nuclear-armed nation has landed in another, he said.

He also said that a peaceful and prosperous West and South Asia is our goal and Pakistan's National Security Policy focuses on the promotion of national security cohesion and harmony through the precepts of unity and diversity.

Recognising that it is the regions and not countries that grow, the COAS said: We believe that peace and stability in our wider region are prerequisites for achieving shared regional prosperity and development.

Our doors are open for all our neighbours, he said.

Gen. Bajwa termed the situation on the Line of Control (LoC) as satisfactory and fairly peaceful, saying mercifully no incident had taken place along the LoC in the last year to the relief of the people living on both sides.

He said that Pakistan believes in peace and using dialogue for resolving issues.

ED Attaches

that government officials used to take "commission" from arms dealers and brokers in their own bank accounts and also in the accounts of their family members for getting arms licenses issued as well as for renewals

of defence personnel licenses.

Searches were conducted by the ED at 11 locations including residential premises of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Rajeev Ranjan (former DC, Kupwara), KAS officers Itrat Hussain (former DC, Kupwara) and Ravinder Kumar Bhatt (former ADC, Kupwara) and former judicial clerks at the arms section of the office of the deputy commissioner (DC), Kupwara, Tariq Ather and Gajan Singh.

The residential premises of six arms dealers of Jammu and Kashmir including Amarnath Bhargava (Varun Armoury), his brother Mukesh Bhargava (Bhargava Gun House), Surjeet Singh (Deshmesh Armoury), Mohinder Kotwal (Mohinder Kotwal Arms and Ammunition), Manohar Singh (Swaran Arms and Ammunition) and Devi Dayal Khajuria (Khajuria Arms) were also searched.

Cash and gold jewellery worth over Rs 2.50 crore was seized apart from property documents.

"Tentative proceeds of crime are expected to be to the tune of Rs 40 crore," the ED said.

The criminal case of money laundering stems from an August 2018 FIR of the CBI (special crime branch, Chandigarh) where it was alleged that bulk issuance of arms licenses has taken place in Jammu and Kashmir between 2012-2016.

About 2.78 lakh arms licenses were issued to various defence and paramilitary personnel by "flouting" the prescribed guidelines and due procedure in lieu of "illicit" monetary consideration which was paid to government officers/ officials through arms dealers/ brokers and proceeds of crime were generated, the ED said.

VP Singh, Mufti

BJP-ruled states have made it tax-free.

Muslims and Pandits are alike. They have the same blood. If you do a DNA test of both, the results will be same. There has been injustice with them (Pandits), which you yourselves are saying. The whole blame is being put on Farooq Abdullah, but it was the doing of V P Singh and Mufti (Mohammad) Sayeed, Swamy said at Navreh Milan', an intercommunity cultural festival organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Peace Forum, here.

The Rajya Sabha MP, however, said he has not watched the movie.

The BJP leader also recalled the kidnap of Sayeed's daughter Rubiya Sayeed, saying it is still not clear how she was abducted, forcing the government to release some of the arrested JKLF militants.

His (Sayeed's) daughter was also kidnapped, which we could not understand how it happened. Because when I became a minister in the Chandra Shekhar government, (then National Conference MP) Saifuddin Soz's daughter was kidnapped by JKLF. Mufti (Sayeed) and VP Singh released 13 people from jail, but we did not release even a single person.

In the end, Soz's daughter was released by JKLF at her house in an auto-rickshaw. They were afraid of our warning. We are not the ones to make compromises, Swamy said.

Earlier, the National Conference founder had found support from former Union minister and now Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, who said that Abdullah had opposed the release of militants in exchange of Sayeed's daughter.

Swamy, while responding to a query from reporters on whether movies such as 'The Kashmir Files' be banned, he said he has personal experience of what the Pandits went through.

How can films be stopped in a democracy? (If you do not like) boycott it, he said.

Referring to the revocation of Article 370 by the Centre in August 2019, Swamy said the people of Jammu and Kashmir should forget about it as the special constitutional provisions will never return.

You should forget (Article) 370. It will never come back. When it is not in any other state, why in Kashmir?, he

said, adding it was a temporary provision and one which could be revoked through a Presidential order.

Calling Kashmir an integral part of India, he asked the people to resolve issues through dialogue.

If there is anything, it can be discussed through dialogue. You should elect good representatives when the assembly elections take place, who can then talk with each other and resolve issues, he said.

The BJP leader said the country should focus more on getting back Pakistan controlled Kashmir and Aksai Chin.

Demands Special

of an event -- Navreh Milan' (inter community cultural festival) -- organised by J-K Peace Forum here, Swami said Kashmiri Pandits have gone through a horrible experience in the 1990s and they we cannot have a similar situation once they return.

So, we will only tell them to return when the situation is good. My suggestion is that one lakh sainiks, who have retired now but still know how to use guns, be asked to live in Kashmir along with their families for five years. They will be given salary, etc for that.

Because when the Kashmiri Pandits return, there will be a special force to protect them. They (Pandits) have experienced a massacre and they should not have to go through that again, he said.

The BJP leader said this force will be specifically for the protection of the returned Kashmiri Pandits.

They (the forces) will have direct communication lines with the Pandit families so that they can immediately reach out them when called, he added.

Asked if the Pandits should remain in separate colonies or together with Muslims across the valley, Swami said it was their choice.

If they are not sure that they can live with Muslims, then they should live separately, he said.

Swami said while the Pandits have to be brought back to live here, the government should create an atmosphere conducive for that.

For that, discussions are going on. I can tell you that no government will last in Delhi unless these four-five lakh people, who were forced to leave, get justice and are able to return to their homes and get back their land and existence, he said.

Later, in his address to a gathering at the event, Swami said the Kashmiri Muslims should not have apprehensions that there would be separate colonies for Pandits or there would be any cultural changes.

No, it is not like that. It is their right to return, their right to live securely and they will get everything that everyone here is getting, he said.

He said the Pandits can live in separate colonies for five to six years so as to create trust that it (repeat of 1990s) will not happen again.

Earlier, Swami performed Pooja at the Chakreshwari Devi temple at Hariparbat here, which was attended by scores of Kashmiri Pandits on the occasion of the Navreh', the first day of the Kashmiri new year celebrated by the Pandit community.

For the first time after 32 years, Hindus have got the right and the opportunity to pray before Chakreshwari Devi on the occasion of Navreh. This is a good beginning and it should not be stopped here, the locks on the temples need to be removed.

Some people tried to massacre them and lessen the numbers of the Kashmiri Pandits by spreading militancy, but now that has ended. Now, we will together move forward to make J-K a progressive part of India, the BJP leader said.

This was just the beginning and with the help of the Centre, all those temples which were shut or damaged, will be restored and re-opened, Swamy said.

He also said a temple built by Shankaracharya in Pakistan controlled Kashmir (PcK) will be taken under the government control.

School Teacher

Srinagar police denied the allegations and said that the news which is "going viral" on social media about rape of a minor girl is fake.

"Two days ago, there was a complaint lodged by a family about suspected molestation of a minor girl, wherein Srinagar police lodged an FIR under relevant sections of IPC and POCSO Act. The accused was also arrested immediately," the police said without naming the accused.

"Further, there was no complaint of rape by family of members of minor girl, which was corroborated by medical examination as well," the police said, adding, "Some unscrupulous elements are trying to give this incident a communal colour by giving motivated statements with intention to create communal divide". The police said "Public is requested not to pay heed to such rumours."

Balwal told Kashmir Observer that the medical examination of the girl showed that there was no rape.

"Some unscrupulous elements are trying to give this incident a communal colour by giving motivated statements with the intention to create communal divide. Public is requested not to pay heed to such rumours," the police said.

Balwal, however said there was an attempt to molest the girl and we will take action against the accused. He further said both the families were living in the same building and were known to each other.

"We will file a chargesheet in the case soon and the accused will be punished if found guilty," he added.

All Security

said a tight vigil is being maintained on social media which is being misused by Pakistan and its stooges to keep militant eco-system alive in the Union Territory.

"We have got rid of COVID-19 to a large extent and are expecting a good turnout of enthusiastic devotees (at Amarnath shrine) this year. The capacity of lodgment camps for the devotees has increased accordingly and all necessary security arrangements will be made (for the smooth and successful yatra)," Singh said.

The pilgrimage to the Himalayan shrine of Amarnath, located at a height of 3,880 metres in south Kashmir, will start on June 30 after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 43-day pilgrimage will end on August 11.

On the recent seizure of Rs 6.90-lakh hawala money in Jammu and alleged involvement of former minister Babu Singh, the DGP said the politician is absconding and he will be traced soon.

"After his questioning, a complete picture will emerge in the case which is linked to Pakistan and separatism," he said, adding some people have already been arrested and the money trail clearly indicated that the fund was meant for subversive and anti-national activities.

Mohammad Shareef Shah (64), a resident of south Kashmir, was arrested with the Hawala money on March 31 from Gandhi Nagar area of Jammu and he revealed during questioning that he was tasked by Babu Singh to collect the money.

Three persons Sidhant Sharma of Kathua and S Gurdev Singh and Mohd Shrief Sartaj of Jammu have also been detained for questioning.

In response to another question on the misuse of social media, the DGP said Pakistan, its agencies and their stooges in J&K are using it to keep the militant eco-system alive in the Union Territory.

"We are keeping a 24/7 watch and if anything adverse is coming to our notice, strict action is being taken in accordance with the law," he said, adding action has been taken against those who clandestinely promote terrorism and narrative of separatism and "strict action against them will continue in future as well."

When Sting Of Street

driver to rush away and he quietly followed the command. Inam

wanted to say something, she wanted to scream but she felt like her voice was stuck in her throat. She looked at the man, trying to convey her displeasure. "My name is Waris," he said.

Inam was an expressive young girl, always coming up with the wittiest responses but it was for the first time in her life, she didn't know how to react and what to say.

She decided to escape the situation as safely as possible without angering them. So she hung her head down and waited for them to be tired of her face and leave. Deep inside, the realization of being weak and submitting to a filthy man, tore her apart but she stood still.

Standing there, with her pride being pulverized, Inam recalled every moment of her life when a man had wronged her. She recalled her 13-year-old self being winked at by an undesirable middle-aged man, she recalled her 16-year-old self being touched inappropriately in a public vehicle in broad day light, she recalled her 18-year-old self being locked in her classroom by some boys in her class. She couldn't help but think about how she crosses creepy glares and undesirable gestures on her way from home to college and back.

The two men started a conversation about what they should do now. "Let's take her along and sit somewhere calm and quiet," said one guy to the other.

"No, let's go to her home and have some tea, I'm sure her mother makes delicious tea," the other replied.

Inam stood there with her mind flooded and a teardrop hanging from her eye. She thought to herself how she would explain any of this to her family if these men really did what they were saying.

"Why don't you tell us what you want to do? Let me take you for shopping and buy you some fancy clothes," one of those guys said.

Inam was frozen in her skin. She couldn't believe what she was witnessing. After talking about tying her up, taking away her phone, kidnapping her to even stabbing her, these filthy young men said everything they could think of to scare her to the core.

It had been minutes and Inam hadn't said a word. This was the longest quiet she had ever been.

"It was the hardest for me to stand there and listen to two strangers talking about doing dreadful things to me," her letter reveals her torment. "Although they didn't do anything but it still feels like they did deeper damage. Their laughter is still ringing in my ears and I still feel their hands around my wrist. I still feel like they are standing too close to me."

Inam had kept her strength for too long now, she could feel herself losing patience and before she knew it, she found herself crying and begging them to leave her alone. "Why are you crying? I'm not a creep, I come from a very good family, you're safe with me," he said unabashedly.

Inam's cries began to grow louder. The guys were scared that it may grab attention of the people standing there. They said to her that they would leave at one condition. They promised to let her go if she sang them a song. A part of her mind was thinking of ways to refuse but a part of her mind was thinking of songs to sing.

"You don't have all day, this deal will be cancelled in ten seconds," they said.

All Inam wanted was to get rid of those men and reach safety. She agreed to sing. The other guy took his phone out and started to film her. "What will you get by damaging my image? I'll sing but please put the camera away," Inam requested them to not record her.

"As to see," she penned down her pain in that letter, "I was just singing, but it felt like I was tearing my pride off my skin and feeding it to them. Badi mamma always says that my mind is my most beautiful feature. How do I tell her now that I have been robbed of my sanity forever? How do I tell her that my most beautiful feature has been taken away from me?"

The boys stood unmoved: "We've already given you much concession. This is the least you can do for us."

Inam knew she had no option left but to sing for the pleasure of two guys she hated the most. She started to sing her favorite song. "Aitebar bhi aa hi jayega, milo to sahi milo to sahi, raasta kol mil hi jayega, chalo to sahi chalo to sahi, aitebaar bhi aa hi jayega".

Inam remembers every moment of that horrific hour of her life. She remembers the fruit vendor watching in silence, she remembers the women passing by and giving her judgmental looks. She remembers the auto driver who chose to leave her with those 'wild dogs'. She remembers refreshing her Instagram feed twenty times a day fearing to see her video there.

From a girl who wouldn't stop talking, Inam transformed to a girl who wouldn't talk a lot. From a Bollywood enthusiast, those Scorpio-driven scorpions transformed her into a girl who hated every form of happiness and pleasure as if it were a sin to smile, as if it were a sin to laugh.

"I'm sure wherever those filthy boys are, they don't even remember me, but I don't remember anything but what they did to me," said Inam as she wiped her tears with her scarf.

"I want to tell someone what I feel, what happened to me but no one would care, why would they? I was killed, kidnapped or burnt down after all. My misery isn't a misery because I am alive. This world only cares about bringing justice to the dead."

Bus Falls Into

village of Assar late Friday night, police said.

Driver Majid Hussain (32) of Malaine Bhalla and Ranjeet Kumar (34) of Seri Bhalla died in the accident, they said.

Mudasir Hussain (23) was rushed to a hospital in an injured condition by the rescuers, they said.

Militant Arrested

Hassanpora area of Bijbehara.

"At 8:00 PM, one suspect was challenged by the team, who tried to flee from the location and while fleeing, he tried to open fire upon the forces," official said.

Forces overpowered and apprehended him, he said, adding that during search, the warlike stores were recovered from the militant.

He identified the arrested militant as Aasif Bashir Ganeil, son of Bashir Ahmad Ganeil of Hassanpura Tabela affiliated with Lashkar-e-Toiba--(KNO)

Village Level

to an ACB spokesperson, the anti-graft body received a complaint alleging that Sahil Sagar, VLV, Block Paran Pilan, Uri was demanding a bribe of Rs 20,000 from him for processing his case under PMAY (G) scheme.

The complainant had alleged that Sagar was demanding a bribe of Rs 7000 from him though he had taken Rs 13000 already. On this the complainant approached ACB for taking necessary legal action.

"Upon receiving the instant complaint, prima facie offence U/S 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 was found made out. Consequently, case FIR No. 11/2022 was registered at P/S ACB Baramulla and investigation taken up," the Bureau spokesperson said.

During the course of investigation, he said, a team was constituted that laid a trap and caught the VLC red handed while demanding and accepting bribe from complainant.

"He was arrested on the spot by the ACB team. The bribe money was also recovered from his possession in presence of independent witnesses. Further investigations in the case are going on," the ACB spokesperson added.

No New Corona

to the infection.

According to officials, the reports of all 3,707 samples tested for the detection of COVID-19 in the twin districts on Friday came out negative.

One patient was discharged in Leh after recovering from coronavirus, taking the recovery count to 27,990, the officials said, adding there are only five active cases in the Union Territory and all of them are in Leh.

Hajj 2022

J&K Aspirants In Dilemma As Saudi Delays Quota Announcement

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Hundreds of Hajj aspirants from Jammu and Kashmir are in a dilemma as Saudi Arabia continues to delay the final quota announcement for Indian pilgrims aspiring to perform the holy pilgrimage this year.

Officials at the J&K Hajj office said that so far there has been no official announcement from the Saudi government vis-à-vis Hajj 2022. "Even though the Umrah is going on smoothly after an announcement made by the Saudi government in January this year, confusion continues to prevail on Hajj 2022 as there is final quota announcement for India so far," the official said.

J&K's Hajj Officer Dr Abdul Salaam Mir said that all the preparations have been completed by them but there is no official word from the Saudi government so far. "We were expecting a quota announcement by March 1 but that got delayed. Till April 2, there is no official quota announcement from the Saudi government," he said.

The Hajj officer said that the moment the Saudi government makes an announcement about Hajj quota, pilgrims registered for the pilgrimage will be asked to prepare.

"We have completed all the formalities from our end that includes registration of applications etc. So far 11000 applications have been received from Haj aspirants from J&K. At All India level, nearly 1,00,000 applications have been received from various States," he said.

A Hajj Committee official said that Haj remained suspended for two consecutive years 2020 and 2021 in the wake of Covid pan-

dem. "Now that things seems to have settled down, the Saudi government first announced restoration of Umrah services, but there is no decision so far about Haj quota," he said, adding that they expect a quota announcement from the Saudi regime for India within a fortnight.

"Given the present improvement in the Covid situation across the globe, it seems that Haj 2022 will take place. Vaccination certificates for both doses are mandatory for every pilgrim undertaking journey," he said.

Asked whether all the registered pilgrims from J&K would be allowed to proceed for Haj this year, the official said that it depends on the quota. "If quota is good enough, I am sure all will be allowed. If quota is less, we will have to go for draws," the official said.

The inordinate delay by the Saudi government in announcing Haj quota for 2022 has left hundreds of Hajj aspirants from J&K worried. "I have been applying for Haj since 2020 and for two consecutive years, Hajj remained banned for pilgrims outside Saudi Arabia due to Covid pandemic. Now that Covid has almost gone, we are in a fix as there is no quota announcement," said Ghulam Qadir Rather, a resident of Srinagar's Pantha Chowk area. He hoped that the Saudi government announces the final quota soon so that Hajj aspirants of J&K start preparing for the holy journey.

Hajj is performed on the 10th day of Islamic month of Zil-haj which falls in July this year. Lakhs of Muslims converge in two holy cities of Makah and Madina to perform religious rituals—(KNO)



KASHMIRI PANDITS OFFER PRAYERS to celebrate Navreh (New Year) at a temple in Srinagar on Saturday.
KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Budgam Villagers Claim Pesticide Pot Caused Food Poisoning

Zaid Bin Shabir

SRINAGAR: A day after 52 persons were hospitalized after consuming poisonous food in central Kashmir's Budgam district, the locals on Saturday made a sensational claim that the pot in which Tehri (yellow rice) was served, was earlier used to accumulate Pesticides.

Talking to Kashmir Observer, several residents of Zaigipora village said that the person who had distributed the food had used the same pot for Tehri, which earlier, he had used for mixing pesticides for his garden.

"He had earlier used a pot for pesticides and then later, he had used the same pot for distributing Tehri," One of the distressed fathers told Kashmir Observer at the GB Pant hospital here.

In fact, medical Superintendent of the GB Pant hospital, Dr Nazir Ahmed Chowdhary said that there are many reasons that can cause food poisoning.

"The most vicious of them is the use of chemicals in food. We'll collect food samples and try to ascertain what really was fed to these children," Ahmed told Kashmir Observer.

Pertinently, on Friday, a massive hue and cry had wrapped the Zaigipora village of district Budgam after 52 people, most of them children, complained of stomach ache and vomiting.

As per eye-witnesses, these people had consumed Tehri (yellow-rice) distributed by their neighbour in celebration of setting a base for his new house.

Soon after consuming the poisonous food, all the consumers had complained about stomach related complications and were immediately shifted to different



hospitals in Kashmir, of which 30 children are currently admitted at Srinagar's GB Pant hospital.

However, the doctors treating these patients at various hospitals of Kashmir have stated their condition to be stable.

Medical Superintendent, GB Pant hospital, Dr Nazir Ahmad Chowdhary told Kashmir Observer that 30 children have been admitted in the hospital so far.

"These children had consumed Tehri last evening. Soon after consuming the poisonous food, these children had started vomiting and complained of diarrhoea. After being admitted to our hospital, we started our necessary procedure to make their condition stable. Except for two patients who are still complaining about dehydration and diarrhoea, all the other patients are stable," he said.

He further added that these children will be kept under observation in the hospital till Monday.

Lamenting on the alleged irresponsibility of his neighbour, Feroz Ahmed from Zaigipora village, whose 7 year old son is still in the hospital, says that he'll file a police complaint against his neighbour for jeopardizing his son's life.

"I too was offered Tehri but I cordially denied it as I'm allergic to Tehri. But my son, out of respect, had taken hardly 2 spoons of that

rice and immediately after eating it, he complained of stomach ache and later, started vomiting."

He further added, "Whenever my son is discharged, I'll file a police complaint against my neighbour."

Expressing his anguish over the incident, another villager said that this is not how one makes others part of his happiness.

"What if my nephew would've died because of that Tehri. My nephew had taken only a small portion of meat and immediately after consuming it, he started vomiting. If he would've died, would my neighbour subsidize it by referring to it as an accident? I'll make sure that he's booked under case for murder," Nazir Ahmed, whose 20 year old nephew is currently admitted in SMHS, told Kashmir Observer.

Dr Tajamul Hussain Khan, CMO Budgam said that they have so far received about 20 people from the village at Sub District hospital Charar-I-sharief and all of them are stable.

Talking to Kashmir Observer, Medical Superintendent, SMHS hospital, Dr Kanwaljeet Singh said that there are two adult patients admitted in the hospital.

"Both of these patients were admitted to the hospital with food poisoning. They have gastro-intestinal infection but they're stable now" Singh added.

LG, Other J&K Leaders Extend Ramazan Greetings

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and a host of leaders from the union territory on Saturday greeted the people on the commencement of the holy month of Ramazan.

The Ramazan moon was sighted this evening and Muslims in India will begin fasting from Sunday.

"Greetings to the people on the commencement of Ramzan. This auspicious period teaches us to be humble, charitable and to work for the greater good of society. May this holy month bring peace, prosperity and happiness for all," Sinha wrote on Twitter.

National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and vice president Omar Abdullah extended warm greetings to the

people.

The NC president said, "We must make most of the ensuing month by praying to the almighty for his forgiveness and mercy."

"It is the time for repentance and improvising, a month that teaches self-control and benevolence. The month affords us the time to transform our lives for the good of our very being and the entire humanity. It is the month to purge ourselves of all malice and vice. I pray that those who fast and do good deeds throughout the month attain Allah's pleasure. I also pray that the month augurs well for the entire humanity," he said.

Omar Abdullah said the holy month teaches remarkable lessons of magnanimity, self-control and compassion.

"Ramzaan Kareem brings with it the message of sup-

porting the vulnerable and deprived, therefore we should go the extra mile to help those who are in need in these times. It is during this holy month that we commemorate the revelation of the Holy Quran. I hope the ensuing month deepens our spirituality, and refurbishes our sense of appreciation for blessings almighty Allah has provided us with," he said.

Other mainstream politicians, including former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti, also greeted the people.

"With the onset of Maah-e-Ramazan, may the divine blessings of this auspicious month infuse spirit of brotherhood, peace, communal harmony & prosperity for our UT. Wish you and your families a Happy Ramadhan," IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar said in his greetings.

**J&K BUDGET
2022-23**

JAMMU: The schemes under the social welfare sector, like Old Age Persons, Women in Distress, Physically Challenged People, Mal-Nourished children, Lactating and expecting women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and other Economically Weaker sections of the society plays an important role in improving the lives of these segments of the society.

As part of the national development initiatives, the commitment towards welfare of under-privileged and the downtrodden, backward and vulnerable sections of the society is tremendous. The role of the social welfare sector in fulfillment of this

commitment thus becomes important and it has been instrumental for removing the distress of these sections through amelioration and anti-poverty measures.

Jammu and Kashmir's annual budget has seen a steep hike during the past three years. In 2019-20, J&K had 88,911 crore worth budget which went up to Rs 1 lakh crore for 2020-21 and this year J&K has received a whopping Rs 1.13 lakh crore (net) for the year 2022-23. This substantial increase in budget is mainly because of good performance by the Union Territory's Finance Department with no bills pending in the Government Treasuries for long, as used to be the

case earlier.

For the social welfare sector, an allocation of about Rs.198.07 crore has been made under Capital Expenditure for the year 2022-23 which is Rs.4.93 crore more than the previous year's budget allocation. In the new budget, 100% coverage under all individual beneficiary schemes would be ensured in 2022-23. Distribution of dietary items and supplementary nutrition items are being made at the doorsteps of beneficiaries in all districts of the UT. There is also a proposal for Old Age Homes to be established in all districts. Motorized tricycles will be provided to all Handicapped persons thereby achieving

India Poised To Lead World's Startup Ecosystem, J&K Lagging Behind: Jitendra Singh

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Asserting that Jammu and Kashmir is lagging behind in the startup initiatives, Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday said the country is poised to lead the world's startup ecosystem.

The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office said greater integration and synergy among industry, government departments, academia and independent institutions was crucial to create an enabling environment for growth of startups.

Singh was addressing the first of its kind programme on Industry Participation in Startups' organized by various industry organisations of Jammu to promote local startups here.

The minister said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is poised to lead the world's startup ecosystem but regretted that Jammu and Kashmir is lagging behind.

Ever since Modi had announced StartUp India, StandUp India' from the ramparts of the Red Fort in his Independence Day address of 2015, it picked up in a big way across the country, but for certain reasons did not receive the same impetus in J&K even though things had begun to change after the new arrangement was introduced over here from August 2019, he said.

He said the number of startups in India has increased from 1,100 in 2014 to 40,000 in 2022, showing a huge jump but the numbers are negligible in J&K.

The startup movement in Jammu and Kashmir has been slower compared to the rest of India due to various reasons but now its impact can be seen through various agri-based startups, Purple Revolution and through startups in other fields like pharma, he said.

The minister claimed that the youth from various parts of the Union Territory were voluntarily giving up government and corporate jobs to start their own ventures thereby increasing their

income manifold.

India with its vast unexplored potential and immense innovation, is destined for a frontline role in the world and emphasised sustainable startups for sustainable future growth, he said, stressing the need for a wider integration and for industry and government to work as equal partners.

The demarcation between the public sector and private sector is fast becoming extinct and it has to be a partnership based on equal respect, equal stakes, equal participation and equal investment, he said.

The minister said greater integration and synergy among industry, government departments, academia and independent institutions was crucial to create an enabling environment for growth of startups.

Sustainable startups would sustain the future economy of India and give it global visibility in the years to come, he said.

While laying special emphasis on science-based startups, the minister said these kind of startups are the future of national and global economy.

While elaborating the need for industry in the sustainable growth of startups, he said the industry needs to be partners with equal stakes and equal investment in the movement.

Talking about the challenge of creating sustainable startups, he said startups need to be linked to livelihood.

Science based sectors, non-science sectors and academic institutions need to work together to link startups with livelihood. This could be done by exploring the unexplored local industry.

He said promoting startup culture in India required a change of mindset and this change is possible through rigorous awareness initiatives for boosting entrepreneurial spirit in a society that is obsessed with jobs especially government jobs to enable youth to become job creators rather than job seekers.

J&K Reports 25 New Covid Cases

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday recorded 25 fresh cases of coronavirus, raising the tally to 4,53,793, officials said.

Of the fresh cases, eight were reported from the Jammu division and 17 from the Kashmir division, they said. The officials said Srinagar district recorded the highest of 13 cases.

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

There are 180 active cases in the union territory, while the number of recovered patients was 4,48,863, the officials said.

The death toll in the union territory due to the pandemic was 4,750. No fresh death was reported in the past 24 hours.

DGP Police Lauds Role of BSF In Securing Borders

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: As many as 626 BSF recruits took oath to serve the nation at an attestation-cum-passing out parade at the Subsidiary Training Centre (STC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district on Saturday.

This is BSF's second passing out parade at the STC here within a fortnight. On March 20, 636 candidates passed out of the centre and the parade was presided over by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, who was the chief guest of the event on Saturday, congratulated the recruits on completion of their two-year-long training.

He said he was proud to start his career with the BSF, considered as the country's first line of defence, some 34 years ago

when he was posted in north Kashmir's Kupwara district.

That was a very difficult period (1990s) as Kupwara became the gate of militancy with large groups of militants going across the border (into Pakistan-controlled Kashmir) and returned after training.

We suddenly found ourselves in a situation, for which in my opinion, we were not ready, Singh said.

However, the police chief said it was the sacrifice, dedication and devotion of the BSF officers and personnel in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to which there was a remarkable improvement in the overall security situation in the erstwhile state.

He hailed the BSF for securing the borders, and fighting militants in Jammu and Kashmir, insurgents in North East and Maoists in Central India.

Differently-Abled People To Get Motorised Tricycles In J&K

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Motorised tricycles will be provided to all the differently-abled people in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022-23, while a proposal to establish old-age homes in all districts of the Union Territory is also under consideration, an official spokesperson said on Saturday.

An allocation of about Rs 198.07 crore has been made to the social welfare sector under capital expenditure for 2022-23, which is Rs 4.93 crore more than last year's budget allocation, the spokesperson said.

In the new budget, a 100-per cent coverage under all individual beneficiary schemes would be ensured in 2022-23, he added.

"Motorised tricycles will be provided to all handicapped persons, thereby achieving a 100 per cent saturation level, for which Rs 25 crore have been provisioned," the spokesperson said.

He said "there is also a proposal for old-age homes to be established in all districts". About 8,88,359 beneficiaries were provided a monthly pension of Rs 1,000 under the Integrated Social Security Scheme (ISSS) and the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), the spokesperson said.

He said there has been a 59-per cent increase in the number of beneficiaries under social security and pension schemes, while the transgender population has, for the first time, been included for pension benefits under the ISSS.

The spokesperson said the welfare of displaced Kashmiris has been the top priority of the government, which is visible from the fact that 1,025 transit accommodation units have already been completed or substantially completed.

Another 1,488 units are at different stages of completion and the work on 2,744 units of transit accommodation has been initiated, he said. The spokesperson said of the 6,000 posts created for Kashmiri migrants under the prime minister's package of 2015, 4,678 have been filled and the remaining ones are being filled up.

Providing foodgrains, cash assistance and other benefits will continue under security-related expenditure (SRE) to the community in 2022-23, he added.

For tribal affairs, the spokesperson said an allocation of about Rs 282.23 crore has been made under capital expenditure for the year 2022-23, which is the same as the previous year's budget allocation.

Rāmdhān Kūrē

The month of Blessings & Benevolence

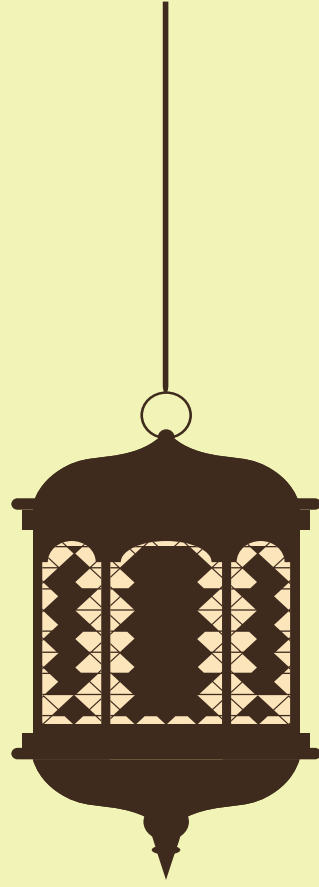
نقشہ سحر و افطار بابت رمضان المبارک ۱۴۴۳ھ
برائے سرینگر و مضافات

(۳۴ ڈگری عرض البلد و مضافات کے لئے)

نوٹ: یہ نقشہ میقات الصلوٰۃ (مرتبہ حضرت مولانا محمد رحمت اللہ میر القاسمی صاحب) کے عین مطابق ہے

اوسطہ مغفرت

تاریخ قمری	تاریخ شمسی	دن	ختم سحری	افطاری
11	13 / اپریل	بدھ	4:36	7:03
12	14	جمعرات	4:34	7:04
13	15	جمعۃ المبارک	4:33	7:05
14	16	سنیچر	4:32	7:05
15	17	اتوار	4:31	7:06
16	18	پیر	4:30	7:07
17	19	منگل	4:28	7:08
18	20	بدھ	4:27	7:09
19	21	جمعرات	4:25	7:10
20	22	جمعۃ المبارک	4:23	7:10



اولہ رحمة

تاریخ قمری	تاریخ شمسی	دن	ختم سحری	افطاری
1	3 / اپریل	اتوار	4:52	6:55
2	4	پیر	4:50	6:56
3	5	منگل	4:48	6:57
4	6	بدھ	4:47	6:57
5	7	جمعرات	4:45	6:58
6	8	جمعۃ المبارک	4:43	6:59
7	9	سنیچر	4:42	7:00
8	10	اتوار	4:41	7:01
9	11	پیر	4:39	7:01
10	12	منگل	4:38	7:02

آخرہ عتق من النار

تاریخ قمری	تاریخ شمسی	دن	ختم سحری	افطاری
21	23 / اپریل	سنیچر	4:22	7:11
22	24	اتوار	4:21	7:12
23	25	پیر	4:20	7:13
24	26	منگل	4:19	7:14
25	27	بدھ	4:17	7:15
26	28	جمعرات	4:16	7:15
27	29	جمعۃ المبارک	4:14	7:16
28	30	سنیچر	4:13	7:16
29	1 / مئی	اتوار	4:12	7:17
30	2	پیر	4:10	7:17

نقشہ ہذا سے بڑھائیں

اوڑی	۳ منٹ
بارہمولہ	۱ منٹ
باندی پورہ	۲ منٹ
پونچھ	۲ منٹ
ٹنگمرگ	۱ منٹ
ٹیٹوال	۳ منٹ
سو پور	۱ منٹ
کرناہ	۳ منٹ

نقشہ ہذا سے گھٹائیں

اسلام آباد	۲ منٹ
پلوامہ	۱ منٹ
پہلگام	۳ منٹ
ترال	۲ منٹ
گد	۲ منٹ
کولگام	۱ منٹ
لیہہ	۱۱ منٹ
ہرموکھ	۱ منٹ