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K O V I E W

Ukraine Policy

As the war in Ukraine drags on, India is finding it increasingly difficult to maintain its neutral policy stance between the West and Russia. US President Joe Biden in a virtual meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged him to throw his lot with the nations resisting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. He said the US and India are going to continue "close consultation on how to manage the destabilizing effects of this Russian war". However, the PM Modi without naming Russia called the "killings of innocent civilians" in Ukraine's Bucha city "very worrying", and said India immediately condemned the killings and called for an independent probe. Earlier foreign minister S Jaishankar and India's envoy at the United Nations T S Tirumurti have condemned Bucha killings unequivocally.

The virtual meeting took place ahead of the 2+2 talks between the US and India's Defence and Foreign Ministers which were also dominated by the discussion on the war in Ukraine. The US demand for India to give up its neutral stance on the war and support western war efforts against Russia. But it is not an easy choice for India. The country has for decades had deep relations with Russia and its predecessor the Soviet Union which also supported it on Kashmir by vetoing the successive resolutions in the Security Council. So, joining the west against Russia would neither be feasible nor would it be without costs for the country.

Making things further difficult for New Delhi is the pressure from China and Russia which want it to be a part of their bloc against the west. Recently, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited India to press the same point. These were very significant visits. The Chinese foreign minister urged India to not support the west over Ukraine and also sought to normalize the relationship between the two countries. But New Delhi has made it clear that it was not in the mood to improve its relations with Beijing until the latter didn't pull back its troops from the territory it has captured in Ladakh. China claims the captured area as its territory and wants New Delhi to move on and accept the new status quo in Ladakh as a fait accompli. New Delhi, however, will not do so as was made clear by foreign minister S Jaishankar.

Though this tricky geopolitical situation has its opportunities for New Delhi, it has also its costs. The US has already threatened consequences if India didn't stop importing oil and gas from Russia. But India has not given up its principled policy, one that is in the best interest of its people.

O T H E R O P I N O N

Poverty and Pandemic

A recent research paper from the International Monetary Fund written by three economists has come up with evidence that during the pandemic, extreme level of poverty in India was kept to the pre-pandemic level after direct distribution of food by the government was taken into account. The poverty cut-off marks were taken to be \$1.9 and \$3.2 measured in purchasing power parity terms. This was interpreted by certain sections of the media as proof of poverty having actually declined during the pandemic, thanks to the policy interventions by the Central government. This is somewhat confusing when viewed against another research paper published in May 2021 by the Azim Premji Foundation, where scholars found compelling evidence of a substantial rise in poverty in India during the pandemic. Using data from the Indian economy, they found that according to one measure — the minimum-wage threshold — 230 million Indians had slipped below this poverty line. This led to the understanding that the pandemic had increased poverty. What then is the correct conclusion to be drawn? Can the results be reconciled?

Both the views are correct in their own ways. Poverty can be viewed in many different ways, the most common being measuring the number of people in a population living below a well-defined level of income, per head per month. This means that the constituency of the poor is not homogenous. Some lie just below the poverty line, while many others can be located at the extreme lower range tending to zero income. What the IMF paper claims is that the extreme poor remained at the pre-pandemic level of incomes because they received a subsidy in kind — in terms of food — from the government. The poor were defined in terms of the purchasing power parity mark of \$1.9 per head per day. The most important conclusion to draw from this study would be to note that without the distribution of free food to the extremely poor, there might have been instances of people perishing from starvation and, obviously, a further spike in extreme poverty. The Azim Premji Foundation paper claims that if one took the minimum-wage threshold as the poverty line, with suitable corrections made for rural-urban differences and inflation, 230 million Indians slipped below this line during the pandemic in 2020. Combining the two sets of results, the reasonable conclusion would be that total poverty had increased during the pandemic, but government policy has helped the poorest of the poor to survive. The increase in total poverty is a difficult challenge for the government to tackle going forward.

Telegraph India

Sri Lanka's Financial Crisis Fuels Political Unrest

The island nation is facing unprecedented upheaval as a growing economic crisis sparks anti-government protests in the streets and calls for the president to resign.

Haris Zargar

For several weeks now, thousands of Sri Lankans have taken to the streets in anti-government protests reminiscent of the Arab Spring as the country grapples with an economic crisis that has resulted in record inflation, a devalued currency, blackouts and a scarcity of basic necessities.

The worst economic crisis in its post-independence history has plunged Sri Lanka deeper into a political crisis that shows no signs of abating. But what may appear as a sudden descent into chaos has been in the making for years.

Owing to its shrinking foreign currency reserves, Sri Lanka is mired in public debt and struggles to pay for imports of fuel and other necessities. The country needs about \$3 billion to help restore supplies of essential items, including fuel and medicine, as well as bridge financing to avoid a hard default on its outstanding foreign debt of \$51 billion.

Because of the financial crunch, the 22 million residents have been dealing with skyrocketing prices and a shortage of essential items. The cost of living has nearly doubled in the past four months, making it unaffordable for many.

Since Sri Lanka gets most of its electricity from imported oil and coal, the government has been compelled to impose power outages that have left citizens in the dark for up to 13 hours at a time, and this may be extended to 16 hours. There is so little money that some of its embassies and consulates are being closed temporarily.

People have been waiting in queues for hours to get fuel or have their cooking gas canisters refilled, with several elderly people even dying while waiting in line for fuel. Schools have been forced to cancel exams owing to a shortage of paper. The crisis has also resulted in the declaration of a public health emergency owing to a severe shortage of medicines and equipment, and state hospitals have had to halt regular surgeries.

Tense political situation

The protests have morphed into anti-regime rallies demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who is accused of corruption and mishandling the economy. They turned violent on 31 March in the capital Colombo as public rage spilled over into the streets. Demonstrators gathered outside the president's residence, slinging stones and lighting fires. The police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse them and arrested over 50 demonstrators.

Rajapaksa then declared a state of emergency, but it was lifted on 5 April. A few days earlier, on 2 April, the government had also imposed a 36-hour curfew to effectively prohibit any gatherings, saying "no person shall be on any public road, railway, public park, public recreation ground or other public ground or the seashore". After the curfew came into effect, the police reportedly arrested over 660 people for violating it.

To suppress a public outcry, the government imposed restrictions on social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram and TikTok. As services began to be disrupted, users around the island began to use virtual private network services to circumvent it.

Condemning the social media restrictions, the Bar Association of Sri Lanka said it was a "vital aspect" of freedom of expression for citizens and "as important as traditional media". The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka observed that the country's Telecommunications Regulatory Commission had "no authority" to ask service providers to restrict social media



The rallies have largely unified ethnic and minority groups as Sri Lanka continues to heal from a long civil war that ended in 2009. But there are fears that the continuing crisis may exacerbate civil strife among sections of the majority Sinhalese population, which is polarised

access. Opposition politicians also slammed the government for "stifling" free expression. As the decision came under widespread criticism, the access to the sites was restored.

Despite the clampdowns, protesters have continued to demand Rajapaksa's resignation, brandishing signs calling his family "thieves" — his older brother Mahinda Rajapaksa is the prime minister — and urging them to "go home". However, both of them have refused to step down.

The two are third-generation politicians and their family has dominated the island's politics for nearly two decades. Rajapaksa family members are currently in charge of 11 ministries. During Mahinda's second presidential term from 2010 to 2015, as many as 40 members of the family were said to be in government posts outside the Cabinet.

Resignations and resistance

On 3 April, the Cabinet resigned en masse, leaving the government scurrying to recruit new ministers to help guide the country through the crises. A few days later, on 5 April, at least 41 parliamentarians quit the ruling coalition, denying the Rajapaksas a governing majority in the assembly. But the government's chief whip, Johnston Fernando, informed Parliament that the president would not resign under any circumstances.

Sri Lanka's main opposition party, Samagi Jana Balawegaya, has also increased its pressure on the regime and said it would propose a motion of no confidence in the president if the government does not provide immediate relief for the people affected by the economic crisis. It has also called for the abolition of the all-powerful executive presidency.

In the midst of this growing political instability, Sri Lanka is frantically seeking international loans to help the country stave off an even worse financial crisis. On 6 April, Rajapaksa announced a three-member advisory group to help the government in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. India has already offered to issue a credit line of \$1

billion and \$500 million in gasoline.

According to experts, the current crisis was in the making for years as the government repeatedly borrowed large sums of money from international lenders to enhance public services. While its foreign debt increased, the economy was severely affected by heavy monsoons in 2016 and 2017 that reduced agricultural output.

The economic crisis was compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit the country's revenue from tourism and remittances, a key source of income and foreign exchange. By 2021, Sri Lanka had welcomed just 173,000 tourists for the year, down from 2.3 million in 2018. The Russia-Ukraine war has only exacerbated these troubles as oil prices soar.

However, government critics argue that ill-advised tax cuts and economic mismanagement have put further strain on the country's public finances, precipitating a spiralling economic meltdown.

The rallies have largely unified ethnic and minority groups as Sri Lanka continues to heal from a long civil war that ended in 2009. But there are fears that the continuing crisis may exacerbate civil strife among sections of the majority Sinhalese population, which is polarised between those who want Rajapaksa out of power and those who want him to stay.

Meanwhile, five experts from the United Nations have called on the government to engage in "constructive and open dialogue" on political reforms with the Sri Lankan people. "Peaceful protests and voices of legitimate dissent should not be met with unnecessary and excessive use of force by authorities," they said. "Resorting to use of force against protesters will only jeopardise avenues to express discontent peacefully, risking instead an escalation of tensions."

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 New Frame.

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Environment and Education

WORLD Nature Conservation Day acknowledges that a healthy environment is the foundation for a stable and healthy human society. It is celebrated on July 28 annually. The main purpose of celebrating World Nature Conservation Day is to conserve the animals and trees that are on the verge of going extinct from the natural environment of the Earth. This day also recognizes that a healthy environment is the foundation for a stable and productive society and to ensure the well-being of present and future generations, we all must participate to protect, conserve, and sustainably manage our natural resources. Conservation of resources has an important role in protecting our mother Earth. The balance in the natural beauty of the earth can be maintained by preserv-

ing various components of nature - water, air, soil, energy, vegetation, minerals, fauna, etc.

The world is facing many challenges related to environment. On one hand, the world is developing at an alarming rate while on the other hand the destruction of natural resources is going on. Today, the human society is facing severe environmental problems like climate change, greenhouse effect, energy crisis, depletion of natural resources, biodiversity loss, pollution of air, water, soil, etc. The scope of the problems is from local level to global level. The ever increasing population and changing lifestyles are increasing the severity of the environmental problems. The time has come to protect the natural environment through precise efforts.

Education is one of the key solutions for this situation. The best

way to spread awareness regarding the Conservation of World nature is through education. A carefully designed learning system through which youngsters are exposed to various aspects of environmental conservation would help them develop a deep understanding of it. Children should become aware of the threats of environmental degradation and encouraged to act responsibly. Education does not only teach the name of a flower but also its importance for the ecosystem.

A well designed environmental education system gives both theoretical as well as practical exposure to environmental conservation. A child would think a thousand times before plucking a flower if he knows its importance in balancing the ecosystem. Schools can have cleanliness drives on campus where children make sure

that everything is kept clean and litter free. From classes to school playgrounds - they should be made to feel responsible for keeping all areas spotlessly clean. They should also be encouraged to participate in cleanliness drives in their communities.

Schools can also make sure children start learning about environment preservation from an early age. If children are being taught about water as an EVS (environmental studies) topic then teachers can cover local water bodies like lakes and rivers. They can apprise the children about water scarcity and ask them to creatively think of ways to conserve water by water harvesting, innovate means to keep water bodies clean and so on.

M Ahmad

Book Review

Siyasi Muslims



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The Muslim vote bank is an imagination of secular parties who treat Muslims as a homogenous social group and make promises to Muslims using the minority status of Muslims in India. However, it misses the point that Muslims are not a homogenous group and everyone among them is not concerned with the package of Muslim issues

Haris Rashid

In his book *Siyasi Muslims: A story of Political Islams in India*, 2019, Hilal Ahmed analyses the Muslim politics in India through contemporary debates. The first thing that the book does is that it challenges the homogeneity of Indian Muslims. As a result, it achieves separation of “Muslim” and “Islam”. Islam is not a living organism that acts on its own but it is the Muslims that act. Therefore, the subject of the book is Indian Muslims not Islam per se. The debate on Burqa that the author analyses highlights the fact that it is the Muslims that act and not Islam. The debate on triple Talaq also points to the fact that when analysing the politics of Muslims, it is the Muslims that should be studied and not Islam. Similarly, the casteism that Muslims in India practice or perpetuate despite the egalitarian nature of Islam also highlights this point.

Hilal Ahmed argues against homogenizing of Indian Muslims by looking for the sources of identity of Muslims in the census started by the British. He argues that the census categorized all Muslims, irrespective of the schools of thought they adhere to or their caste or class, in one category and reduced them to numbers. This reduction to numbers is the reason provided by him for the homogenisation of Indian Muslims. Since all Muslims belong to the religion of Islam, it might have been convenient for the purpose of census to consider them as one category. In this context, the explanation provided by the author begs the questions- what would have been the alternative to this? As the author introduces the reader to the different castes, classes and schools of thought that the Muslims adhere to, should the census adopt a caste based, class based or the school of thought based approach? Interestingly, the author does not even once mention the first schism in Islam- the Shia-Sunni divide. Irrespective of the line of this argument, the author however drives the point home that Indian Muslims are not a homogenous category.

Since Indian Muslims are not homogenous, they have different approaches to similar Muslim issues. Therefore, no single organization can claim to be representative of the entire Indian Muslim population. All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) might be one of the well known organizations but there are a plethora of other Muslim organizations that contest over similar Muslim issues. Irrespective of these plethora organizations contesting over Muslim issues, the author argues that these issues are treated by the government and the political parties keeping in mind that Muslims are a homogenous group. As a result, only some of the Muslims, mostly AIMPLB as the government and the courts give priority to it, are represented. The voices and concerns of other Muslim groups are not considered. Similarly, there are other issues, including legal and constitutional, over which internal politics takes place among Muslims. Some elite Muslims want reservation for all the Muslims while others belonging to the lower castes want reservation for Dalit Muslims only and some want separate reservations for Dalit Muslims and other Muslims. Therefore, there is no consensus on these Muslim issues among various Muslim groups in India. However, most of the Muslims invoke the constitution and speak the language of rights when faced with these issues.

Given that Muslims are not a homogenous group and they are not represented by a single organization, Ahmed goes on to explain their nature of participation and interaction with the politics of the country. He counters the argument that Muslims are only concerned with Muslim issues and beyond that they are not concerned about anything. Providing quantitative evidence, he argues that Muslims are equally concerned about poverty, unemployment and other common governance issues that other socio-religious communities also face. Giving the example of Babri Masjid, he argues that it is not the most important issue for most of Muslims in India and it does not figure as an electoral issue for Muslims. The reaction to Triple Talaq or the abolition of Hajj subsidy also highlights the point that Muslims are concerned about politics beyond these Muslim issues. In this context, Ahmed rebuts the accusations that Muslims are

concerned only with their Muslim identity and further goes on to argue that they do not form a “vote bank” of any party. He argues that Muslims show different voting patterns in different elections. Sometimes they vote for Indian National Congress (INC) while other times they vote for Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The example of fatwas issued by Imam of Jamia Masjid Delhi asking people to vote for different parties in different elections is given to highlight the point that Muslims do not vote for any single party. However, Muslims, like any other community, do form voting blocs at the local constituency level in the best of their interests and there is no exception about it. Therefore, at the national level, Muslims do not vote collectively for a particular party. The Muslim vote

ment. Some of the parties like BJP who oppose Muslim appeasement have token representation of good Muslims in their party so as to reach out to Muslims for votes while at the same time asking them to vote as Indians and not as Muslims.

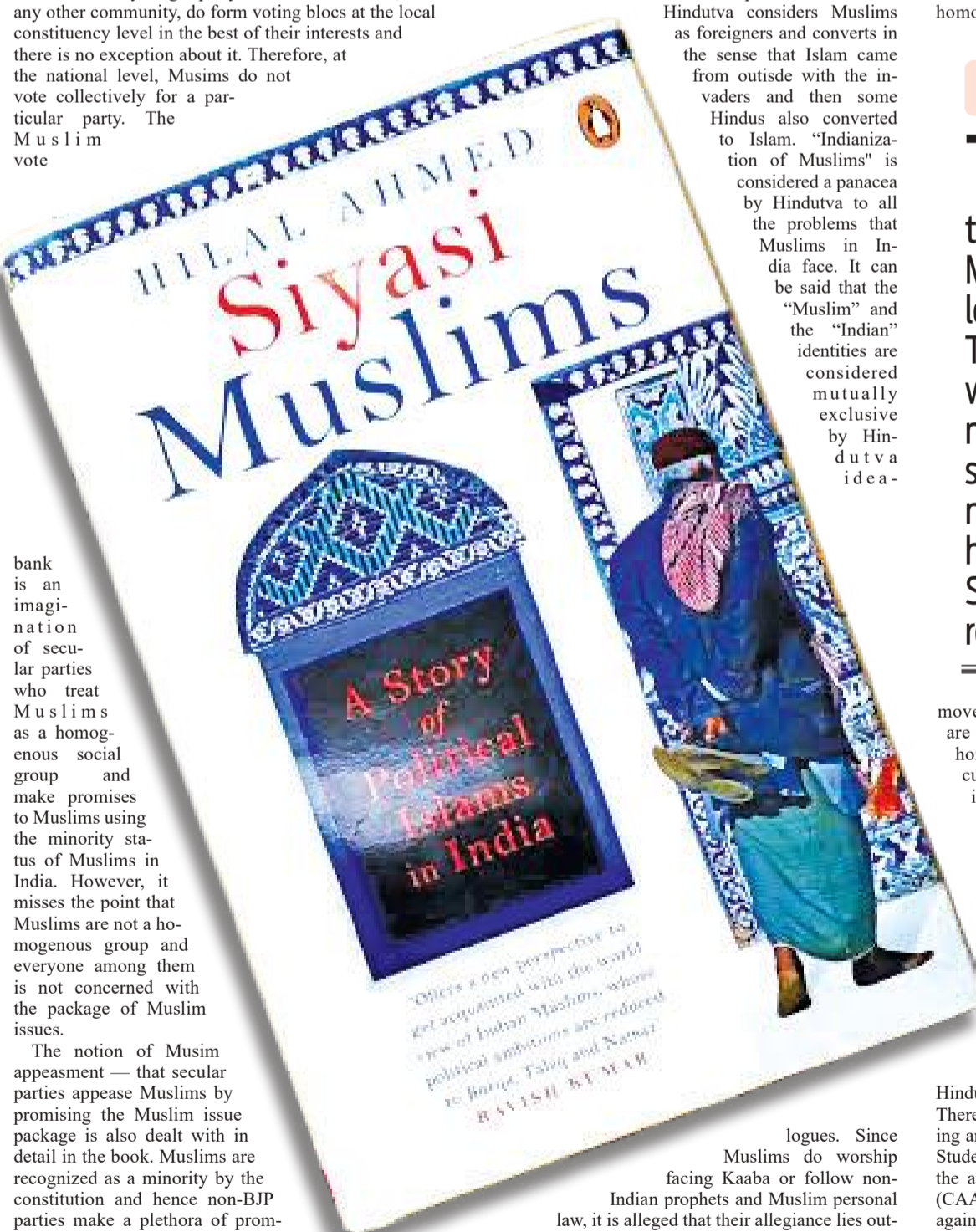
Since the book analyses the contemporary Muslim issues in India, it also deals with the Hindutva politics and tries to situate Muslims in it. The author argues that Hindutva needs Muslims to survive as they create Muslims as a permanent “other”. Hindutva considers Muslims as foreigners and converts in the sense that Islam came from outside with the invaders and then some Hindus also converted to Islam. “Indianization of Muslims” is considered a panacea by Hindutva to all the problems that Muslims in India face. It can be said that the “Muslim” and the “Indian” identities are considered mutually exclusive by Hindutva idea-

It is interesting that Ahmed argues how Muslims are a heterogenous group that are different based on class, caste, gender and the schools of thought they belong to. It brings out how all these different identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege for Muslims. It is what is called “intersectionality”- which identifies multiple factors of advantages and disadvantages.

However, on the homogeneity of Muslims, it is not mentioned how the Pakistan movement affected this homogenous identity of Muslims. Since the Pakistan

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There are political parties led by Muslims in India that claim to represent Muslims both at the state level and the national level. The book does not deal with such parties and only mentions the BJP and the secular parties. There is also no mention of how Muslims have reacted to Hindutva. Silence is not the only reaction by Muslims



bank is an imagination of secular parties who treat Muslims as a homogenous social group and make promises to Muslims using the minority status of Muslims in India. However, it misses the point that Muslims are not a homogenous group and everyone among them is not concerned with the package of Muslim issues.

The notion of Muslim appeasement — that secular parties appease Muslims by promising the Muslim issue package is also dealt with in detail in the book. Muslims are recognized as a minority by the constitution and hence non-BJP parties make a plethora of promises to Muslims on Muslim issues using the “minority” character of the community. These issues include minority status of educational institutes like Jamia Milia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University and the OBC reservation for Muslims. Ahmed argues that these promises and work done for Muslims cannot be called appeasement as these parties making promises or doing work for Muslims consider Muslims to be a homogenous group. Only a few sections of dominant Muslims benefit from what is called Muslim appeasement. Further, Sachar Committee report on the socio-economic condition of Muslims in India is invoked to refute that anything done for Muslims as a community is appease-

logues. Since Muslims do worship Kaaba or follow non-Indian prophets and Muslim personal law, it is alleged that their allegiance lies outside India.

While Hindutva has historically used anti-Muslim rhetoric to target Indian Muslims, the ideology of Hindutva is not fixed to Savarkar or Golwalkar. There is no discussion on how the identity of Muslims have been shaped in the wake of partition in 1947 or the Kashmir issue. The word “separation” or “separatist” is used many times throughout the book but it is not elaborated as to why Muslims are accused of separatist tendencies. Further, the reaction of Muslims to Hindutva is also not discussed. Since it is argued that Muslims think like any other socio-religious group and are not just concerned about their Muslim identity, they do not react to these religious issues and maintain “Muslim silence”.

movement was based on the premise that Muslims are a nation, how it impacted or brought about the homogenization of Muslims has not been discussed. The impact of Hindutva on this identity is also not discussed. Since Hindutva interacts with Muslims based on their religion and considers them a homogenous group, the reaction from Muslims is expected to be on the lines of religion and as a homogenous community of Muslims.

One of the important points that the book misses is Muslim mobilization. There are political parties led by Muslims in India that claim to represent Muslims both at the state level and the national level. The book does not deal with such parties and only mentions the BJP and the secular parties. There is also no mention of how Muslims have reacted to Hindutva. Silence is not the only reaction by Muslims. There have been various forms of reactions, including armed mobilization by various Muslim groups like Students’ Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). In fact, the author discusses the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) but does not mention how Muslims mobilized against it.

Overall, the book does a great job at deconstructing the Muslim community of India and identifies their source of identity. Through the contemporary debates on Muslim issues in Indian politics, it places them in the historical context and clarifies the terms of the debate. Though he engages with the Muslim politics but also leaves a lot out of the book on this subject.

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

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Tehsildar Among Four Injured In Clash In Rajouri, Probe Ordered

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: At least four people, including a tehsildar, were injured in a clash in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, prompting the authorities to order an inquiry, officials said.

Police have registered two FIRs in the case, while Deputy Commissioner, Rajouri, Vikas Kundal ordered an inquiry. In his order, Kundal appointed Additional Deputy Commissioner, Kalakote, Krishan Lal as the inquiry officer and asked him to submit a report within a week.

Two PDD Engineers, Inspector In ACB Net

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The anti-corruption bureau (ACB) on Wednesday arrested two junior engineers and an inspector of the power development department (PDD) for demanding and accepting a bribe from a unit holder for upgrading the electricity consumption, sanction load.

officials, he said, settled for Rs 260000 for completing the work. On receipt of the complaint, the ACB spokesperson said, a Case FIR No. 12/2022 U/S 7 PC Act 1988 was registered in PS ACB Baramulla and investigation taken up.

IUST Holds Conf On Impact Of Fasting On Spiritual, Mental Health



Observer News Service

AWANTIPORA: To necessitate the spiritual upgradation of the society and highlight the significance of Ramadhan, the International Centre for Spiritual Studies (ICSS) of Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) held a one day Conference on the theme "Impact of Fasting on Spiritual and Mental Health" in collaboration with Shamah Foundation (A Women Concern based in Kashmir) here on Tuesday.

ing, a revered dimension of fasting and worship according to Islam," he added.

Heatwave Continues In Jammu, Light Rains Lash Kashmir

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Heatwave conditions continued to prevail over the Jammu region on Wednesday, while light rains in Kashmir brought down the day temperature to normal after almost a month, an IMD official said.

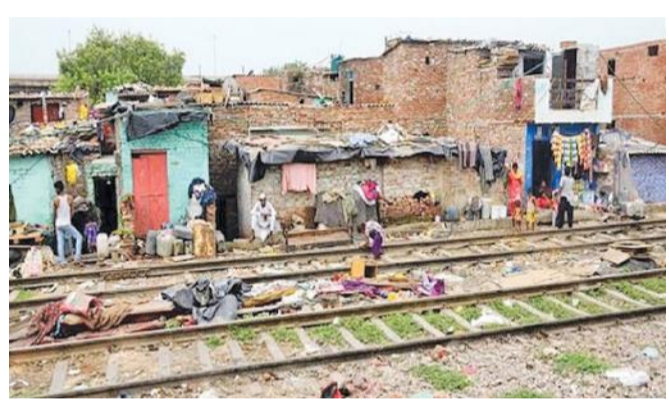
Katra, the base camp for the pilgrims visiting Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, recorded a high of 34.6 degrees Celsius and a low of 22.8 degrees Celsius. The weather, on the other hand, was pleasant in Kashmir region where Srinagar recorded a high of near normal 20.6 degrees Celsius and a low of 11.8 degrees Celsius, which was 4.2 notches above normal, the official said.

rainfall on Wednesday. According to IMD, most parts of Kashmir valley and some places in the high altitude areas of Jammu region recorded light to moderate rains since Tuesday night. The weather is expected to remain cloudy with light rain likely at many places in Kashmir and some places in Jammu on April 14, the official said, adding that the next spell of light to moderate rain is likely on April 20 and 21. As per IMD, light snowfall in the upper reaches of north Kashmir, including Razdan top on Bandipora-Gurez road, was reported.

Large Chunk Of Railway Land Cleared Of Slum-Dwellers In Jammu

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Maratha Basti shantytown near the Jammu railway station wore a deserted look on Tuesday with a majority of its dwellers, hailing from different parts of the country and some Rohingya Muslims, having left after packing their belongings.



Dozens of families that are yet to leave are also packing their belongings and are ready to leave after the district administration issued a notice, asking them to vacate the railway land immediately.

According to government data, over 13,700 foreigners, including Rohingyas and Bangladeshi nationals, are settled in Jammu and Samba districts of Jammu and Kashmir, where their population has increased by over 6,000 between 2008 and 2016. Over 200 Rohingyas are also lodged in a holding centre in Kathua after they were found living illegally in Jammu city during a verification drive in March last year.

"We have been living here for several decades without any problem. The government has decided to vacate the land and we have no option but to move elsewhere in search of a shelter," Mohan Lal, who hails from Siwan in Bihar, said. His wife Pooja said they have been living at this place for years and were shell shocked after police pasted the notice at different places.

According to official sources, there were over 100 families of migrant labourers and 38 families of Rohingyas living on the railway land. The notice was served in response to the issue raised by the railway authorities with the district administration, officials said, expressing hope that the land would be handed over to the railway authorities in the shortest possible time. Facing persecution, Rohingyas fled Myanmar and many of them entered India illegally through Bangladesh and took shelter in different parts of the country, including Jammu.

Last week, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court gave six weeks to the government to identify the immigrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh illegally staying in the Union Territory. "We do not know where to go with our children as we have no place of our own. We will be killed if we return to our country," Mohammad Zakir, a Rohingya, said as his family members were busy packing their belongings. Shamsul Alam, another Rohingya, said many of them are observing the Ramzan fast and finding it difficult to find a shelter amid the soaring temperatures.

IIT, IIM, Central Universities Made Functional In Record Time: Kansal

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Jammu & Kashmir is witnessing an unprecedented era of positive developments with setting up of premier education institutes like IIT, IIM, AIIMS, Central and Cluster Universities among other avenues of education, Principal Secretary Higher Education, Rohit Kansal said Wednesday.



He made these remarks while addressing students of Central University Jammu. He was chairing the valedictory function of a 3-day Mobile Film Making workshop. The workshop was organised by the Mass Communication and New Media Department of Central University of Jammu. The participants have been trained by Ritesh Taksande from Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) Pune.

He advised the students to 'think through chaos to identify world changing opportunities'. The Principal Secretary also shed light on the implementation of National Education Policy-2020. He reiterated that all educational institutions across J&K would be implementing NEP in full from the current session. He also revealed that J&K would now follow a uniform academic calendar that would be in sync with the national academic calendar. This would immensely benefit the students and also enable students from J&K to compete for admission to the best colleges and universities across India without any loss of time.

He assured all support to the Central University Jammu for the implementation of the NEP 2020. Veteran BBC Editor and documentary film maker, Vijay Rana also spoke on the event and shared his professional experiences with the students. He urged the students to move ahead with confidence and faith and nothing could prevent them from being successful. Speaking at the event, Vice Chancellor Sanjeev Jain assured successful implementation of NEP-2020 in the university and assured that the Central University would enhance the emphasis on employability and skill based courses and continuous organising 'outcome based' practical training sessions in the university in the future also.

Return Of KPs To Kashmir High On NC Agenda: Gupta

Observer News Service

JAMMU: A day long convention of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Minority Cell was held today at Sher e Kashmir Bhawan, Jammu under the chairmanship of party's Provincial President Jammu Rattan Lal Gupta. The meet was organized by Jatin Bhat.

Mr Sheikh Bashir Ahmed Provincial Secretary Jammu said that unemployment has caused a sense of deprivation and despair among the migrant youth and this needed to be addressed on priority. Babu Ram Pal President Central Zone Jammu exhorted the functionaries to strengthen the National Conference and the Minority Cell at the grass roots level. NC Minority wing functionary Jatin Bhat while referring to the plight of the non camp migrants putting in the rented accommodation called for construction of additional 5000 flats across Jammu. He also demanded raising of boundary wall in Jagati. He stressed the need for availability of basic needs in all the camps, particularly drinking water, power and medicare. Those who were present in the meeting : Vijay Lochan P.P SC Cell, Vijay Laxami Dutta Senior leader women wing, Qazi Jalal Ud din, Ashok Koul, A.K Raina, P.I Talshi, Shadi Lal, R.L Malla, Chandra Ji, Daizy ji, Vijay Koul, Kaka Ji Bhan and others.

DC Bandipora Reviews Flood Preparedness Plan

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Dr. Owais Ahmad on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review flood preparedness in the district besides discussing the Flood Management Action Plan of the district. The meeting discussed the Flood Management Action Plan in detail. All the departments put forward their suggestions and informed the meeting about their preparedness.

Dr Owais directed departments to gear up for conduct of mock drills and other activities on a regular basis. He directed the officers to strictly follow the Action Plan while dealing with any situation and stressed on maintaining close coordination between various departments for better results. The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Ali Afzar Khan, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Parvaiz Rahim, SDM Sumbal Dr Bashir Ahmad, SDM Gurez, Dr Mudassar, CMO Bandipora, CEO Bandipora, Ex. Engineers of Irrigation Flood Control Bandipora and sumbal, MID Shadipora, R&B Bandipora and Sumbal, PHE Bandipora and Sumbal, SSD Gurez besides Tehsildars, Dy. SP DAR, AEEs of PDD and other senior officials of the district.

Religious Intolerance Increasing, Parliamentary Panel Should Be Formed To Look Into It: Sikh Body

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Alleging that religious intolerance has increased in the country in the recent past, a Sikh body here on Wednesday called for forming a parliamentary panel to look into the issue and suggest action against those involved in fanning such feelings. In a statement, All Parties Sikh Coordination Committee (APSCC) chairman J S Raina said religious places such as gurudwaras, temples, mosques and churches should be kept away from politics and people should be allowed to practise their own

religion without any fear. "Since the acts of religious intolerance have increased in the recent past, a parliamentary standing committee should be formed so that stern action is taken against rogue elements and people carry on with their religious obligation without any fear," he said. He also urged the Supreme Court to take note of such incidents and ensure that the right to freedom of religion is enforced in letter and spirit. Raina conveyed his best wishes on the occasion of Baisakhi and prayed for peace as well as prosperity of the entire country.

BCI Recognizes CUK's BA LLB Programme

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: Bar Council of India (BCI) has recognised the integrated five-year B.A LLB Programme of the Central University of Kashmir (CUK). The BCI conducted a live virtual inspection of the School of Legal Studies (SLS) on 11th of March, 2022, in which Judges, academicians, lawyers and administrators were present. They took keen interest in physically verifying all the parameters of the department required for recognition of the programme. The Committee submitted its report to the BCI Chairman who convened a meeting of the Legal Education Committee on 11-04-22. The Committee, on the basis of the report submitted by the Inspection Team, found that the Department of Law, School of Legal Studies is fulfilling all the prescribed conditions and recommended recognition of its integrated five-year B.A LLB Programme. This decision of the Legal Education Committee was approved

by the Chairman BCI and later conveyed to the department. The Programme stands now recognised from 2011 to 2023. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Shah and Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zargar congratulated the Dean, School of Legal Studies, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Mir including the faculty members for their untiring efforts and students who are real beneficiaries of this accomplishment. The Department had applied for recognition of the five-year BA.LLB programme to the Bar Council of India, immediately after its establishment in 2011 and a BCI team had visited the department, but the team could not submit its report to the Chairman Bar Council of India.

LG Sinha Interacts With J&K's First Women Cycling Club Members



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday interacted with members of women cycling club, 'Women Do Ride' of J&K, at the Raj Bhavan. LG Sinha congratulated the members of the first women cycling club led by Payal Jain. He appreciated the efforts of first women cyclist group of J&K in inspiring positivity in society, gender equality, women empowerment, skill-sharing & invaluable contribution to social development of the country. During the interaction, the women club members apprised

LG Sinha about various activities through which they raise awareness on a host of social causes. They also discussed concerns of women cyclists and sports enthusiasts. The Lt Governor said the government is making pro-active intervention in the building of adequate infrastructure and facilities to encourage women's participation in governance, business, and other sectors. The courage and determination of the cyclist group to succeed in scripting success stories in various other fields. He also extended Baisakhi greetings to the group members.

Wushu, Volleyball Events Dominate Day In Shopian



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: J&K Admin's sporting initiative of 'My Youth My Pride' was on full-swing across J&K on Wednesday. Wushu and Volleyball competitions were held at Sports Stadium in Shopian in which around 160 players participated including a good number of female athletes.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, some of the jubilant participants felt that such events should become a regular feature in the district. They opined that the Shopian stadium mostly hosts cricket matches but for a change, the competitions for games that interest them is a welcome change and will go a long way in building the talent pool in other games. Earlier, DDC Vice Chairman, Shopian, Irfan Manhas presided over the function as the chief guest while Sheikh Gulam Qadir, Sarpanch Zawoor was the guest of honour. Incharge of Sports Stadium Shopian and many other officials of Sports Council and a number of NYCs were also present on the occasion. A large number of local spectators were also present in the stadium to root for their local heroes. Chief guest interacted with the participants and others present on the occasion and apprised them about the benefits of participation in Sports. He thanked the Sports Council and administration of J&K for reaching out to the district Shopian and conducting sports events. He also expressed his hope that such events shall grace district Shopian in future too. Not so far away from Shopian, BSM Mattan and Pahalgam Blues registered their wins in Nanil Sports Field where they defeat-

ed their arch-rivals in the Spring Shield T-20 Cricket tournament to book their places in the next round. BSM Mattan after winning the toss scored 179 for the loss of 9 wickets with Jamid being their top scorer with a personal score of 61 runs, a feat that earned him the man of the match award. The opponents Mattan Blues were bundled out for paltry 143 runs and handed over the ticket for the next round to BSM Mattan. Shab-rooz and Faizan scored 46 and 45 runs respectively in what proved to be a losing cause. In another match, DCC Darigund lost to Pahalgam Blues. Choosing to bat after winning the toss, DCC Darigund could only aggregate 120 runs losing all the wickets in the pursuit of a big total. Sharid and Abrar bowled some tight lines and grabbed 3 scalps each. Batters of Pahalgam Blues played sensible cricket and sailed through losing only 4 wickets with Sharid anchoring the innings and contributing a vital 31 runs with the bat. Sharid for his all-around performance was declared man of the match. The match between KCC Mattan and Super Stars Mattan was in progress when the report was being filed. Meanwhile, 'My Youth My Pride' initiative received a rousing response in district Doda where events in Kabaddi, Kho-Kho and Chess were held at Sports Stadium Doda. Around 90 athletes took part in the one-day event which also featured a good number of female athletes as well. The battery of sports events being played under the umbrella of the 'My Youth My Pride' initiative of the Sports Council has been received well by all the sections of the society.

IPL: Royals, Titans Set For High-Voltage Clash

Press Trust of India

NAVI MUMBAI: A battle royale is on the cards when Hardik Pandya's Gujarat Titans take on the Sanju Samson-led Rajasthan Royals, two line-ups armed with potent bowling units in a top-of-the-table IPL showdown here on Thursday. The Royals put together one of the best, if not the best bowling attacks, for this season and all their spinners and pacers have been right on the mark. The seasoned Trent Boult has continued to reign fire with the new ball and has been equally impressive in the slog overs. In the previous game against Lucknow Super Giants, he bowled a fiery opening spell to get rid of skipper KL Rahul and Krishnappa Gowtham in the very first over. Prasidh Krishna has given a glimpse of why he is touted to be the next fast-bowling sensation in Indian cricket. Alongside Boult, the duo has bowled with pace and aggression. Rookie Kuldeep Sen too proved he has the stomach to play with the bigwigs. The spin duties, on the other hand, are being ably carried out by senior India spinner Ravi-



chandran Ashwin and the wily Yuzvendra Chahal. It will be a tall task for the Titans' batters, who are thin on experience, to navigate through the Royals bowling. The new-entrants have relied heavily on young opener Shubman Gill, who has been in scintillating form, and Pandya. Matthew Wade has struggled to get runs while David Miller is also yet to fire, leaving rookies Abhinav Manohar and B Sai Surdharshan with more responsibility. However, Rahul Tewatia seems to be loving his role as the finisher tonking sixes at will. The Titans boast of formidable bowling unit themselves. The pace bowling department includes the likes of Lockie Ferguson, one of the fastest bowlers in world cricket, senior India quick Mohammed Shami, and Pandya, all attacking wicket-taking bowlers, who can put the opposition under pressure. Rashid Khan, expectedly, is their most economical bowler. The opposition batters have preferred to play his four overs out rather than go for the big shots. Both teams have won three games and lost one with the Royals perched on top of the points table owing to a superior net run rate, while the Titans are placed fourth.

'Mental Strain Of Leading India Taking Toll On Rohit'

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Former South Africa skipper Graeme Smith feels the "mental strain" of leading the Indian team across formats may be taking a toll on Rohit Sharma in the ongoing IPL. Rohit's Mumbai Indians, who have won the IPL a record five times, are yet to open their account in the 15th edition of the lucrative league, having lost all their four matches so far. This after the swash-buckling opener has led India to white-ball series victories against the West Indies and Sri Lanka followed by a Test series at home against the islanders. "This is the first tournament he is captaining MI since becoming India's white-ball captain. Does that mental strain take a toll in the IPL? It's something to consider," Smith was quoted as saying by 'Cricket.com'. Rohit was appointed India's full-time Test captain in February with his first assignment being the series against Sri Lanka in March. For his franchise this season,

Rohit has not been at his best with the bat and Smith, one of South Africa's finest captains, wondered if it has to do with him leading the country across formats. "Rohit is the energy at the top of the order. Gets them off to a start, sets up the game that allows everyone else to play. When he is scoring runs MI are going to win a lot of the time." Besides enduring four straight losses as the team's skipper, the opener has managed to score just 80 runs at an average of 20. Smith said Rohit regaining his touch with the willow makes things easier for MI.

"He's just such a key player. If you look at the line-up, Rohit, an outstanding player, hasn't found form."

"You've got Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav injured for a couple of games. He has now come in and is looking good and then Pollard as the power finisher. You've got Brevish there but he's a young man. That's a very strong batting line-up." Ahead of the multiple-time IPL winners' match against Punjab Kings, Smith called for left-arm spin bowling West Indies all-rounder Fabian Allen's inclusion in the playing XI. "I've got for Tymal Mills to try and show some support to Bumrah. I've gone for Fabian Allen as well," Smith said, citing the presence of many right-handers in the Punjab Kings line-up.



"My reason for that Punjab having a largely right-handed batting line-up and I like the fact he can spin the ball away from them and that will provide Rohit Sharma with another useful option and lengthens the batting line-up slightly," Smith reasoned.

Andrew McDonald Named Australia Head Coach

Agencies

MELBOURNE: Andrew McDonald has been named head coach of the Australian men's cricket team on a four-year contract. Cricket Australia said Wednesday that McDonald's contract had been made permanent after serving as interim coach since Justin Langer did not agree to a short-term contract renewal in February. "The journey so far has been particularly pleasing, and I am honored to be given this incredible opportunity for what is an exciting period ahead," said McDonald, who was the favourite to secure the job fulltime after Australia's 1-0 test series win in Pakistan. McDonald joined Australia's coaching team in 2019 after leading Victoria state and the Melbourne Renegades to all three domestic competition titles during the 2018-19 season. The former test all-rounder has also held head coaching roles in the Indian Premier League and in English county cricket. He had been senior assistant coach with Langer since joining the Australian team.



Novak Djokovic Loses Clay-Court Opener

Agencies

PARIS: Novak Djokovic opened his clay-court season with a surprising loss to Alejandro Davidovich Fokina at the Monte Carlo Masters 2022 tennis tournament on Tuesday. Davidovich Fokina stunned the top-ranked Serb 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-1 in the second round to hand Djokovic another setback as he tries to move on from the controversy surrounding his refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19. It makes for rare back-to-back losses for Djokovic, who had not played since being eliminated in the quarterfinals of the Dubai Ten-



nis Championships in February - his only previous tournament this year after he was barred from playing at the Australian Open. "He was the better player," Djokovic said. "I was hanging on the ropes the entire match." The Serb said he was too exhausted to put up a fight in the third set.

Inter Zonal Chess C'chip For U-14/17 Boys Held



Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: The District Youth Services and Sports Department Shopian under the supervision of District Youth Services and Sports Officer, Gurmukh Singh Dutta on Wednesday conducted Inter Zonal (District Level) competition in the discipline of Chess U-14/17 Boys here at Mini Secretariat Arhama, here

The championship was inaugurated by the Activity Incharge, Riyaz Ahmad Wachkoo and PEL HSS Imamsahib Shahid Islam. Speaking on the occasion, Dutta impressed upon the participants to take part in sports activities to get physically and mentally fit. The officers and officials of District Youth Services and Sports Office (DYSSO) were present at the event.

FIFA Warned Court Of World Cup Chaos If Russia Played

Agencies

GENEVA: Letting Russia try to qualify for the World Cup risked doing "irreparable and chaotic" harm to the competition, FIFA successfully argued at sport's highest court. The legal debate between FIFA and Russia's soccer federation was published Tuesday by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, explaining why its judge denied an urgent Russian request to freeze a ban that excluded its teams from the men's and women's World Cups.



The interim ruling in Russia's appeal on March 18 "pending a full appeal hearing likely due at CAS in the weeks ahead - ensured the men's team could not play Poland six days later in the World Cup qualifying playoff. Poland was given a bye and advanced to the tournament in Qatar by beating Sweden in the playoff final. Poland, Sweden and the Czech Republic "which lost to Sweden" had all stated they would refuse to play Russia in light of the country's war on Ukraine. That three-nation boycott of Russia weighed heavily on the urgent CAS ruling, which sided with FIFA's stated need to "guarantee the smooth running of its flagship competition."

Through FIFA competition rules typically punish federations whose teams refuse to play scheduled games, soccer's world body agreed with Poland, Sweden and the Czechs. "Those decisions are both fully understood and cannot be criticized from either a legal or moral point of view," FIFA lawyers said in a submission to the court. FIFA said it could foresee that other member federations would also refuse to play Russia if the team advanced to the World Cup, saying the consequences for the tournament "would be irreparable and chaotic."

Lawyers for the Russian soccer federation argued the ban by the FIFA Council was "a disguised disciplinary sanction" where the right to be heard was denied. The ruling was made by a single member of the CAS management board, Corinne Schmidhauser, the president of the appeals division. The Swiss lawyer had to decide if the potential damage done to Russia's soccer team outweighed the damage to FIFA as a competition organizer. Schmidhauser noted that "should (Russia's) men's national team be allowed to play, their opponents would forfeit the game and the matches would not even take place."

Having considered all these factors, FIFA must act to guarantee the efficient organization and smooth running of its competitions," the governing body said. Lawyers for the Russian soccer federation argued the ban by the FIFA Council was "a disguised disciplinary sanction" where the right to be heard was denied. The ruling was made by a single member of the CAS management board, Corinne Schmidhauser, the president of the appeals division. The Swiss lawyer had to decide if the potential damage done to Russia's soccer team outweighed the damage to FIFA as a competition organizer. Schmidhauser noted that "should (Russia's) men's national team be allowed to play, their opponents would forfeit the game and the matches would not even take place."

Advertisement for Emergency Medical Service Kashmir. It features the logo of the Kashmiri American Society of Healthcare and H.E.L.P. Foundation. The text offers a free critical care ambulance service 24/7 in Srinagar, Baramulla, Anantnag, and Kupwara. It includes contact numbers for emergencies (9484-100-200 and 0194-240-4000) and a request for donations to account number 0365040100013064.