

'JeM CONSPIRACY CASE'

NIA Court Sentences 5 Convicts to Life In Jail

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Monday awarded life imprisonment to five members of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) for recruiting and training youths for terror activities across the country.

Special Judge Shailender Malik awarded the jail term to Sajjad Ahmed Khan, Bilal Ahmed Mir, Muzaffar Ahmed Bhat, Ishfaq Ahmed Bhat and Meraj-ud-din Chopan after they pleaded guilty in the case.

The judge also awarded a five-year jail term to Tanveer Ahmed Ganie in the case.

The judge noted that all the convicts were in conspiracy with each other to wage war against India.

It said that the convicts were "not only members



of JeM but they have been supporting/harboring terrorists/members of JeM by providing them arms/ammunition, logistic supports and explosives."

"The accused were also involved in enticing/ motivating locals of Jammu & Kashmir to go into militancy and arranging funds, etc. for carrying out terrorist acts and therefore they all are liable to be convicted for offence u/s 120B IPC as well as u/s 18 of UA(P) Act," the judge said.

The NIA lodged an FIR in March 2019 and started the investigation.

The probe agency said the convicts were trained by Pakistan-based JeM operatives to do reconnaissance of targets, arrange hideouts, and provides logistical support to terrorists and to carry out terror attacks in India.

The court noted that Mufti Abdul Rauf Ashgar, the brother of JeM chief Maulana Masood Azhar, along with other senior commanders of the JeM entered into a larger conspiracy of waging war against India.

In pursuance to the conspiracy, a large number of unknown Pakistan-trained terrorists, trainers of weapons and explosives belonging to | [More on P10](#)

THE ACCUSED WERE ALSO INVOLVED in enticing/ motivating locals of Jammu & Kashmir to go into militancy and arranging funds, etc. for carrying out terrorist acts and therefore they all are liable to be convicted for offence u/s 120B IPC as well as u/s 18 of UA(P) Act."

4 Of A Family Killed In Udhampur Car Crash

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: A prayer leader of a mosque and three members of his family were killed when their car skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway on Monday, officials said.

The accident took place near Prem Mandir in the Chenani area of Udhampur district around 8.30 am when the family was on its way to Jammu from their Gool-Sangaldan village in Ramban district, the officials said.

Their car skidded off the road and | [More on P10](#)

Non-Functional Panels In J&K

SC Seeks SG's Assistance On PIL

Observer News Service

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday sought assistance of the solicitor general on a PIL which alleged statutory panels including the Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Commission are not functional in the union territory (UT) after the abrogation of Article 370.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice P S Narasimha took note of the submissions of Pune-based lawyer Asim Suhas Sarode that various statutory panels like

the State Information Commission, the human rights body and the consumer panel in the UT are not working.

The bench requested Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was present in the court, to go into the petition and apprise it of the present status. The law officer sought two weeks to revert.

"We will list after two weeks," the bench said and asked Sarode to provide a copy of his petition to the law officer.

Sarode has made the DoPT (Department of Personnel) | [More on P10](#)

Mehbooba's Fairview Stay Ends After 17 Years
Ex-CM Shifts To Sister's House In City Outskirts

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Former Chief Minister and People's Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti on Monday vacated her official Fairview bungalow in the high-security Gupkar area in this capital city, her party spokesman said.

She has shifted to a private residence at Khimber on Srinagar outskirts. The house where Mehbooba shifted belongs to her younger sister



and brother-in-law who are doctors and based outside the country.

"Mehbooba vacated her Gupkar residence," PDP spokesman said.

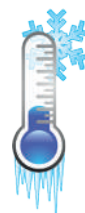
The Jammu and Kashmir administration had last month asked Mehbooba to vacate the government's Fairview bungalow and also set a deadline to move out by the end of November.

Initially she was told to vacate on November 15.

Mehbooba's new residence is more than 20 km away from Fairview residence. | [More on P10](#)

Cold Wave Tightens Grip On Kashmir

Zaid Bin Shabir



Srinagar: The weather department said on Monday that the cold wave conditions will intensify across the Kashmir Valley in the coming days, while ruling out possibility of any snowfall in the plains during the next 10 days.

Amid the prevailing dry weather conditions, minimum temperatures continued to drop in the Valley on Monday due to clear overnight sky.

"The minimum temperatures dropped further across Kashmir today due to the clear night sky. These temperatures are likely to drop further as the weather is likely to remain dry during the next 24 hours," said Mukhtar Ahmed, Deputy Director, Meteorological Department in Srinagar. | [More on P10](#)



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(*CBDT Circular No. 21/2022 in F.No. 275/25/2022-IT(B) dt. 27/10/2022)

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Crime Branch Probing 221 'Corrupt' Babus, Politicians

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Crime Branch of Jammu and Kashmir police is investigating as many as 785 cases related to corruption and fraud, 211 among them naming bureaucrats, politicians and police officers in the Union Territory.

This information has been provided by the Crime Branch in response to a right to information



(RTI) application filed by senior Journalist and social activist MM Shuja.

According to the official figures, the Crime Branch is probing 785 cases registered against politicians and government officials, including bureaucrats and police officers from 2017 to September 2022.

Out of these, Crime Branch Kashmir is investigating 393 cases and Crime Branch Jammu is handling 392 cases, the RTI reveals. It also adds that the special investigation | [More on P10](#)

What IFFI Jury Head Nadav Lapid Said About 'The Kashmir Files'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Nadav Lapid, the jury head at the 53rd International Film Festival of India (IFFI) on Monday termed Vivek Agnihotri directed 'The Kashmir Files' as a vulgar, propaganda movie and expressed dismay over allowing the film into the competition section.

Lapid made these remarks in his speech on the closing day of the nine-day event that was attended among others by top ministers, including Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur.



"I would like to thank the head of the festival and the director of the programming for the cinematic richness of the programme, for its diversity, for its complexity. It was intense. We saw seven films in the debutant competition, and 15 films in the international | [More on P10](#)

Jammu Warehouse To Issue Bills In Sanskrit

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: In a bid to popularise Sanskrit language, a traders' body in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday announced to issue bills of products in the city's biggest warehouse in the ancient language.

The body will also inaugurate a "Sanskrit market" in the biggest and oldest grain mandi of the Union territory.

"Sanskrit market will be inaugurated in the biggest and oldest grain mandi of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday," Deepak Gupta, president, Jammu Traders Federation said. He said on this day, commodities will be | [More on P10](#)



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Amar Niwas Complex Srinagar Smart City's 'Smart Office'

Srinagar: This is a scene outside the offices of Inspector General of Registration in Amar Niwas Complex popularly known as DC Office Srinagar.

On Monday I had a date with the Registrars office for a Sale Deed. I was called there at 10.30 AM. I rushed from my home in Nishat manoeuvring chaotic traffic and braving morning chill in order to be on time. Once there I had to first face with the challenge of parking my vehicle as DC office has no public parking facility. So one has to

informed that there was no electricity and hence biometrics can't be done. Upon inquiry I was told that the inverters had stopped working only after half an hour as there is a heavy load on them. Further enquiry revealed that supply line from the electric pole (See photo) had fallen and there was no one to fix it. A cleric made a half-hearted attempt to call line man who in turn said he was busy somewhere. After a long wait at around 11.45 some people who had come to get their jobs done volunteered to climb up this dangerously dangling electric pole and fix the fallen live wire.

Grievance



plead with shopkeepers to allow them to provide some parking space. It is noteworthy that the DC Office complex also houses offices of the Regional Directorate of Surveys and Land Records, Divisional Commissioner and Financial Commissioner Revenue.

After I was done with this pleading I made my way inside the fortified but crumbling automatic era DC office complex.

To my utter dismay I saw scores of people, men and women, young and old waiting there before me who

To cheers of scores of onlookers who have been waiting in cold since morning the wire was finally connected and electricity temporarily restored. All rushed inside to get their jobs done. After all wire was connected temporarily and could fall again. But once we rushed in we found rooms choked as there is no waiting area not to talk of any seating arrangement.

By 1 PM moments before lunch break could have pushed us out again, job was done. I thanked my stars. —Azra

Bazam-E-Saqafat Organises Book Release Function

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Bazam-e-Saqafat (Kashmir) on Monday organised a book release function Saqafat (Annual) with a special number on Dr Syed Amin Tabish at Govt Women's Col-

lege MA Road Srinagar.

Vice Chancellor Kashmir University, Prof Nilofer Khan was Chief Guest, Former Director SKIMS Prof M. S Khuroo and Principal Govt Women's College Prof Ruhi Kanth were guests of honour on the occasion.



'It's A Shame'

Govt Dept Draws Flak For Naming Beneficiaries On Walls

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: The move of the Social Welfare Department to publicly publish the names of ISSS/NSAP beneficiaries on city walls has triggered a Twitter debate with netizens calling the move uncalled for.

Pertinently, the names of the beneficiaries of ISSS/NSAP schemes have been written on several walls of the city by the Social Welfare Department.

However, the move seems to have backfired with several people calling the move "getting publicity at the cost of poor people."

One such wall has been painted at Lal Bazar near G.D. Goenka School.

"Department of Social Welfare ward list of beneficiaries ISSS/ NSAP of DIST SGR 61" reads the banner. It is followed by the names of scores of beneficiaries who have benefited

from ISSS/NSAP Schemes.

Netizens have voiced outrage over the incident saying there's little worse than publicizing the plight of those in need.

Professor Sheikh Mohammad Shafi, former HOD Library Sciences, Kashmir University called the move "Exploitation of plight of the poor for cheap publicity."

Other netizens also voiced similar views.

"This is shameful. Do they have the consent of people to publish their names on the walls in public places. I hope the officials of the Social Welfare Department know that implementing a government scheme is not a favor, it's an obligation" tweeted Sanam Sutirath Wazir.

Popular RJ Nasir tweeted: "Very antisocial policy by social welfare Dept. I wonder what is the need to do this when there

is a campaign of digitizing every record in full swing".

"I have seen it in other areas too. Someone in the past had pointed this out but no action was taken even then" tweeted Moazzam Mir, another twitter user.

The viral tweet saw more than 10,000 impressions with more than 1700 people engaging with the tweet.

However, authorities say they are sticking to norms and doing it for the sake of transparency and accountability.

Speaking to Kashmir Observer, Director, Social Welfare Department Kashmir Mohammad Shafiq Chak said that people have been critical of the move in the past as well.

"At some places, people had objected to the move in the past as well. It is a norm and we have to follow the rules. It has been done for the sake of transparency" Shafiq said.

BJP To Support 'Independent Group's No-Confidence Motion' Against Mayor

Agencies

Srinagar: Bhartiya Janata Party has withdrawn support to Srinagar Mayor Junaid Azim Mattu.

BJP said that the decision has been taken after a formal meeting in Jammu where it was unanimously decided to withdraw the support to Srinagar Mayor and even support the 'independent' group that will bring a 'no-confidence motion against the Mayor.

This was disclosed by party Councilor Nazir Gilkar and Election In Charge Asif Masoodi at a press conference here in Kashmir capital Srinagar on Monday.

Nazir Gilkar as per the news agency Kashmir News Trust while hitting the Mayor left, right and centre said that the incumbent Mayor has been resorting to 'corruption' and 'malpractices and he needs to be taken to task. He said the allegations leveled by them have

been proven correct by Mayor himself when he stated that he macadamized the two constituencies 'Zadibal' and 'Hazratbal' Srinagar only.

"We are not against anyone and don't want to deprive people of basic facilities but our question is why the Mayor spent hefty amounts on interior roads of two particular constituencies and ignored the vital roads used by the people," Gilkar questioned. KNT

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- PDD: 0194-2450213
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- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BIJBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORA: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR

04 Jumad al-Awwal

1444

PRAYERS

FAJR 5:45

ZUHR 12:17

ASR 3:47

Magrib 5:27

ISHA 7:50

This Day In History

- 1581 - Doornik (Tournai) surrenders to Duke of Parma
- 1596 King Philip II devalues Spanish currency
- 1812 - Napoleon's Grand Army crosses Berezina River in retreat from Russia
- 1850 - The treaty, Punctuation of Olmütz, signed in Olomouc means diplomatic capitulation of Prussia to Austrian Empire, taking over the leadership of German Confederation
- 1864 - Battle of Spring Hill, TN (Thomason's Station)
- 1870 - Compulsory education proclaimed in England
- 1872 - Indian Wars: The Modoc War begins with the Battle of Lost River.
- 1877 - US inventor Thomas Edison demonstrates his hand-cranked phonograph for the first time
- 1893 - Ziqiang Institute, today known as Wuhan University, is founded by Zhang Zhidong, governor of Hubei and Hunan Provinces in late Qing Dynasty of China after his memorial to the throne is approved by the Qing Government.
- 1900 - General Horatio Kitchener assumes command of the British forces in South Africa from General Lord Roberts
- 1916 - US declares martial law in Dominican Republic
- 1917 - A Supreme Allied War Council meets at Versailles to define war aims
- 1918 - Serbia annexes Montenegro
- 1933 - Japan begins persecution of communists
- 1935 - Michael Joseph Savage becomes the first Labour Prime Minister of New Zealand
- 1935 - Physicist Erwin Schrödinger publishes his famous thought experiment "Schrödinger's cat", a paradox that illustrates the problem of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics
- 1939 - USSR drops diplomatic relations with Finland
- 1943 - Partisan Tito forms temporary government in Jajce, Bosnia
- 1943 - U-86 sinks in Atlantic Ocean
- 1943 - US aircraft carrier Hornet launched
- 1944 - Albania liberated from Nazi control (National Day)
- 1944 - The first surgery (on a human) to correct blue baby syndrome is performed by Alfred Blalock and Vivien Thomas.
- 1945 - Yugoslavian Socialist Republic proclaimed
- 1947 - UN Gen Assembly partitions Palestine between Arabs & Jews.
- 1952 - US President-elect Eisenhower visits Korea to assess war.
- 1962 - Great Britain & France decide to jointly build Concord(e).
- 1963 - Trans-Canada Airlines Flight 831: A Douglas DC-8 carrying 118, crashes after taking-off from Dorval Airport near Montreal, Canada.
- 1967 - British troops withdraw from Aden and South Yemen.
- 1978 - UN observes "International day of solidarity with Palestinian people," boycotted by US & about 20 other countries.
- 1989 - India Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi resigns
- 1990 - UN Security Council approves US-sponsored resolution authorizing the use of force in the Persian Gulf if Iraq does not withdrawal from Kuwait by Jan. 15, 1991.
- 1995 - US President Bill Clinton lifts ban on exports of oil from the Alaskan North Slope; the ban was imposed after the oil embargo by Arab oil producers in 1973.

From KO Archives

Bomb Hurlled At Marriage Party, 11 Wounded

Observer News Service

Srinagar: At least 11 members of marriage party were wounded in a powerful grenade explosion triggered by suspected militants in Handwara area in Kupwara, an official spokesman today said.


He said unidentified militants lobbed a grenade inside the house of one Abdul Khaliq Dar where the marriage ceremony of his son was in progress.

The grenade exploded inside the house located at Jigerpora in Handwara area, 80 Km from here, wounding 11 members of the marriage party, the spokesman said.

He said the explosion took place around 2100 hours yesterday and caused panic among the people present in the house, and added that police shifted the injured to hospital.

The condition of four of the injured was stated to be critical, he said.

(Kashmir Observer, 29 November, 1998)



The Jammu & Kashmir Bank Limited
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Possession Notice

Notice under Section 13 (4) of the SARFAESI ACT, 2002 read with Rule 8 (1) of the Security (Enforcement) Interest Rules, 2002

Whereas Mr. Raja Sajad Hussain Khan, as the Authorized Officer of the Jammu & Kashmir Bank Limited under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers under section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notice dated 08.09.2022 thereby calling upon the Borrower namely M/s Sanjiv Saraf and Associates Prop. Mr. Sanjiv Saraf to repay an amount of Rs.2,59,28,027.22P (Rupees Two Crore, Fifty Nine Lacs, Twenty Eight Thousand, Twenty Seven and Paise Twenty Two only) being the balance outstanding as on 31.08.2022 in the accounts of the Borrower, within 60 days from the date of the said notice together with the future interest and other charges thereon.

The said borrower having failed to repay the said amount, notice is hereby given to the said borrower in particular and the public in general that the undersigned being authorized officer of the J & K Bank Ltd. has taken possession of the mortgage property described herein below, in exercise of the powers conferred on me under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules, on this the 25.11.2022.

The said borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned against dealing with the said property in any manner whatsoever and any dealings with the said property will be subject to the charge of the J&K Bank Limited for the amount in aggregating to Rs.2,64,24,012.22P (Rupees Two Crore, Sixty Four Lacs Twenty Four Thousand Twelve And Paise Twenty Two Only) as on 31.10.2022 together with future interest thereon from 01.11.2022 and other charges incurred or to be incurred. The borrowers attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of the time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable Property

1. Equitable Mortgage of Leasehold Rights of Plot No.35 measuring 02 Kanals situated in Industrial Estate Rangreth, Budgam, Kashmir M/s Sanjiv Saraf & Associates.

2. Equitable Mortgage of Lease hold Rights of Plot No. 36 measuring 01 Kanal alongwith Single Storied Building situated in Industrial Estate, Rangreth, Budgam, Kashmir standing in the name of M/s Sanjiv Saraf & Associates.

Dated: 25.11.2022
Place : Nowgam, Srinagar

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5 Leading Newspapers Urge US To Drop Hunt For Julian Assange

Agencies

LONDON: Five of the Western world's leading newspapers issued a joint call Monday for the United States to drop its prosecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The Australian publisher remains in custody in Britain pending a US extradition request to face trial for divulging US military secrets about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Publishing is not a crime," argued the editors and publishers of The Guardian, Le Monde, The New York Times, El Pais and



Der Spiegel in an open letter to the US government.

The letter marked the 12th anniversary of the newspapers collaborating with Assange to release excerpts from more than 250,000 US diplomatic cables that had been obtained by WikiLeaks.

A year later, Assange pub-

lished unredacted excerpts of some of the cables. The five newspapers criticised him then for potentially endangering the lives of US intelligence sources.

"But we come together now to express our grave concerns about the continued prosecution of Julian Assange for obtaining and publishing classified materials," the letter said.

It noted that when Barack Obama was president and Joe Biden his vice president, the US administration had held off on indicting Assange, as journalists involved could also have had to face prosecution.

That changed under Donald Trump, when the US justice department charged Assange under the 1917 Espionage Act, "which has never been used to prosecute a publisher or broadcaster".

"This indictment sets a dangerous precedent, and threatens to undermine America's (constitutional) first amendment and the freedom of the press," the letter to the Biden administration argued.

"Obtaining and disclosing sensitive information when necessary in the public interest is a core part of the daily work of journalists," it said.

"Twelve years after the publication of 'Cablegate', it is time for the US government to end its prosecution of Julian Assange for publishing secrets."

Pakistan's Taliban Ends Ceasefire Agreement, Orders Attacks Across Country



Agencies

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Taliban said on Monday they have called off a shaky ceasefire agreed with the government in June and ordered fighters to stage attacks across the country.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a separate entity to the Taliban in Afghanistan but sharing a similar Islamist ideology, have been

responsible for dozens of violent attacks and hundreds of deaths across Pakistan since emerging in 2007.

"As military operations are ongoing against mujahideen in different areas ... so it is imperative for you to carry out attacks wherever you can in the entire country," it said in a statement.

The TTP held sway over vast tracts of Pakistan's rugged tribal belt for a time,

imposing a radical version of Islamic law.

Its fighters were largely driven out of Pakistan into neighbouring Afghanistan from 2010 but have been emboldened by the Afghan Taliban's return to power in Kabul.

The TTP agreed a ceasefire with the Pakistan government in June but both sides have repeatedly claimed the truce was ignored and there have been numerous clashes.

Hackers Demand ₹200 Crore From AIIMS, Server Down For 6 Days: Report



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Hackers have allegedly demanded an estimated ₹200 crore in cryptocurrency from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi as its server remained out of order for the sixth consecutive day, official sources said on Monday.

It is feared that data of around 3-4 crore patients could have been compromised due to the breach detected Wednesday morning.

Patient care services in emergency, outpatient, inpatient and laboratory wings are being managed manually as the server remained down, the sources said.

The India Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN), Delhi Police and representatives of the Ministry of Home Affairs are investigating the ransomware attack.

A case of extortion and cyber

terrorism was registered by the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit of the Delhi Police on November 25.

Official sources said internet services are blocked on computers at the hospital on the recommendations of the investigating agencies.

The AIIMS server has stored data of several VIPs, including former prime ministers, ministers, bureaucrats and judges.

"Hackers have allegedly demanded around ₹200 crore in cryptocurrency," one of the sources told PTI.

Meanwhile, the NIC e-hospital database and application servers for e-hospital have been restored. The NIC team is scanning and cleaning infection from other e-hospital servers located at AIIMS which are required for delivery of hospital services, an official source said.

"All People Living In India Are Hindus": RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat

Press Trust of India

DARBHANGA: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat Monday asserted that all people living in India were by definition Hindus and diversity had flourished in the country because of the cultural ethos of the land.

Anybody who agrees to sing Sanskrit verses in praise of Bharat Mata and is committed to preservation of the culture of the land is a Hindu, the 'Sarsanghchalak' said.

Mr Bhagwat who was addressing RSS workers here before concluding his four-day tour of Bihar, said the mammoth organisation will become redundant if all citizens of the country adopt the spirit of selfless service exhibited by the 'Swayamsevaks' (RSS volunteers).

"People should understand that because they live in Hindustan, they all are Hindus. They might by other things as well, but all other identities have been made possible because of Hindu ethos of acceptance ... Hindutva is the name for the centuries old culture to which all the diverse streams owe their origin," he said.

"Different branches may have stemmed and may seem opposed to each other, but they all trace their beginning to the same source," Mr Bhag-



wat said.

The septuagenarian RSS chief said values like seeing oneself in others, viewing women as mothers and not objects of lust and not coveting wealth that belongs to others defined the Hindu ethos.

"Hindutva is a binding force. All those who believe themselves to be Hindus are Hindus. So are those whose ancestors happened to be Hindus," said Mr Bhagwat, whose similar remarks in the past had triggered controversy.

RSS' mission is to regain the lost glory of the country, which was the "Vishwaguru" (world teacher) in the ancient times.

"To build a nation so great requires a conducive social atmosphere, which the Sangh

seeks to create. Our volunteers spend just an hour at the shakhas. The remaining 23 hours of the day are spent rendering selfless social service without accepting a paisa of government aid," Mr Bhagwat said.

The swayamsevaks are seen in action whenever there is any calamity, natural or otherwise. "We do not want anything in return, not even adulation", he said.

The RSS, he said, came into being because society at large did not seem to be conscious enough of its responsibilities.

"If all people take to selfless service then there will be no need for people to wear our badge. Every citizen will be deemed to be a swayamsevak in his own right," Mr Bhagwat added.

Iraqis sue Trump, US officials over assassination of Soleimani, Muhandis

Agencies

In relation to the assassination of senior Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, as well as the Iraqi commander of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, several Iraqi citizens have filed a lawsuit against former US President Donald Trump, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the former US ambassador to Baghdad, and some previous Iraqi officials.

On 27 November, 78 individuals took legal action against the former US officials and registered their case at the Federal Court of Appeal in Baghdad. Among those who took legal action is Muhandis' brother, Muhammad Hassan Jaafar al-Muhandis.

The IRGC and PMU generals were assassinated on 3 January 2020 in a US drone strike near Baghdad's International Airport. Two days after the attack, local lawmakers ratified a bill demanding the withdrawal of foreign presence led by the US and its allies.

In recent months, the IRGC has launched several attacks against Kurdish militant groups residing in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish Region (IKR), calling



on the government in Baghdad and Erbil to expel the armed separatist groups fueling violence in the streets of Iraq.

In addition, the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ground force, General Muhammad Pakpour, announced that troops would be sent to the country's Kurdish border regions to prevent "the infiltration of terrorists" from the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR).

"Some armored units and special forces of the [IRGC] ground forces are currently heading to the border provinces in the west and northwest of the country," Pakpour said.

Despite Baghdad and Tehran sharing similar rhetoric on the presence of foreign powers in Iraq, Iraq recently condemned Iran over its frequent attacks against the western-backed Kurdish forces in the IKR.

Religious Freedom Does Not Include Right To Convert Others: Centre Tells SC

Agencies

NEW DELHI: The Central government on Monday told the Supreme Court that the right to freedom of religion does not include a fundamental right to convert other people to a particular religion.

It is "cognizant of the gravity and the seriousness" of the issue, said the Centre in its affidavit filed on a PIL claiming that fraudulent and deceitful religious conversion is rampant across the country. Such issue of conversion shall be "taken up in all seriousness by the Union of India and appropriate steps shall be taken as the Central government is cognizant of the menace", the Centre said in its affidavit.

"The right to freedom of religion certainly does not include the right to convert an individual through fraud, deception, coercion, allurements or other such means," it said.

The central government further said that nine States over the course of the years passed enactments seeking to curb this practice. Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Haryana are the States which already have legislation in place on conversion, the affidavit added.

The affidavit stated that "such enactments are necessary for protecting cherished rights of vulnerable sections of



the society including women and economically and socially backward classes."

The right to freedom of religion, and more importantly, the right to the consciousness of all citizens of the country is an extremely cherished and valuable right which ought to be protected by the executive and the legislature, it said.

As the matter came up for hearing, a bench headed by Justice MR Shah said the issue of forced religious conversion is "very serious" and asked the Centre to file a detailed affidavit to make its stand clear.

It asked the Centre to file an affidavit with instructions from the State governments.

The bench has now posted the matter for hearing on December 5.

Earlier, the top court had remarked that forced religious conversion is a "very serious issue" and may affect the "security of the country" along with the freedom of conscience of citizens as far as religion is concerned.

NEWS MAKERS

456 'Crorepati' Candidates Contesting In Gujarat Assembly Elections: Report

Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD: As many as 456, or around 28 per cent, of 1,621 candidates contesting the upcoming Gujarat Assembly elections are 'crorepatis' who have declared assets worth ₹1 crore or more, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said on Monday.

The BJP tops the list with a total of 154 'crorepati' candidates, followed by Congress with 142, and AAP has 68. The average asset of candidates in the fray is ₹2.56 crore, the ADR report informed.

Bharatiya Janata Party's Jayanti Patel, contesting from the Mansa seat in Gandhinagar, is the richest candidate with declared assets of ₹661 crore, followed by BJP's Balvant Rajput of Sidhpur with ₹372 crore and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s Ajitsinh Thakor, who is contesting from Dabhoi seat, with declared assets of ₹342 crore.

There are 221 'crorepatis' among the 788 contestants in the fray for the first phase of elections for 89 seats scheduled on December 1.

The number of such candidates stands at 245 out of the total 833 contestants in the fray for the 93 seats that will go

to polls in the second and final phase on December 5, as per the ADR report.

It said six candidates in the fray have declared "zero" assets, while another six have said their assets are worth less than ₹10,000.

Jayanti Patel, the richest candidate as per the ADR report, also has the highest liability at ₹233 crore.

In terms of educational qualifications, 42 candidates have declared themselves to be illiterate, 85 "just literate", while 997 have said they have studied between Classes 5-12. 449 candidates are graduates.

Informing about the age profile, the ADR report said two candidates are above the age of 80, 197 are between 61-80 years of age, 861 are between 41-60 and 561 in the 25-40 age group segment.

The report claimed a "close and alarming nexus" between money and muscle power hurt the principles of free and fair elections, 'participatory democracy' as well as the 'level playing field'.

"The present circumstances, therefore, demand an extensive deliberation by the voters so that the sanctity of elections is not ridiculed by the tenacious entry of tainted candidates and candidates with abnormal multiplication of assets," it said.

Driver Gives Lift To Men For Money. They Use Chilli Powder To Steal SUV

Press Trust of India

NOIDA: Two men, who allegedly robbed an SUV in Delhi on pretext of taking a lift and then overpowering its driver by using chilli powder, have been arrested by the Noida police, officials said on Monday.

The car, a Tata Harrier belonging to a Noida Sector-93 resident who works in Delhi, was being driven by a driver who had offered ride to four strangers in return for money, an official said.

The strangers had entered the car in Noida and had gone to Delhi when they rubbed chilli powder on driver's eyes and overpowered him, before taking the vehicle towards Gurugram, Haryana where they dumped him, the official said, citing the FIR.

Two accused have been arrested and the car has also been recovered, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central Noida) Saad Miyan Khan said.

"A zero FIR was lodged in the case that took place in Delhi on September 23. The case was later lodged at the Noida Sector 20 police station. Further, officials at Phase 2 police station got a tip off about the suspects being in their area and nabbed them on Sunday," Mr Khan said.

Two of the suspects -Roshan Mishra and Anil Kumar - have been arrested while two more of their partners are yet to be caught, the officer said.

According to police, a normal first information report (FIR) has to be lodged at a police station in whose area of jurisdiction a crime is committed. But in case of a "Zero FIR", the complaint can be filed in any police station irrespective of the area of jurisdiction and it is later transferred to the appropriate police station for action.

The accused have been booked under Indian Penal Code sections 393 (robbery), 411 (receiving property dishonestly) and 34 (crime done by several people with common intention), the police said.

Charles Darwin's Signed Document To Go For Auction, Could Fetch ₹9 Crore

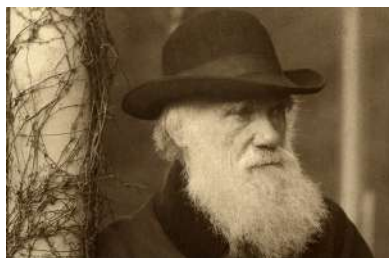
Agencies

Sotheby's in New York will soon auction a document that Charles Darwin signed and which supports his theory of evolution. The letter is anticipated to sell for over 1 million pound (Rs 9,85,21,780), a record price for a Darwin manuscript, as per the BBC.

There isn't much original Darwinian writing left because he didn't regularly archive his work. "If it does, and it's signed, it's almost always just with the abbreviated "C Darwin" or "Ch Darwin. It's very rare to have his name, "Charles Darwin", written out in full and in his own hand," the website states.

However, Professor John van Wyhe, the curator of the academic database known as Darwin Online, claims that it is particularly special because of what the great man chose to include on the page in addition to his signature.

"He includes a passage that appears in the third edition of On the Origin of Species. It's a really favourite passage, because he's trying to make the point that people might find his theory unbelievable and outlandish, but they said the same about Newton and gravity, and



nobody doubted the existence of gravity anymore. The same, he says, would be true eventually with evolution and natural selection," the professor told BBC.

The document was produced for The Autographic Mirror magazine. Hermann Kindt, its publisher, also printed facsimiles of famous people's autographs or handwriting alongside their biographies. Darwin jumped at the chance when he was asked if he would contribute. It was a chance for him to refute his critics, the outlet states.

According to the BBC, the letter reads, "I have now recapitulated the chief facts and considerations, which have thoroughly convinced me that species have been modified, during a long course of descent, by the preservation or the natural selection of many successive slight favourable variations.

Azad Begins 3-Day Visit To Kishtwar-Doda Belt

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Democratic Azad Party chief Ghulam Nabi Azad Monday began a three-day outreach visit to Doda and Kishtwar districts and said his party is getting strong with new people joining it.

The former Congress leader met multiple people in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district and enquired about their problems.

"A lot of people are leaving other parties and joining us. It is a good thing for us. It strengthens our party," Azad told reporters.

Thanking the people of Jammu and Kashmir, he said, "Whenever I visit any place, people join us."

Asked about the rise in the number of voters in the Union Territory, Azad said, "For a long period, the voter's lists were not revised."

Bukhari Begins Three-Day Tour To Uri



Observer News Service

URI: Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari, who is on a three-day visit to north Kashmir's Uri, received a rousing reception from the people and party workers on his arrival to this border region on Monday morning.

He began his tour by paying his obeisance at the revered Shah-dara Sharif shrine.

On the day first of his tour, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari met a number of public delegations including social, religious, and political personalities at Basgran, Sultan Daki, Sarai Bandi, Chapter, Kamalkote, and other places. People informed him about the public issues and grievances in these meetings.

On this occasion, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari gave a patient hearing to the locals and reiterated his commitment that Apni Party will do everything to ensure this neglected region gets its due share of prosperity and development in the future.

Apni Party leader also visited several places to offer his condolences to the families of some prominent people who passed away recently. He visited the residences of Syed Hussain Shah and Choudhary Kataria who both passed away recently and offered his condolences to their families. Also, he visited the residence of Party's Tehsil Chairman Qazi Mohammad Sheikh to offer his condolences over the demise of his sister.

The party leaders and workers called on Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari and apprised him of the present political scenario in the border region.

On this occasion, several political leaders and activists from Congress, National Conference

(NC), and Peoples Conference (PC) joined Apni Party and Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari greeted them all into the party fold.

The new entrants included Halqa President of NC Abdul Aziz Sheikh, Bashir Ahmad Baba (NC leader), N. A. Sheikh (NC leader), Youth President of Congress in Uri Khurshid Ahmad Khatana, Block President of PC and Sarpanch Syed Mushtaq A Shah, and others.

Addressing a public rally at Sarai Bandi, he said, "Sadly, the traditional political parties and their so-called leaders, who have been at the helm of affairs most of the time since past 75 years in J&K, have always neglected this far-flung region and have rendered this beautiful place underdeveloped and even with no basic facilities for the population."

"But I assure you that when Apni Party gets a public mandate to serve the people, it will leave no stone unturned to ensure extensive development in Uri and prosperity to its people." He added.

Taking a dig at the conventional politicians, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari said, "The history of the past 75 years stands witness that these politicians have always allured people on fake promises. They always came to you to get your votes and after attaining power they forgot their promises. Now, it is your responsibility to tell them enough is enough. You should not fall prey to their fake promises and emotional slogans anymore."

During his meeting with Apni Party leaders and workers in Uri, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari ascertained the present political scenario in the border region. The leaders and senior workers also discussed certain party matters with their leader, and a strategy was chalked out to strengthen the party at the grass root level in all the areas of Uri.

Woman Drug Peddler Held In Handwara

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested a lady drug peddler and recovered contraband substance from her possession in North Kashmir's Kupwara district.

In a statement issued here, a spokesperson said that a police party of Police Station Handwara arrested a lady drug peddler near ITI Gonipora. During search, he said, around 06 grams of Brown Sugar was recovered from her possession.

The police identified her as Has-eena Begum of Gonipora Handwara.

Accordingly, the spokesperson said, a case vide FIR No. 300/2022 under relevant sections of law has been registered at PS Handwara and investigation has been initiated.

"Community members are requested to come forward with any information regarding drug peddlers in their neighborhood. Persons found indulging in drug peddling will be dealt as per law. Our consistent actions against drug peddlers should reassure the community members that we are making efforts to keep our society free from the scourge of drug menace," he added.

Encroachment, Unabated Pollution Hits Hygam Wetland In Sopore

Migratory Birds Being Forced To Find Alternative Habitat For Winter Home, Experts Express Concern



Agencies

SRINAGAR: Once known as Maharaja Protected Wetland is losing its sheen as illegal encroachment, unabated pollution and lack of conservation measures have affected the ecosystem of the wetland at Haritar Hygam in Sopore.

The Hygam-Wetland, a natural aquifer, spread over 7.25 kilometers is one of the known wetlands of Kashmir. The wetland is embedded with springs. It has 1400 hectares of land with the area is dominated by extensive reed beds and home to many migratory birds include White Heeled Duck, Shoveller, Red-Crested Pochard, White-Eyed Pochard, Pintail, Mallard, Gadwall, Coot and Graylag.

Aijaz Rasool, wetland technical expert and a senior executive member of Environmental Policy Group (EPG) told a local news agency KNO that due to large-scale illegal encroachments, unabated pollution and insensitivity of authorities to keep check on human interference in the wetland, it has reduced to a big

pond, forcing migratory birds to find an alternative habitat as their winter home.

"The wetland is ill maintained. Authorities must restore and conserve the wetland for future generations as there is a water siltation of 10 ft which deteriorates its condition," he said.

Similarly, Patron central Auqaf committee Tarzoo in Sopore Aijaz Ahmed Dar said that the wetland has been encroached at many places including Haritar, Hygam, Lolpora, Gohul, Goshbug etc.

"Scores of structures have come up over the past several years while hundreds of kanals of land were being used by encroachers illegally for cultivating paddy," he said.

Dar, who is also a member of EPG said that the authorities earlier had identified the encroached land of at least 2300 Kanals and have not been retrieved yet. In addition to this, approximately 1200 kanals of land have been converted for crop cultivation.

"The official inability to act in time has encouraged more and more people to grab the

land. Hundreds of trees were uprooted during the snow but they were not removed. An auction may have fetched money to conserve the wetland but nothing was done," he added.

Mohammad Shafi Bacha, a retired senior official of the Wildlife department and was at Hygam wetland said that he used to count the migratory birds in lakhs. "But we hardly witness any now because the water level capacity of this wetland has been minimised to 1 sq km from 7.2 sq kms due to siltation," he said.

"In the year 2000, we had marked the wetland and decided to remove the trees which were planted by the various agencies including social forestry, panchayats and even the wildlife department as well. It has been 20 years since then and nothing has been done till now," Bacha added.

Similarly, locals too demanded attention of the authorities to save the wetland from further deterioration.

Wildlife warden North Kashmir could not be contacted despite repeated phone calls.

Chief Secretary Asks R&B To Stick To Timelines

Asks Department To Explore Possibility Of Ring Road For Jammu

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta Monday held that the deliverables regarding the R&B Department should be adhered to and the road projects interconnecting the 2 divisions of the UT expedited for all weather smooth connectivity.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, PWD; PCCF; Commissioner Secretary, Forests; Commissioner Secretary, Revenue; Secretary PD&MD; Secretary, Transport; Divisional Commissioner, Jammu; DG Budget; RO NHAI, DCs of Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur and Samba.

Outstation based officers participated in the meeting through video conferencing.

Dr Mehta impressed upon the officers to complete the Semi-Ring Road for Jammu up to March next year and explore the possibility of Ring-Road around the city for the easement of commuters. He asked them to prepare a DPR for the same.

The Chief Secretary also stressed on the officers to prepare a DPR for Kathua-Bani-Sarthal-Bhadarwah-Doda Road without any delay. He told them that it is of great significance with respect to giving boost to tourism in these areas. He directed for connecting it with both Jammu-Srinagar Highway

and Sinthan-Kishtwar Road for its maximum utility.

He told them that the condition of Sinthan-Kishtwar and Sonamarg Road should be maintained constantly. He called for keeping ready the men and machinery for snow clearance of these roads for their least blocking during winters.

He also made out that the Delhi-Katra Expressway corridor to have an interchange with the Srinagar-Jammu Highway so that people traveling on this Expressway could come out to this highway for proceeding towards Srinagar.

He called for expediting the work on Jaiswal Bridge for lessening the travel time on the highway.

Dr Mehta asked the authorities to improve the overall road surface of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway so that travel time is reduced to maximum of 8 hours. He told them to give daily reports about the trucks laid off on the Highway and the time for which these are made to halt there. He told them to declare the stretches of Jawahar Tunnel and Patnitop as part of National Highway so that these are maintained effectively.

Dr Mehta took notice of the repeated delays made by the Executing Agencies in completing the T3 and T5 Tunnels on the National Highway. He

urged them to complete the both without any further delay as these would be pivotal in making the travel easy on this road. He asked them to look into the possibility of connecting the tourist destinations of Budgam-Yousmarg-Doodhpathri-Tosamaidan-Gulmarg so that all these locations are visited as a package together.

The Chief Secretary Mehta directed to facilitate smooth traffic flow on the Ramban-Banihal stretch of the National Highway, the traffic police and district administration were directed to properly demarcate single-lane driving zones and ensure lane-driving and traffic discipline among the commuters.

The Chief Secretary further directed the District Administration, Ramban to reduce the response time for clearing up traffic snarl ups on the highway caused by vehicles breakdown or accidents by deploying adequate number of cranes on Ramban-Banihal stretch, particularly on the under-construction stretches.

The Chief Secretary also instructed the Divisional and District administration Jammu to give facelift to the entry point at Lakanpur so that the sight is appealing. He asked them to take immediate steps for starting work on the project so that it is completed forthwith.

Event On Mental Health Awareness Held At Central University

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: The HELP Foundation in collaboration with Kashmir American Society for Healthcare, Medical Education and Research (KASHMER) held a program on the importance of Mental Health awareness and substance abuse Central University Kashmir Ganderbal on Monday.

The event was held in collaboration with the IT Department of the Central University. Students and faculty members of the Department took part in the programme.

The event was inaugurated by Dr Aafaq Alam Khan, Assistant Professor IT Department, Central University.

Dr Syed Riyaz Ahmed, Project Director KASHMER spoke on various

ationalities and substance abuse in the society.

Dr Mohd Afzal Zargar, Dean Academics CUK summed up different aspects of mental health issues in our society.

"It is important to share mental health concerns with families, friends and mental health care experts" Dr Afzal said.

In this regard he also envisioned cooperation between two entities regarding carrying group sessions and workshops related to various mental health disorders.

Pertinently, KASHMER has been providing all services to the Kashmiri community free of cost.

Speakers also spoke on the importance of pre-hospital care and how it helps reduce mortality and morbidity of patients that require



social programs of KASHMER being held in collaboration with HELP Foundation and Help Poor Voluntary Trust in the Kashmir Valley.

Dr Muzaffar Khan, Consultant Psychologist and Director YDRC, Healthy Minds counselors Uzma Sami and Adil spoke on the importance of mental health, different kinds of mental health dysfunctioning.

urgent treatment.

Attendees of the event were also made aware about how to call free Emergency Medical Service critical care ambulances at 9484100200/01942310018.

The word of thanks and concluding remarks were given by Assistant Professor IT Dept CUK. Dr Zahoor Ahmed.

Villagers Launch Hunger Strike Against Mining In Kathua

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Residents of Sahar panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district launched a hunger strike on Monday against mining in a local stream.

They said they have been holding protests for the last one week, but their demand to stop mining had been ignored and this prompted them to launch the hunger strike on the banks of Sahar Khud stream.

The villagers, led by sarpanch Bholi Singh and panch Harnam Singh, met near the recently opened mining block and raised slogans against the government.

"It is unfortunate that the geology and mining department allotted the mining block with-

out taking local residents and the panchayat into confidence," Singh said.

He said the villagers protested against the government's decision from the first day, but they were sidelined.

"The villagers have decided to continue their protest and launch hunger strike to save environment and natural resources," he said.

An official, however, claimed that mining has been suspended in view of the protests.

"Sahar Khud mining block was allocated by following due legal process. We have suspended the operation after opposition from the villagers. We are trying to sort out the issue," district mining officer Rajinder Singh said.

Man's Body Retrieved From Jhelum In Sopore

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Body of a man hailing from Kupwara was retrieved, hours after he allegedly jumped into river Jhelum in Sopore area of North Kashmir, reports said Monday.

News agency GNS quoting officials reported that one Ali Mohammad Wani, son of Atta Mohammad purportedly jumped

into the river. A rescue operation was instantly launched at the site by Police, NDRF and locals, following which the body was retrieved.

"A pheran (cloak) mobile phone and some documents of the person were found lying nearby," they said.

Confirming it, a police official said that a case has been registered in this regard.

AGuH Terror Module Busted In Sopore: Police

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Police on Monday claimed to have achieved a major breakthrough by busting a module of AGuH in Sopore by arresting the group's handler for north Kashmir besides four over-ground workers as well.

In a statement issued here, a police spokesperson said that upon an information by sister agency regarding movement of main terrorist handler, Sopore Police alongwith 22RR established an MVCP grid in Sopore.

During MVCP, he said, two individuals identified as Mushtaq Ahmed Bhat an alleged handler of Chanapora, Srinagar and Ishfaq Ahmed Shah resident of Budgam were arrested.

He further said incriminating material, arms and ammunition including 01 Pistol, 01 Magazine, 10 rounds and 3 Grenades was recovered from their possession.

On further interrogation and development of the information, the spokesperson said 2 more terror associates identified as Abdul Majeed Kumar resident of Bernate, Boniyar and Abdul Rashid Kumar resident of

Pattan were also arrested. Besides incriminating material, he said, 1 Pistol, 1 Magazine, 10 rounds and 11 Grenades were recovered from their possession.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the busted terrorist module of AGuH was being handled by Ahsaan Dar and one individual named Chaudhary from across the border (PoK)," the spokesperson said.

"The module was instructed to ensure continuous supply of arms & ammunition in Kashmir Valley for conducting attacks on outsiders, civilians and Security Forces to instil fear in the minds of general public. The timely and effective action by Sopore police and 22RR by busting the terrorist module have resulted in averting a possible major tragedy," he added.

Meanwhile in Awantipora, the spokesperson said, Police along with 42 RR and CRPF recovered arms & ammunition including 202 AK rounds, 03 detonators, 762 mm 26 rounds, 02 rounds of Insas wrapped in Polyethene hidden under boulders at Bund Lalgam area of Awantipora.

3-Month Training Programme Started For Youth Aspiring To Join Forces In Samba

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Authorities in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir has started a three-month programme to train the unemployed youth desirous to pursue career in Army, paramilitary, police and allied forces, an official said on Monday.

Over 500 candidates have been shortlisted in the district to undergo the training programme, being conducted in collaboration with Mission Youth J&K, at each block headquarter, the official said.

The official said the physical test of desiring candidates by a team of doctors and physical education teachers

was conducted at the block development offices concerned under district youth training and empowerment program.

"Samba youth are traditionally attracted towards belt forces and it was their strong demand to provide for such a training programme," Deputy Commissioner, Samba, Anuradha Gupta said.

She said the programme which is funded under mission youth, envisages imparting of physical and academic coaching by professional trainers and constructive channelizing of the energies of youth through activities like sports, yoga, recreation, meditation, career counsel-

ling and drug de-addiction.

Gupta said the training will be imparted to youth at centres established across different blocks of the district.

These centres would essentially include one sports ground for activities to improve the physical endurance of the candidates and one academic centre for imparting academic skills, she said.

She said retired Army men and other professionals appointed under the programme will impart physical training, while academic counsellors will train youth in academics required to face the recruitment examination.



KASHMIR OBSERVER
Tuesday| 29-11-2022

Gujarat Polls

Although it looks certain that the BJP will win again in Gujarat despite being in power for 27 years, the AAP's entering the fray has added a dash of drama to the poll scene. The AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal may not have rattled the game in the state but he has emerged as a conspicuous presence and unlike Congress has been able to set an alternative political discourse. For example, the BJP has been forced to react to his narrative about improving schools and healthcare facilities. But this hardly means that the BJP is on the defensive. In Gujarat, Modi remains the overarching leader, a son of the soil. Besides, the BJP's ideology, Hindutva is now the reigning creed which all parties grudgingly or otherwise nod to.

Kejriwal, once a proponent of the so called post-ideological politics in the country, has chosen to rebrand himself as a Hindu leader. And as he tries to expand into Gujarat and looks set to step into the vacuum of a national opposition party left behind by a depleting Congress, his nods to the BJP's ideological vision have become more noticeable.

There is now almost a tacit consensus on Hindutva in the country. And this makes the BJP even stronger as the party remains the sole authentic purveyor of the ideology. And no matter how much other parties hew closer to the BJP creed, they will always be seen as counterfeit, opportunistic copies of the original.

Despite a widely shared foregone conclusion about the outcome of Gujarat polls, a triangular context between the BJP, the AAP and the Congress has made Gujarat a centre of media attention. Congress has undergone some rejuvenation with the Rahul Gandhi's padyatra which has drawn both attention and participation. But whether it translates into votes for the party remains a moot point. Congress is also reported to be mobilizing people in rural Gujarat where the BJP is believed to be not as strong as in urban areas. It will be interesting to see how ther AAP and the Congress eventually fare in Gujarat. In any case, the outcome of the elections in Gujarat will set the stage for 2024. So far, there is not a distant sign that even a combined opposition is in a position to take on the BJP. But then two years is a long time in politics. It is quite possible that a political alternative can come up which could give a tough fight to the BJP. But as of now it looks unlikely that PM Modi faces any major political challenge, either in Gujarat or at the national level.

OTHER OPINON

Minnow's Beating
Titans at Fifa World Cup

Once may be a coincidence. But twice need not be happenstance. The football World Cup in Qatar has already been marked — not marred — by upheavals. Goliaths — major footballing powers from South America and Europe — have been slayed by the proverbial Davids — rising forces from West and East Asia. Argentina, world champions twice, were the first to fall to unheralded Saudi Arabia in what can be said to be one of the biggest upsets in World Cup history. Any sense of schadenfreude that Germany, an old rival of Argentina, relished was quickly erased when Die Mannschaft were humiliated by Japan. Asian teams are not the only ones creating unexpected magic on the pitch. Croatia, a finalist in the 2018 edition of the tournament, was held to an honourable draw by Morocco, one of the flag-bearers of African football. Such has been the momentum of the David-slays-Goliath phenomenon in Qatar that further unexpected results in this World Cup cannot be ruled out.

Of course, minnows triumphing against titans is not new. In fact, there is something called the winner's curse, which has resulted in holders of titles bowing out quite unceremoniously in the early stages of the tournament. But Qatar seems to be heralding the promise of something novel: the contours of a new footballing world where the term, minnows, may no longer apply to most competitors. The fundamental reason behind this transformation is not far to seek. The globalisation of the game has resulted in a large contingent of players from football's Global South — Africa, Asia and South America — getting accommodated in the world-class facilities offered by European giants to further hone their formidable skills. Club football has played a pivotal role in the democratisation of the Beautiful Game. The results are encouraging. The two goals that helped Japan topple Germany were scored by Japanese players who play in the German Bundesliga. It is imperative that the doors of these grooming facilities remain open and immune from the narrow political rhetoric that demands the death of migration that enriches both sport and polity. Arguably, the fall of footballing Goliaths is suggestive of a form of poetic justice. In a deeply stratified global order — Asia and Africa have been on the receiving end of colonial and climatic purges — the margin, it seems, can avenge itself on the centre occasionally, if only in sport.

Telegraph India

No Guests at Hygam Wetland

Hygam Wetland needs special attention from the Govt having been declared as Ramsar site



Hygam wetland visit. Picture by author

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Since the last two weeks, I have been eagerly waiting to visit Hygam Wetland Reserve near Sopore. A Srinagar based Environmental Police Group (EPG) and its offshoot Green Citizens Council (GCC) have been planning a visit since a long time now. Finally, this Sunday (November 27th 2022), around 15 member teams from EPG/GCC visited Hygam Wetland Reserve. Pertinently, Hygam wetland reserve was declared as Ramsar site this year in August along with Shalabugh wetland.

During our visit to Hygam wetland, we could not see migratory birds in the area. This is a matter of serious concern. Infact, some experts in the group like Dr Riyaz Qureshi from Tourism Studies Department of Kashmir University were of the opinion that even though there were still chances of birds visiting in the coming weeks in a more more foggy and cold weather but it was also likely that due to constant water pollution and illegal construction, the birds may not visit at all.

According to locals in Hygam, typically, the bird population in Hygam wetland used to be huge in November as compared to their non-existent count this season.

Migratory birds who visit Hygam all the way from central Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe and even China include Shovelers, White Gheese Red Crested Pochards, White Eyed Pochards, Common Teal Coots etc. That the team could not spot any of these birds is a matter of grave concern.

Akhtar Hussain, an environmental science student and a bird watcher from Sumbal, had an interesting story to narrate during the visit. He registered having watched birds wanting to land near Khurwan Sar wetland around November 19th and failing to do so. He had documented this curious observation in photos as well.

Akhtar believes that migratory birds could not recollect that this was their own habitat as the colour of water had changed due to pollution and topography of the land also having changed due to constant land encroachments. He added that construction of houses near wetlands and vehicular sound was preventing migratory birds from visiting their designated habitats.

Encroachments around Hygam wetland

Media has been highlighting the encroachments of Hygam wetlands quite robustly. In the last few years, many reports were carried by local English dailies about choking this wetland. Yet, authorities at the helm have been unable to stop the land encroachment especially around Hygam which has been continuing for the past few decades. During our visit, we could see demarcated wetland areas having been converted into paddy fields. Infact, few apple orchards were also developed on Hygam wetland around its North Western shore.

The Hygam Wetland Reserve is spread over an area of around 1400 hectares of land mass but in villages like Hygam, Haritar, Lolpora, Gohul, Tengpora and Goshbug many encroachments have been seen.

Several residential houses, cattle sheds, and bathrooms have been constructed in addition

The wetlands in Kashmir are shrinking day by day. We have almost lost Hokersar, Anchar, Gilsar and Khushal Sar. Dal lake is on death bed and so is the Wullar lake. At a time when Hygam wetland has been declared a Ramsar site of international importance, it is the duty of the Govt to come to its rescue soon. Civil Society organisations, Educational Institutions, Auqaf Committees around Hygam, Tarzoo, Sopore need to be sensitized about Hygam Wetland Reserve and other satellite wetlands of the area

tion to growing paddy and apples on the hundreds of kanals of wetland area. Local citizens told the visiting EPG delegation that around 80 plus illegal constructions have come up on the Hygam wetland in the last few years while hundreds of kanals of land has been converted for paddy cultivation.

Although there are several FIRs registered in local police stations, Police and Revenue Department officials are not taking steps to evict the encroachers. Infact, the Wildlife Department tried to undertake an eviction drive in the Hygam wetland area last year in June but the encroachers attacked the wildlife officials and even injured some of them.

Central Auqaf Committee Tarzoo

The Central Auqaf Committee Tarzoo Sopore under the guidance of its patron Ajaz Ahmad Dar and other members has been actively working for conservation of environment in the area.

The special focus of this committee is on wetland conservation as the entire Tarzoo, Darnambal, Hygam, Ninglee has huge wetlands which are in fact in the Wullar catchment area as well.

The Central Auqaf Committee Tarzoo is the first kind of religious organisation in Kashmir which is concerned about environmental conservation

and sustainable development. The Central Auqaf Committee during the last 3 years has organised almost a dozen workshops, conferences on wetland conservation. They have filed a petition before J&K High Court on unscientific garbage disposal near Ninglee wetland area through Advocate Shafqat Nazir, legal advisor of EPG. The High Court gave a landmark judgement and the then Chief Justice Geeta Mittal personally visited the site in Ninglee where municipal solid waste was being dumped by Municipal Council Sopore. The illegal work was later-on stopped. In Fact, I had also moved a petition before the National Green Tribunal on the request of the Central Auqaf Committee Tarzoo.

On April 10th 2021, the five village panchayats in the Tarzoo area on the guidance of the Central Auqaf Committee adopted a joint resolution by invoking section 5 of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006. The FRA empowers the Gram Sabha to protect the wildlife, forest, and biodiversity of the village and to ensure that adjoining catchment areas, water sources, and other ecologically sensitive areas are adequately protected. Through that resolution, the village panchayats asked the district administration Baramulla and Municipal Council, Sopore to stop dumping solid waste in the forest land which was a severe threat to the environment and biodiversity of the area. Pertinently after closure of the Ninglee dump site, District Administration Baramulla had chosen another site which was forest land and panchayat land. Now that site has also been shut down due to the efforts of Central Auqaf Committee Tarzoo Sopore.

Conclusion

The theme for the 2022 edition of World Wetlands Day which is celebrated on February 2nd every year is Wetlands Action for People and Nature. This theme highlights the importance of actions that ensure that wetlands are conserved and sustainably used. It is in fact an appeal to invest financial, human and political capital to save the world's wetlands from disappearing and to restore those we have degraded. The wetlands in Kashmir are shrinking day by day. We have almost lost Hokersar, Anchar, Gilsar and Khushal Sar. Dal lake is on death bed and so is the Wullar lake. At a time when Hygam wetland has been declared a Ramsar site of international importance, it is the duty of the Govt to come to its rescue soon. Civil Society organisations, educational Institutions, Auqaf Committees around Hygam, Tarzoo, Sopore need to be sensitized about Hygam Wetland Reserve and other satellite wetlands of the area as well. School children should be mandatorily taken out for wetland walks by their teachers across Kashmir which will help them to know the importance of this important water ecosystem. Chief Secretary J&K Dr A K Mehta who is also the Chairperson of State Wetlands Authority should also intervene in this issue.

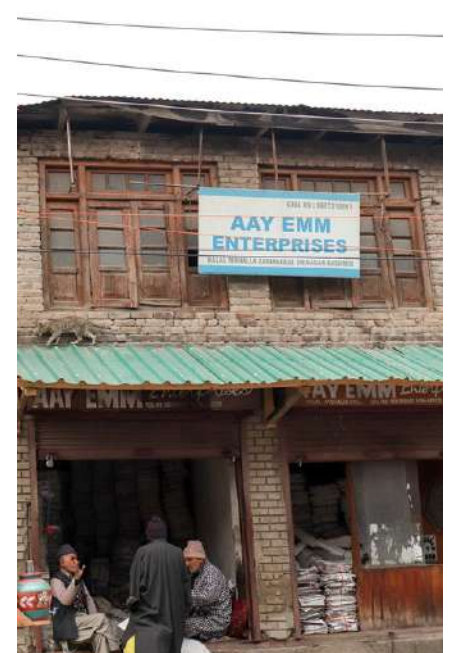
Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer
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Juxtaposed Kashmir

Where Assorted Abodes Form Humdrum Heritage

Amid The Smart City Drive, The Fate Of Old Structures And Juxtaposed Landmarks Remains Uncertain In Srinagar

Photos by Taha Wani



cube like units, the intellectual appetite of yore was written in a pure genre of geniusness in old structures. The new addresses now resemble a row of fridges stacked vertically to building-size proportions. They're just tasteless experiments. Kashmir's heritage structures were once considered to be a pilgrimage. These buildings usually stand out against a crowd of much more generic surrounding structures. For many international visitors, such buildings were an architecture nerd's equivalent of a celebrity selfie. These buildings today are in a conspicuous state of disrepair. Their bodies are pockmarked. Since last year, everyone in Kashmir, especially in Srinagar, is doing a back-and-forth over the buildings' fate. These grand-old structures are now rendered bereft and doomed. The impending time for such structures didn't come to pass and their dynamic vision is no longer woven into the fabric of the long-lasting architecture.

Much of the structural change is being attributed to the craftspeople. Unlike the old masters, the new architects are champions of the new style that express bitter-disappointment for its failure. It's pretty understandable why straight lines are easy and curves are hard. Most of the new structures are just collections of boxes. It's mostly like toddlers playing with rubber blocks. When structures were made in the past, the process would yield the curves and master builders earned their respect with arches and wooden rooftops. However, the new shapes are mostly cheaper in style. It's the tyranny of time. Besides the structure, the wooden windows have now changed into steel. It feels as if people vanished in these windows, and for the most part one cannot know, at least for a while, if they actually ever sit there as witnesses of the life and time in the valley. It wouldn't be wrong to trust the oldtimers when they say that the classic craftsmen were hired to build



impossible things. However, the new architecture is no longer drawn to its culmination through the potential for magic and the glimmer of hope that invigorates the mundane. The master artists learned the flaws and foibles of construction with each passing day. But, the latest mansions are a long and haphazard apprenticeship. It may be a delightful stunt but with a dead look. In the cat race to promote cities that provide core infrastructure, give a decent quality of life to their citizens and apply smart solutions to improve services and infrastructure, these new projects push behind the idea of heritage and Kashmir's architectural history. The new structures are like pop-up obstacles, piling on complexities. It shows the desperation to reach first. The old designer choices of materi-

al and design weren't just aesthetically fashionable, their main purpose of constructing a building was to function as a soothing place for the soul. Much of the modernist architecture can be understood as waging war on the valley's architectural importance. As extreme as the aesthetic of modern architecture seems today, many in the valley are sure that it is safe. But, the new design still looks like blank and empty boxes. Even Agha Shahid was concerned about how ugly buildings had come up in place of the old ones and how original Kashmiri architecture, which is so unique, was slowly vanishing. Now that traditional Kashmiri homes are facing an onslaught, it's hard to imagine any writer romanticizing Kashmir and glossing over the importance of architecture in life.



Zaid Bin Shabir

Srinagar's classic countenance would once fuel fantasies with its grace and grandeur and spark poetic praises. But now, the rundown residences are defying the picture-perfect of what once was the Venice of East. What remains now are the distorted dwellings — mostly long, symmetrical facades, looking east and west, with several windows for taking the

air, fascinating staircases and a collection of Kashmiri artistry. These structures would constitute an ideal-abode for craftspeople. However, the new non-indigenous structures have pushed and pulled this architectural history of everyone to obscurity. And now, the future of these old-structures has seemingly frozen in time and stares into the dark. The quintessence structures around the seven bridges compelling the Bard of Jhelum, Agha Shahid Ali, to pen down glorious tributes are no longer a poetic panorama. The urban structures no longer give an unobstructed view of the calm riverline. The official stand on this new wave is mere an architectural analogy created by the change. Unlike contemporary perspective struggling around a stack of steel





Can Covid Nasal Sprays Prevent And Treat Infection?

One study of about 400 health-care workers suggests a nasal spray may reduce the incidence of COVID by up to 80 per cent.

The Conversation

We have vaccines to boost our immune response to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID. We have medicines you can take at home (and in hospital) to treat COVID. Now researchers are trialling something new. They want to develop drugs that stop the virus getting into the body in the first place. That includes nasal sprays that stop the virus attaching to cells in the nose. Other researchers are looking at the potential for nasal sprays to stop the virus replicating in the nose, or to make the nose a hostile place to enter the body.

Here's where the science is up to and what we can expect next.

How could we block the virus?

“Viral blockade”, as the name suggests, is a simple premise based on blocking SARS-CoV-2. In other words, if something gets in its way, the virus cannot attach to a cell and it can't infect you. As SARS-CoV-2 is a respiratory virus, it makes sense to deliver this type of medicine where the virus mainly enters the body – via the nose, in a nasal spray. There are various groups around the world working on this concept. Some research is still being conducted in the lab. Some agents have progressed to preliminary human trials. None are yet available for widespread use.

Heparin

Heparin is a common medicine that's been used for decades to thin the blood. Studies in mice show that when heparin is delivered via the nose, it's safe and effective in preventing the virus binding to nose cells. Researchers believe heparin binds to the virus itself and stops the virus attaching to the cells it's trying to infect. A clinical trial is being conducted in Victoria in collaboration between multiple Melbourne-based research centres and the University of Oxford.

Covixyl-V

Covixyl-V (ethyl lauroyl arginine hydrochloride) is another nasal spray under development. It aims to prevent COVID by blocking or modifying the cell surface to prevent the virus from infecting. This compound has been explored for use in various viral infections, and early studies

in cells and small animals has shown it can prevent attachment of SARS-CoV-2 and reduce the overall viral load.

Iota-carrageenan

This molecule, which is extracted from seaweed, acts by blocking virus entry into airway cells. One study of about 400 health-care workers suggests a nasal spray may reduce the incidence of COVID by up to 80 per cent.

IGM-6268

This is an engineered antibody that binds to SARS-CoV-2, blocking the virus from attaching to cells in the nose. A nasal and oral (mouth) spray are in a clinical trial to assess safety.

Cold atmospheric plasma

This is a gas that contains charged particles. At cold temperatures, it can alter the surface of a cell. A lab-based study shows the gas changes expression of receptors on the skin that would normally allow the virus to attach. This re-

sults in less SARS-CoV-2 attachment and infection. Scientists now think this technology could be adapted to a nasal spray to prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection.

How could we stop the virus replicating?

Another tactic is to develop nasal sprays that stop the virus replicating in the nose. Researchers are designing genetic fragments that bind to the viral RNA. These fragments – known as “locked nucleic acid antisense oligonucleotides” (or LNA ASOs for short) – put a proverbial spanner in the works and stop the virus from replicating. A spray of these genetic fragments delivered into the nose reduced virus replication in the nose and prevented disease in small animals.

How could we change the nose?

A third strategy is to change the nose environment to make it less hospitable for the virus. That could be by using a nasal spray to change moisture levels (with saline), alter the pH (making the nose more acidic or alkaline), or adding a virus-killing agent (iodine). Saline can reduce the amount of SARS-CoV-2 in the nose by simply washing away the virus. One study has even found that saline nasal irrigation can lessen COVID disease severity. But we would need further research into saline sprays. An Australian-led study has found that an iodine-based nasal spray reduced the viral load in the nose. Further clinical trials are planned. One study used a test spray – containing ingredients including eucalyptus and clove oils, potassium chloride and glycerol. The aim was to kill the virus and change the acidity of the nose to prevent the virus attaching. This novel formulation has been tested in the lab and in a clinical trial showing it to be safe and to reduce infection rate from about 34 per cent to 13 per cent when compared to placebo controls.

Barriers ahead

Despite promising data so far on nasal sprays for COVID, one of the major barriers is keeping the sprays in the nose. To overcome this, most sprays need multiple applications a day, sometimes every few hours. So based on what we know so far, nasal sprays will not singlehandedly beat COVID. But if they are shown to be safe and effective in clinical trials, and receive regulatory approval, they might be another tool to help prevent it.

'Over 75% Indians With Hypertension Have Uncontrolled BP'

Press Trust Of India

Less than one-fourth of hypertensive patients in India have their blood pressure under control, according to a study published in The Lancet Regional Health journal. Hypertension or high blood pressure is an important modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular diseases (CVD), making it one of the significant contributors of premature death and morbidity. The team, including researchers from National Centre for Disease Control, New Delhi, and Boston University School of Public Health, US, conducted a systematic review of 51 studies published after 2001 that reported hypertension control rates in India. The researchers focused on community-based non-interventional studies which provide a realistic picture of control rates at the community level. They also examined the

risk factors, they said. "Less than one-fourth of hypertensive patients in India had their blood pressure under control during 2016 2020. Although the control rate has improved compared to previous years, substantial differences exist across regions," the authors of the study said. "Very few studies have examined the lifestyle risk factors and social determinants relevant to hypertension control in India," they added. In the study, hypertension control rate was defined as the proportion of patients with their blood pressure under control ie. a systolic blood pressure less than 140 mmHg (unit of pressure) and diastolic blood pressure less than 90 mmHg. The review included 49 cross-sectional and two cohort studies covering 1.39 million population (73 per cent females) including 338,313 (3.3 lakh) hypertensive patients. Thirty nine studies had state-specific data covering 15 states and territories.



changes in control rates over the years, which the authors said, was never done before. The research found that 21 studies (41 per cent) reported poorer hypertension control rates among males than females, and six studies (12 per cent) reported poorer control rates among rural patients. The pooled hypertension control rate in India during 2001 2020 was 17.5 per cent – with significant increase over the years, reaching 22.5 per cent in 2016 2020, the researchers said. Sub-group analysis showed significantly better control rates in the South and West regions, and significantly poorer control rates among males. Very few studies reported data on social determinants or lifestyle

The mean hypertension prevalence across studies was 24.2 per cent, and 46.8 per cent of them were aware of their high blood pressure. The researchers noted that India needs to develop and evaluate sustainable, community-based strategies and programmes to improve hypertension control rates. "Hypertension is a significant contributor to mortality in India. Achieving better hypertension control rate at the population level is critical in reducing cardiovascular morbidity and mortality," the authors said. The team also included researchers from Government Medical College, Manjeri and KIMS Al-Shifa Specialty Hospital, Perinthalmanna, both in Kerala.

WhatsApp To Launch ‘Message Yourself’ Feature In India

IANS

Meta-owned messaging platform WhatsApp on Monday announced the launch of a new ‘Message Yourself’ feature in India, in the coming weeks. It is a 1:1 chat with yourself to send notes, reminders,

able on Android and iPhone and will be rolled out to all users in the coming weeks,” the company said. Earlier this month, Meta Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg had announced ‘Communities on WhatsApp’ along with several new features like 32-person video calling, in-chat polls and



and updates, the company said in a statement. On WhatsApp, users can send notes, reminders, shopping lists, and other things to themselves in order to manage their to-do lists. To use the new feature, open the WhatsApp application, create a new chat, then click on your contact at the top of the list and start messaging. This feature will be avail-

groups with up to 1,024 users. “We’re launching Communities on WhatsApp. It makes groups better by enabling sub-groups, multiple threads, announcement channels, and more. We’re also rolling out polls and 32 person video calling too. All secured by end to end encryption so your messages stay private,” said the Meta CEO.

‘Govt To Make E-Filing Of Consumer Complaints Mandatory From April 2023’

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The government will make e-filing of consumer complaints compulsory from April next year, a move that is



also expected to help in faster redressal of the grievances, a senior official said on Monday.

Currently, people can file complaints before consumer commissions or courts, both in physical and online mode.

The electronic filing (e-filing) option for consumer complaints was introduced on September 7, 2020.

"Looking at the success of e-filing, we are going to make it

mandatory from April 1, 2023 for all consumer commissions in the country," the official at the consumer affairs ministry told PTI.

According to the official, the mandatory e-filing of complaints will also help people file consumer complaints directly without the help of a lawyer at his or her choice.

Once the complaints are in the form of e-filings, it will facilitate speedier disposal of the cases, the official added.

To address consumer grievances, there is a three-tier system starting with the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum (DCDRF). At the state level, it is the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission and at the national level, it is the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

The ministry has taken several measures to strengthen infrastructure of consumer courts in the country to facilitate easy filing and early disposal of cases

Amazon To Wind Down Parts Of Indian Operations, Sack Hundreds: Report

Bloomberg

NEW DELHI: Amazon.com Inc. will wind down parts of its Indian operations, showing that even the crucial growth market with 1.4 billion consumers isn't immune to Chief Executive Officer Andy Jassy's cost-reduction campaign.

The company said it is exiting meal deliveries as well as a service providing bulk doorstep deliveries of packaged consumer goods to small businesses. The exits will involve layoffs of just several hundred out of a workforce of thousands, leaving Amazon relying on its core offerings such as online retail in the country, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Jassy is reducing expenses and jobs around the world amid slowing growth in several areas of Amazon's business.

In India, the pullback underscores Amazon's struggles in one of the world's fastest growing e-commerce markets, where it's facing regulatory heat and competition from homegrown conglomerates Reliance Industries Ltd. and Tata Group as well as Walmart Inc.'s Flipkart.

After plowing billions of dollars in everything from grocery delivery to payments in India during the past decade, the company has failed to achieve the sort of dominance it enjoys in markets such as the US.

Several projects in beta testing are also likely to be shelved, said the person, who asked not to be named discussing internal deliberations. Amazon has announced that its Amazon Academy learning platform, which offers online test prep resources for students competing to enter India's medical and engineering schools, will shut down in the coming months.

Job losses in the country are likely to be in the low hundreds,



the person said, or just a fraction of Amazon's India e-commerce workforce of over 10,000. Overall, Amazon employs more than 100,000 people full time in the country for its worldwide operations.

The company has attracted the wrath of a labor union assembling tech workers for making what it calls "voluntary separation" offers and giving employees limited time -- only until Dec. 6 -- to decide. Amazon itself doesn't have a labor union.

Globally, Amazon plans to cut about 10,000 jobs, its largest ever headcount reduction, people familiar with the matter have said. It has projected the smallest revenue increase ever for its holiday quarter, and Jassy had put in place a hiring freeze on some corporate roles and shut down several experimental and smaller programs.

Amazon launched Amazon Food, the meal delivery service it's now shuttering, in India in 2020. It offers food from restaurants and other providers serving everything from paratha stuffed bread to McDonald's burgers and fries. Amazon's business-customer unit will continue to provide small retailers and bulk buyers with goods such as groceries and medical supplies but will no longer offer door delivery of packaged consumer goods.

"We are discontinuing these programs in a phased manner to take care of current customers and partners," the company said in an emailed statement. "We remain committed to India and will continue to invest across those areas where we can bring value to our customers."

CS Complements RBI's Efforts For Ensuring A Strong Financial Ecosystem In J&K

Mehta inaugurates Diamond Jubilee celebrations of RBI Jammu



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta Monday inaugurated the celebrations of Diamond Jubilee function of Reserve Bank of India, Jammu.

The function was organized to mark the completion of RBI, Jammu's 60 years.

In order to mark the occasion, a function was organised at RBI Jammu which was inaugurated by Dr Mehta as Chief Guest. Kamal P. Patnaik, Regional Director, Reserve Bank of India, senior officials from RBI and its present and retired staff members were present on the occasion.

A video showcasing the journey of Reserve Bank of India, Jammu from year 1962 was played at the function.

The important milestones and achievement of RBI, Jammu were highlighted in the video. A memoir on RBI Jammu's journey during these 60 years was also unveiled by the Chief Secretary.

Dr. Mehta congratulated all the present and retired staff members of RBI Jammu present on the occasion.

He highlighted that despite the challenges posed by Covid-19 in last few years, economy of J&K has shown robust growth and complemented the efforts of RBI in ensuring a strong financial ecosystem in the UT. He further assured them about the support of UT Administration in its commitment for creating an enabling atmosphere for sustained economic growth in the region.

Dr. Mehta also acknowledged the contribution of RBI, Jammu in developing the region and hoped that the staff members of RBI will continue to work hard in collaboration with UT administration to make J&K a developed economy.

Kamal P. Patnaik, Regional Director, RBI also congratulated its staff members, present and retired on completing 60 years and appreciated their efforts. He exhorted upon the RBI employees to work even harder to take the country forward in this 'Amrit Kaal'.

Retired employees of the bank were also felicitated at the function.

The event ended with a vote of thanks by Shri. Sandeep Mittal, General Manager of the Bank.

J&K Agri Dept Conducts Successful Trials Of Shiitake Mushroom Cultivation



Observer News Service

JAMMU: The agriculture department of Jammu and Kashmir has successfully completed field trials of the cultivation of one of the costliest mushrooms, Shiitake.

Shiitake mushroom (Lentinus edodes), which is native to Japan and China, is a type of edible fungus, and contains a chemical called lentinan, which some medical professionals use to boost immune system, according to officials.

"We have completed successful trials of this variety of mushroom. It is an achievement for us," Agriculture Department Director K K Sharma told PTI.

Sharma said the department carried out two field

trials in the climatic conditions of Jammu and these trials were successful.

"In one of the trails, we used wooden chips and saw dust, which resulted in fruiting bodies. We are positive that mushrooms will also start growing in the next few days.

"The second trial was conducted using Japanese technology at multiple locations on blocks. These blocks were provided by the Mushroom institute Palampur in Himachal Pradesh (HP)," Sharma said, adding, "These trails also turned out to be a success as we noted the growth of fruiting bodies here as well."

Now that the trails are successful, these technologies will be shared with farmers for mass cultivation

of this mushroom, according to the director. "These technologies will be taken to the farmers in the next six months," he said.

According to the officials, it will be considered as a move to bring an economic boom in the farming sector with regard to the mushroom cultivation.

Shiitake is a high-value mushroom variant, Sharma noted, adding, "It is considered as an immunity booster and is a preferred ingredient in soups. It is even used in medicines."

Shiitake mushrooms are the second-most commonly eaten mushrooms in the world. "Lentinan and other chemicals in Shiitake mushroom might stimulate the immune system," he said.

Jet Airways Plan To Pull Out Of Bankruptcy Is In Tatters: Report

Reuters

MUMBAI: Creditors of Jet Airways and the company's new owners are deadlocked over a resolution plan to pull the airline out of bankruptcy, putting the carrier's future in limbo, according to sources.

Creditors may approach the aviation ministry to seek approval to liquidate Jet's assets if a resolution does not emerge during a critical court hearing on Tuesday, said a senior banker.

"There have been too many delays ... there are concerns the resolution plan may fall apart so we are looking to see if we can at least get something out of this deal via the liquidation

to implement this plan, and remain "fully committed" to getting Jet Airways off the ground, it added.

State Bank of India, the lead lender in the consortium of creditors, declined to comment. The court-appointed resolution professional overseeing the case did not immediately respond to an email request for comment.

Once India's biggest private carrier, Jet stopped flying in April 2019 after running out of cash and was taken to a bankruptcy court by creditors who were owed about 180 billion rupees (\$2 billion).

Last June, a restructuring plan was approved by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)



route," the banker, who has dismised knowledge of the matter, said.

The resolution plan is binding upon all involved parties and was approved by the bankruptcy court, a spokesperson for Jet's new owners said in a statement.

We are "working closely" with the erstwhile lenders of Jet

and the airline was set to resume operations by the first quarter of 2022 under its new owners - a consortium including London-based Kalrock Capital and UAE-based businessman Murari Lal Jalan.

However, disagreements between the company's new owners and lenders over the plan risks derailing Jet's recovery.

Trade Unions Demand Restoration Of OPS, Credible Social Security For Unorganised Workers

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Trade unions on Monday pressed for restoration of the old pension scheme (OPS) and a credible social security net for unorganised workers in their pre-budget consultation with finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

In 2004, the OPS was replaced with the National Pension System (NPS) which is contributory and not indexed (not linked to dearness allowance).

States like Punjab, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh have already announced the restoration of

Pension Scheme in place of NPS by contribution out of government kitty." The forum of these unions did not attend the virtual pre-budget consultation as the unions wanted a physical meeting and demanded more time to express their views.

They had protested against the virtual meeting, saying that over a dozen central trade unions were given three minutes each to raise issues related to workers. The unions also invited the finance minister for an open debate saying that it would give her more time to defend policies followed by her.



the OPS for their employees.

A joint forum of ten central trade unions, which did not participate in the meet held earlier in the day, stated in its memorandum to the ministry through e-mail: "Restore Old

Besides, S P Tiwari, General Secretary, TUCC (Trade Union Coordination Centre), who participated in the meeting said that his union also demanded that the OPS should be restored in place of NPS.

SHORT TAKES

Markets Hit Fresh All-Time Highs; Rally For 5th Day

MUMBAI: Benchmark indices ended at fresh lifetime highs on Monday amid foreign fund inflows, a decline in crude oil prices and buying in index major Reliance Industries.

Rallying for the fifth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 211.16 points or 0.34 per cent to settle at 62,504.80, its fresh record closing high. During the day, it jumped 407.76 points or 0.65 per cent to its lifetime intra-day peak of 62,701.40.

The broader NSE Nifty gained 50 points or 0.27 per cent to end at 18,562.75, its record closing high.

"Sentiment and flows currently are acting as a strong catalyst for the markets which touched an all-time high. We are seeing domestic as also foreign investors being net buyers of equity aiding the momentum," said Lakshmi Iyer, CEO- Investment Advisory, Kotak Investment Advisors Limited.

Among the Sensex pack, Reliance Industries jumped the most by 3.48 per cent, followed by Nestle, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro, ICICI Bank and IndusInd Bank.

Tata Steel, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, HDFC and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.77 per cent and midcap jumped 0.72 per cent. **PTI**

Bank Credit Grows At 17.2% In Sep Quarter: RBI Data

MUMBAI: Bank credit growth improved to 17.2 per cent in the September quarter 2022 from 7 per cent in the year-ago period, reflecting pick-up in economic activities.

"Credit growth remained broad-based: all population groups and bank groups recorded double digit annual growth," the Reserve Bank said while releasing 'Quarterly Statistics on Deposits and Credit of SCBs: September 2022'.

Bank credit growth improved further to 17.2 per cent (year-on-year) in September 2022 from 14.2 per cent a quarter ago and 7 per cent a year ago, it said.

Aggregate deposits growth (y-o-y), which remained in the close range of 9.5-10.2 per cent since June 2021, stood at 9.8 per cent in September 2022. Since December 2020, bank branches in metropolitan centres have been recording higher annual growth than those in rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

Private sector bank group has been outpacing public sector banks, foreign banks and regional rural banks in deposit mobilisation, the RBI said.

As per the data, year-on-year growth in term deposits rose to 10.2 per cent in September 2022 from 6.4 per cent a year ago. Current and savings deposits growth moderated to 8.8 per cent and 9.4 per cent from 17.5 per cent and 14.5 per cent, respectively, a year ago. **PTI**

First Batch Completes Bamboo Craft Skill Up-Gradation Training

SAMBA: The First batch of artisans has completed Bamboo craft skill up-gradation training organised at Block Sumb under the Aspirational Block Development Programme (ABDP).

The skill upgradation and enhancement training program is being organised by District administration Samba and District Handicraft Department for four batches of 20 artisans for 15 days each to upgrade their bamboo craft skills through North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council, Assam (NECBDC). The training of the first batch began on 14th Nov and culminated on Monday 28th Nov, 22.

In this regard, an awareness camp cum certification distribution ceremony was held at block Sumb with ACD Samba, Sidharth Dhimman as the chief guest. He congratulated the pass out batch and distributed certificates and processing tool kits among the tainees and encouraged them to carry forward the work learnt in the training session.

AD Handicrafts and Handloom Samba, Niharika briefed about this training programme. She said "The training is being conducted as part of ABDP under the aegis of MoU signed by UT of JK with NECBDC Assam for Bamboo entrepreneurship and bamboo infrastructure development in JK." **ONS**

JKRLM Organises Workshop On SHG-Bank Linkage

SHOPIAN: The Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM) UMEED Monday organised a workshop in collaboration with Lead District Manager JK Bank on SHG-Bank Linkage at RSETI Shopian.

The aim of the workshop was to sensitize the bankers and the community for proper implementation of the programme and offer an opportunity for direct interaction between bankers and SHG members.

District Programme Manager (IB&CB) JKRLM, Javaid Ahmad presented an overview of activities, approach and achievements of UMEED, particularly in the area of financial inclusion. He said the mandate of JK-RLM is to reach out to the rural population and link them to sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Speaking on the occasion, Lead District Manager Shopian, Farooq Ahmad said that the J&K Bank is committed to take an extra mile towards financial inclusion and empowerment of women and SHG credit linkage. He assured of all kinds of possible assistance to the SHGs.

Bank representatives assured to take the subject of SHG Bank Linkage on a high priority. They said SHG credit linkage is a social concern as well as a promising business proposition for bankers and assured every possible help to the SHGs. **ONS**

69th All India Cooperative Week Celebrated At Pulwama

PULWAMA: On the eve of 69th All India Cooperative week, Cooperative Deptt District Pulwama in collaboration with the Cooperative Societies of Pulwama Monday organized a seminar to highlight the achievements of cooperative sector in the district and to generate cooperative awareness among general public to mark the opening day of 69th All India Cooperative Week celebrations.

The function was presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Pulwama, Fayaz Ahmad Banday as Chief Guest, while Deputy Registrar Cooperative societies Pulwama attended function among others addressed the gathering on this occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the ADC stressed upon the need of inculcating democratic value system in the cooperative societies. He further mentioned how Cooperatives should be infused with energy so that they can utilise the goodwill that they have amongst the public to strengthen the rural economy.

Speaking on the main theme of day "Ease of Doing Business For Cooperatives, GeM and Export Promotion", ADC highlighted how the Department has been working hard to usher in Ease of Doing Business through online registration of new cooperatives. **ONS**

Kerala Govt Terms Unacceptable Mob Attack On Police Station; Church Seeks Judicial Probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram / Kozhikode: The attack on a police station in Vizhinjam area by a large mob, allegedly of those protesting against the Adani port construction, was termed as "unacceptable" by the Left government on Monday, while the Latin Catholic church claimed "outside forces" were behind it and sought a judicial probe into it.

The ruling CPI(M) said the recent incidents of violence in the coastal area were reprehensible and claimed that some "mysterious forces" with vested interests were trying to create a riot-like situation there.

"In the name of protests, some were resorting to violence to create a conflict in the coastal areas and the state government should take strict action against the same," the CPI(M) state secretary said in a release.

The Congress-led UDF opposition, on the other hand, blamed the government for "deliberately provoking" the protesters to take up violence by lodging an FIR against at least 15 Latin Catholic priests, including metropolitan Archbishop Thomas J Netto and Vicar General Eugene Pereira, over the violence at Vizhinjam on Saturday.

"If protest leaders (priests) were to be made accountable for actions of the protesters, then would Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan be held responsible for protests and other actions of their party workers?" Leader of Opposition in the state assembly V D Sathesnan asked while speaking to reporters in Thiruvananthapuram.

The Congress leader advised Vijayan to set aside his ego and directly hold discussions with



the protesting fisherfolk to convince them to end the agitation.

Earlier in the day, Kerala Minister of Ports Ahammed Devarkovil said the government has been "very patient" till now in relation to the protests, but if the agitation attains a "criminal nature" -- where police personnel are attacked and injured and police property is destroyed -- that was "unacceptable."

"Especially in a secular state like Kerala, we will not allow any kind of communal conflict," the minister said and claimed that the mob attacked houses and establishments of those not belonging to their community.

"We will go to any extent to ensure communal harmony in the state," the minister said while speaking to reporters in Kozhikode.

On being told that the Latin Catholic church, which is leading the protest against the port construction, has claimed that external forces were in play and were the reasons for the violence during the last two days,

Devarkovil said the government has received several reports and the same were being investigated.

Vicar General Pereira, who has been seen at the forefront of the protests, claimed "outside forces" were behind the port-related violence in the last two days and said there should be a judicial probe into the incidents.

At the same time, he also said the attack on the police station, injuries caused to the police personnel and the damage to property were not justifiable.

State Finance Minister K N Balagopal said these unfortunate incidents of violence were happening when the project, an important one for the state, was at the finishing point and hoped that the matter can be resolved amicably.

Devarkovil too said that the project, which cost around Rs 7,500 crore, was important for the overall development of the state and therefore, its work cannot be stopped -- which is one of the seven demands of the

anti-port protesters.

He said five demands have been accepted and besides the stopping of the port construction, the only other demand that remained was providing kerosene at subsidised rates to fisherfolk.

The minister said kerosene was provided by the Centre and therefore, it was not up to the state to provide it at subsidised rates.

He also said that when the protesters were not abiding by repeated orders of the high court not to obstruct construction work or movement of materials for the project, it makes no sense for them to seek a judicial enquiry into the violence.

"So if there is an action, there will be a reaction," he said, but added that till date the government has not tried to suppress the protest by force in view of its public nature and presence of women and children at its forefront.

"However, we will have to implement court orders," Devarkovil further said.

Sathesnan said that while the

Congress and UDF opposition led by it would never encourage the violence that occurred in Vizhinjam on Sunday, it had given several warnings to the state government that if they do not resolve the issue, the situation could turn dangerous.

He also alleged that the CPI(M) and the BJP were working together to derail the protest.

Senior Congress leader and former KPCC president V M Sudheeran said the agitators were seeking a proper study of the impact and consequences of the project on the coastal regions, but it has been "twisted into an anti-port agitation."

The CPI(M), while blaming some vested interests for the violence at Vizhinjam, said that the state government has always worked to safeguard interests of the fisherfolk and would continue to do so.

Kerala Assembly Speaker A N Shamseer urged the protesters to withdraw their agitation and to cooperate with the state government as most of their demands were accepted.

Meanwhile, the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC) termed the Sunday violence as unfortunate, but said that the Centre and the state government were ignoring the protesters' demand for a proper study of the impact of the port construction.

They also opposed the police action of registering FIRs against the priests and sought an impartial and fair investigation into the violence at Vizhinjam.

Over 3,000 'identifiable persons' have been booked in connection with clashes during an ongoing protest against the Adani port project in Kerala's Vizhinjam area on Sunday night.

As many as 36 police personnel were reported to be injured in the violence that ensued.

SC Closes Proceedings Against Demolition Near Afzal Khan's Tomb, Says Razing Over

Agenceis

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday closed the proceedings on an interim plea after taking note of the submissions of Maharashtra authorities that the demolition drive conducted to remove alleged unauthorised structures on government land around the tomb of Afzal Khan, the commander of the Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur, has been completed.

"Now the demolition drive has been carried out and hence, so far as the interim application (challenging the demolition) is concerned, actually nothing survives," a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice P S Narasimha said while disposing of the interim plea of Hazrat Mohd Afzal Khan Memorial Society against the demolition drive.

It, however, kept the main appeal of the society pending for adjudication against two Bombay High Court orders asking the state government to demolish the illegal structures in and around the tomb. The Society had claimed the demolition could damage the tomb.

The top court had on November 11 sought reports from the district collector and the deputy conservator of forests of Satara in Maharashtra on the demolition drive conducted to remove alleged unauthorised structures on government land at the site.

At the outset, the bench perused the reports filed by the district collector and the deputy conservator of forests of Satara besides the pictures of the demolition drive and said they showed the extent of illegal constructions on forest land.

Senior advocate N K Kaul, appearing for the state

government, said the tomb of Afzal Khan and another grave, which was found during the demolition drive, are "untouched" and "protected".

Kaul said that two dharamshala, built illegally on the government land, have been demolished.

The counsel for the Hazrat Mohd Afzal Khan Memorial Society, however, said he will like those razed structures to be re-built as the demolition was illegal.

Initially, the bench was of the view that the society should seek other legal remedy before appropriate forum as nothing survived in the main petition either. Later, it decided to keep the main petition pending when the counsel for the society argued on this aspect.

The Bombay High Court had, in its orders passed on October 15, 2008 and November 11, 2009, ordered the state government authorities to remove illegal structures in and around the tomb.

The state government's appeal against the HC orders were dismissed on account of delay.

The appeal of the society against these orders of the high court is pending.

Earlier on November 11, the top court was appraised by the Maharashtra government that the demolition drive, against which the instant plea was moved, was over and illegal structures built on government and forest land were razed.

Afzal Khan was killed by Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj near the Pratapgad Fort in Maharashtra's Satara district and a tomb was built there in his memory later.

The demolition exercise started in the early hours of Thursday.

Will ask HC to consider afresh anticipatory bail pleas in ISRO espionage case: SC

AGENCEIS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court said on Monday it will ask the Kerala High Court to consider afresh the anticipatory bail pleas of four people, including a former Director General of Police (DGP), in a case of alleged frame-up of scientist Nambi Narayanan in the 1994 ISRO espionage matter.

It was hearing the CBI's appeal against the high court order granting bail to former Gujarat DGP R B Sreekumar, two former police officers of Kerala -- S Vijayan and Thampi S Durga Dutt, and a retired intelligence official P S Jayaprakash.

"What we propose is this..We will say high court to consider the anticipatory bail applications afresh without in any way being influenced by any observations," said a bench headed by Justice MR Shah.

Sreekumar was then the Deputy Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB).



Justice CT Ravikumar, added it will, in the meantime, continue the protection from arrest granted to them.

The court observed the high court, in the order under

challenge, committed certain errors including not considering and dealing with the individual allegations made by the accused.

"Two things high court has committed wrong . The

observation by the DK Jain committee (pertaining to the role of erring police officials in the 1994 espionage case) has not been considered at all. Individual allegations of each accused has not been dealt with and considered at all," the court said.

"We will pass order accordingly. We will ask the high court to decide. We are continuing the protection Let the high court consider everything afresh," stated the court.

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for CBI, argued the case was serious and did not concern a "private offence" but an "offence against the nation", and the high court could not have granted anticipatory bail to the accused.

He said the CBI probe was initiated pursuant to the directions of the apex court to find out whether foreign powers were involved.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal appeared for the then IB official and defended the high court

order, saying there was no allegation against him in the FIR and there was no basis to seek his custody for investigation.

The apex court had in November last year issued notice on the CBI's plea filed in the matter.

The agency had said its probe found that some scientists were tortured and framed in the espionage case due to which the development of cryogenic engine was hit, setting back India's space programme by almost one or two decades.

The CBI earlier alleged there was a clear indication that the accused were part of a team which had ulterior motives to torpedo the attempts of the ISRO for manufacturing the cryogenic engine.

While granting anticipatory bail to these four accused on August 13 last year, the high court had said, "There is not even a scintilla of evidence regarding the petitioners being influenced by any foreign power

so as to induce them to hatch a conspiracy to falsely implicate the scientists of the ISRO with the intention to stall the activities of the ISRO with regard to the development of the cryogenic engine."

It had said unless there is specific material regarding their involvement, prima facie, it cannot be said that they were acting against the interests of the country.

The CBI has registered a case against 18 people for various offences, including criminal conspiracy, in connection with the arrest and detention of former ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan in the espionage case.

The case, which had hit the headlines in 1994, pertained to allegations of transfer of certain confidential documents on India's space programme to foreign countries by two scientists and four others, including two Maldivian women.

Narayanan, who was given a clean chit by the CBI, had earlier

alleged the Kerala police had "fabricated" the case and the technology he was accused to have stolen and sold in the 1994 case did not even exist at that time.

The CBI had said the then top police officials in Kerala were responsible for Narayanan's illegal arrest.

The apex court had on September 14, 2018 appointed a three-member committee while directing the Kerala government to cough up a Rs 50 lakh compensation for compelling Narayanan to undergo "immense humiliation".

Terming the police action against the ex-scientist of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) "psychopathological treatment", the apex court had in September 2018 said his "liberty and dignity", basic to his human rights, were jeopardised as he was taken into custody and, eventually, despite all the glory of the past, was compelled to face "cynical abhorrence".

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

NIA Court Sentences

the JeM have illegally infiltrated into the Indian territory recently, the court noted.

Another Pakistani national, Kari Mufti Yasir (since expired), had infiltrated into India and reached south Kashmir to recruit, train and motivate local Kashmiri youths to carry out terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India, including Delhi-NCR.

The court noted that Sajjad Ahmed Khan was specifically sent to Delhi to carry out reconnaissance of important targets and to set up hideouts in Delhi as well as to radicalize and recruit youths of Uttar Pradesh and other states and to provide them weapon and training with the intention to threaten unity, integrity and sovereignty of India and to wage war against the Government of India.

Mehbooba's Fairview

The Fairview bungalow was allotted to Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in December 2005, after he relinquished the chief minister's office. The Fairview bungalow was the address of late Mufti Sayeed and his daughter Mehbooba for over a decade. She continued to occupy the Bungalow from December 2005 till Monday before moving out to her sister's house.

The Fairview residence was formerly

an infamous torture center, known as PAPA-2.

Until 1989, it served as an official guest house. The building was occupied by the Border Security Forces in 1990 who named it PAPA-2.

It continued to function as an interrogation and torture center till 1996.

In 1996, Ashok Jaitley, former Chief Secretary of the State moved in and used it as his residence. In 2003 it was renovated and served as the residence of then Finance Minister Muzaffar Hussain Baig.

Cold Wave Tightens

"As of now, there's no expectation of any new weather system in J&K. The weather will continue to remain somewhat the same in the next 8-10 days. It's unlikely that plain areas will receive any snowfall during the above period," he said.

"However, the weather will continue to remain foggy, which is likely to reduce visibility in the valley in the coming days," he added.

Meanwhile, most parts of Kashmir continued to reel under sub-zero temperature with Pahalgam remaining the coldest place in the Valley on Monday.

A meteorological department official said that Srinagar witnessed mist this morning and recorded a low of minus 1.8°C against minus 2.1°C on the previous night. The temperature was 0.9°C below normal during this time of the year for the capital city so

far, he said.

Qazigund recorded a low of minus 1.6°C against minus 1.4°C on the previous night. The temperature was 0.6°C below normal.

In Pahalgam, the mercury settled at minus 4.0°C against minus 3.4°C on the previous night and it was 0.6°C below normal for the south Kashmir resort, he said.

Kokernag recorded a low of 0.4°C against minus 0.4°C on the previous night and it was 0.8°C above normal for the place, he said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 1.0°C, the same as on the previous night, the official said. It was 2.1°C above normal for the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, the official said.

In Kupwara town, the mercury settled at minus 2.1°C against minus 1.4°C as on the previous night, the official said. It was 1.0°C below normal for the north Kashmir place, he said.

Jammu recorded a low of 9.8°C against 9.6°C on the previous night. It was 0.5°C below normal for J&K's winter capital, he said. Banihal recorded a low of 3.2°C (1.3°C above normal), Batote 4.9°C (0.8°C above normal), Katra 9.0°C (0.1°C above normal) and Bhardarwah 3.0°C (1.7°C above normal).

In Ladakh, Leh recorded minus 8.0°C and mercury in Drass, the world's second coldest place after Siberia, settled at minus 12.1°C, the official said.

The Met department has forecast mainly dry weather for next 24 in J&K and said that no large change was expected till December 7. (With agency inputs)

Ex-MLAs Given

occupied by them.

He said after giving undertaking, 15-days of time have been provided to them to vacate the quarters.

On Saturday, authorities asked former chief minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, 7 former legislators and one municipal councillor to vacate government quarters occupied by them in the Housing Colony Khanabal area of Anantnag district. (KNO)

4 Of A Family

plunged into a 700-feet gorge along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway on Monday, they said.

Imam (prayer leader) of Jamia Masjid Sangaldan, Mufti Abdul Hamid (32) and his father Mufti Jamal Din (65) were killed on the spot, while his mother Hajra Begum (60) and nephew Adil Gulzar (16) were rescued, and taken to a hospital in Udhampur district.

However, both the injured succumbed to their injuries, the officials said, adding the bodies of all four deceased were shifted to the hospital's mortuary room for post-mortem.

SC Seeks SG's

and Training), National Human

Rights Commission and the Law Commission of India parties to the PIL.

In August 2019, the Centre bifurcated Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories and abrogated the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution which accorded special status to the erstwhile state.

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on August 5, 2019 and passed the same day. The Lok Sabha cleared it the next day.

Crime Branch

wing has produced challan in 272 cases before the court of the law.

In 2017, the Crime Branch disposed off 81 cases, followed by 82 cases in 2018, 79 cases in 2019, 48 cases in 2020, 120 in 2021, and 69 cases in the ongoing year. (With KNT inputs)

What IFFI Jury

competition -- the front window of the festival. 14 out of them had cinematic qualities, defaults and evoked vivid discussions," the jury head said.

"All of us were disturbed and shocked by the 15th film, The Kashmir Files. That felt like a propaganda, vulgar movie, inappropriate for an artistic competitive section of such a prestigious film festival. I feel totally comfortable to openly share these feelings here with you on this stage. In the spirit of this festival, can surely also accept a critical discussion, which is essential

for art and life," he added.

Lapid further said that his jury members were asked for selecting the best film of the 15 in the international competitive section for various categories including the Golden and Silver peacocks.

"I feel totally comfortable to share this feelings with you on stage since the feeling we felt at this festival, can truly accept also a critical discussion, which is essential for art and for life," he added.

The controversial film, starring Anupam Kher and other veteran actors, had triggered a debate on the Kashmiri Pandit's issues, and grossed

over Rs 340 crore at the box office.

Jammu Warehouse

sold in the warehouse (Nehru Market) in Sanskrit and the bills will also be issued in that language.

Gupta said such a step has been taken as part of the birth centenary celebrations of Dr Uttamchand Shastri Pathak, who was a known scholar of Devvani Sanskrit.

Professor Madan Mohan Jha, director, Kendriya Sanskrit University said from November 30, Sanskrit classes will be held for traders and their staff at the warehouse from 4 to 5 pm.

Mahant Rohit Shastri, president, Shri Kailash Jyotish and Vedic Institute Trust, said a mobile Gurukul will be started soon to teach the rich language to the entire Jammu and Kashmir.

FIFA World Cup: Ghana Defeats Korea 3-2, Cameroon Draw 3-3 With Serbia

Ghana 3-2 South Korea



AL RAYYAN: Mohammed Kudus scored twice, including the go-ahead goal after South Korea evened the match in the second half, and Ghana staved off elimination at the World Cup with a 3-2 victory on Monday.

Mohammed Salisu also scored for the Black Stars, who lost their opening match against Portugal and were in need of points for a chance to reach the knockout round in Qatar.

Down 2-0, Cho Gu-sung scored both of South Korea's goals about three minutes apart early in the

second half to even the game at 2-2.

But Kudus' low left-footed goal in the 68th minute sailed out of the reach of goalkeeper Kim Seung-gyu to give the Black Stars back the lead. Goalkeeper Lawrence Ati-Zigi preserved the victory with a leaping save off Cho's attempt in stoppage time.

South Korea forward Son Heung-min remained without a goal in Qatar.

Ghana wraps up Group H on Friday against Uruguay, while the South Koreans play Portugal. No African team has reached the World Cup semifinals.



GQatari football fans hit back at Germany's World Cup protest on Sunday by holding pictures of former Germany player Mesut Özil while covering their mouths during the match against Spain. A group of fans held copies of a hand-drawn sketch of Özil, while others showed pictures of him in action for Germany.

Özil, a German-born descendant of Turkish immigrants, accused the country's soccer federation, fans and media of racism in their treatment of people with Turkish roots.

"I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose," Özil said at the time.

Cameroon 3-3 Serbia



AL WAKRAH: Cameroon staged an impressive comeback in a 3-3 draw against Serbia at the World Cup despite replacing its goalkeeper at the last minute.

Andre Onana, who plays for Italian club Inter Milan, wasn't in Cameroon's lineup or even at the stadium to watch the Group G match.

Coach Rigobert Song said he dropped his starting goalkeeper for "disciplinary reasons."

Song replaced Onana with Denis Epassy, who made only his sixth international appearance.

Cameroon was down 3-1 but second-half substitute Vincent

Aboubakar turned the game with a goal and an assist.

He lobbed Serbia goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic in the 64th minute to score his 34th goal for the Indomitable Lions, and set up striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting two minutes later for the equalizer.

Cameroon took the lead in the first half through central defender Jean-Charles Castelletto. Strahinja Pavlovic's headed in a free kick to level the score before Sergej Milinkovic-Savic struck from 20 meters just two minutes later. Striker Aleksandar Mitrovic made it 3-1 at the start of the second half. (AP)

BCCI Enters Guinness World Record For T20 Crowd Attendance

Agencies

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced that they have entered into the Guinness Book of World Records for the biggest crowd attendance during a T20 match. This milestone was achieved during the final match of the Indian Premier League 2022 between Gujarat Titans and Rajasthan Royals at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

On 29 May 2022, the IPL 2022

is for all our fans for their unmatched passion and unwavering support. Congratulations to @GCAMotera and @IPL," tweeted BCCI. Gujarat Titans defeated Rajasthan Royals by seven wickets to clinch the IPL 2022 title.

"Extremely delighted & proud to receive the Guinness World Record for the largest attendance at a T20 match when 101,566 people witnessed the epic @IPL final at @GCAMotera's magnificent Narendra Modi Stadium on 29 May 2022. A big thanks to our



final between Gujarat Titans and Rajasthan Royals at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad was attended by 1,01,566 people, setting a new world record.

"A proud moment for everyone as India creates the Guinness World Record. This one

fans for making this possible! @BCCI," BCCI secretary Jay Shah tweeted. The Motera stadium was built in 1982 and was refurbished in 2021. It hosted the second qualifier as well as the final of the 15th season of IPL on 29th of May 2022. (ANI)

Stokes To Donate Match Fees To Pakistan Flood Victims



Reuters

England captain Ben Stokes will donate his match fees from their three-test series against hosts Pakistan to help the victims of devastating floods in the country, the 31-year-old said in a statement on Monday.

Millions of people in Pakistan have had their lives affected by severe flooding in recent months, with officials in the Asian nation estimating damage from torrential monsoon rains that have killed over 1,000 people at more than \$40 billion. "To be back here after 17 years as a test side is very exciting. There is a sense of responsibility amongst the playing and support group and to be here is special," Stokes said.

"The floods that devastated Pakistan earlier this year was

very sad to see and has had significant impact on the country and the people. "The game has given me a lot in my life and I feel it's only right to give something back that goes far beyond cricket. I will be donating my match fees from this test series to the Pakistan flood appeal."

The first test starts in Rawalpindi on Thursday and England will be without fast bowler Mark Wood, who is nursing a hip injury that ruled him out of the Twenty20 World Cup semi-final and final in Australia this month. "Mark's not going to make the first test squad unfortunately because of his injury," head coach Brendon McCullum said.

"We expect him to be ready for the second test and otherwise we've got a full squad to pick from."



Real Kashmir Defeat Churchill Brothers 1-0 To Maintain Unbeaten Run

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Real Kashmir continued their unbeaten run in the 2022-23 Hero I-League with a 1-0 win over Churchill Brothers at the TRC Stadium in Srinagar on Monday.

A second-half header by the substitute Ibrahim Nurudeen proved enough for the hosts as they defeated Churchill Brothers for the first time in the Hero I-League.

Churchill Brothers maintained possession right from the first whistle, however, the first major chance of the game fell for the home side at the quarter-hour mark as midfielder Yakubu Wadudu's shot was deflected onto the post by goalkeeper Albino Gomes.

In the 18th minute, Real Kashmir's Lalnuntluanga Bawitlung took a powerful shot from 30-yards out but the Churchill custodian Albino Gomes made a great save, diving to his left to

keep the ball out of his goal. The 28-year-old was called into action again in the 34th minute, making another acrobatic save, this time from Samuel Kynshi's effort.

Five minutes before the half-time whistle, Tana curled in a corner for the visitors, which was punched away by Subhasish Roy Chowdhury in the Real Kashmir goal. The Snow Leopards launched a promising counter-attack from the resulting clearance as Jerry Pulamte sent Kynshi through on goal with a neat pass. Albino Gomes stood strong for the Red Machines once again, pulling off two saves in quick succession to deny the hosts the opening goal.

At the hour mark, Joseph Clemente fouled Kynshi just outside the penalty area. Nozom Babadzhanyan took the resultant free-kick but his effort hit the wall and went out for a corner. Five minutes later, Pulamte received a great through ball from

Wadudu before sending a cross in for Issahak Nuhu Seidu but the Ghanaian failed to get a clean connection and Churchill custodian Gomes collected the ball.

The Churchill defence was finally breached in the 76th minute as Gomes' parry for the corner kick dropped for Bawitlung at the edge of the box, who lobbed it back into the box for substitute Ibrahim Nurudeen to head home.

The visitors later received many opportunities to come back into the game with both Tana and Cissé taking free kicks just outside the Real Kashmir penalty area but their efforts were well off target. It just wasn't Churchill Brothers' day as they finished the game with no shots on target.

With this result, the home side remained at the top of the table with 10 points from four games (three wins and a draw), while the Goan side have just a single point from their four outings.

J&K Knocked Out Of Vijay Hazare Trophy After 7-Wicket Loss To Assam

Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD: Riyan Parag smashed a superb 116-ball 174 to help Assam chase down a mammoth target of 351 in 46.1 overs against Jammu & Kashmir in their Vijay Hazare quarterfinal here on Monday.

Parag struck 12 sixes and a dozen fours as Assam won the match by seven wickets. Replaying to J&K's 350 that was built on tons by Henan Nazir 124 (113 balls, 5 fours, 5 sixes) and Shubham Khajuria 120 (84 balls, 8 fours, 8 sixes), Assam slipped to 45 for two before Parag and Rishav Das (114 off 118 balls) got into the act.

The right-handed batter's huge 277-run partnership with



Das left the J&K bowlers, who had been impressive through the tournament, clueless.

It was Parag's third century in the ongoing Hazare Trophy and made a daunting task look easy for Assam.

Parag fell 29 runs short of the target but Das, who played second fiddle, saw Assam home

with 23 balls to spare.

Sent into bat, J&K got off to a bright start with openers Khajuria and Vivrant Sharma (34) putting on 74 in 11.4 overs. After Sharma fell, Khajuria and Nazir put on 129 runs for the second wicket.

Khajuria's dismissal to Avinav Choudhury (2/47) sparked a mini collapse but Nazir and Fazil Rashid (53, 46 balls, 3 fours, 2 sixes) added 113 for the fifth wicket.

Brief scores: J&K 350 for 7 in 50 overs (Henan Nazir 124, Shubham Khajuria 120, Fazil Rashid 53) lost to Assam 354 for 3 in 46.1 overs (Riyan Parag 174, Rishav Das 114 not out) by seven wickets.

Iran vs USA: US Soccer Briefly Scrubs Emblem From Iran Flag At WC

Agencies

TODAY'S MATCHES

DOHA: The U.S. Soccer Federation briefly displayed Iran's national flag on social media without the emblem of the Islamic Republic, saying the move supported protesters in Iran ahead of the two nations' World Cup match Tuesday.

Iran's government reacted by accusing America of removing the name of God from its national flag.

The USSF decision added yet another political firestorm to the Middle East's first World Cup, one organizers had hoped would be spared of off-the-field controversies.

It occurred as the U.S. prepared to face Iran in a decisive World Cup match already freighted by the decades of enmity between the countries and the nationwide protests challenging Tehran's theocratic government.



The USSF said in a statement Sunday morning it decided to forego the official flag on social media accounts to show "support for the women in Iran fighting for basic human rights."

The Twitter account of the U.S. men's team displayed a banner with the squad's matches in the group stage, with the Iranian flag only bearing its green, white and red colours. The same was seen in a post on its Facebook and Instagram accounts laying out the point totals so far in its group.

By Sunday afternoon, the normal flag with the emblem had been restored in the Twitter banner and the Facebook and Instagram posts with the altered flag had been removed.

"We wanted to show our support for the women in Iran with our graphic for 24 hours," the federation said.

The USSF displayed the official Iranian flag in a graphic showing Group B standings on its website.

Defender Walker Zimmerman said the U.S. players were unaware of the posts.

The brief absence of the emblem came as months long demonstrations challenged Iran's government following the Sept. 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who had been detained by the country's morality police.

The protests have seen at least 450 people killed since they started, as well as over 18,000 arrested, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, an advocacy group following the demonstrations.

Iran has not released casu-

Kick Off

Teams	Kick Off
Ecuador vs Senegal	8:30 PM
Qatar vs Netherlands	8:30 PM
Iran vs USA	12:30 AM
England vs Wales	12:30 AM

alty or arrest figures for months and alleges without providing evidence that the protests have been fomented by its enemies abroad, including the U.S.

Tehran also restricts media access and has detained over 63 reporters and photographers since the demonstrations began, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, making covering the unrest that much more difficult.

Iran's mission to the United Nations and its soccer federation did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press. As comments raged online, Iranian state television

described the U.S. federation as "removing the symbol of Allah" from the Iranian flag.

Iran's semiofficial ISNA news agency quoted Saffiollah Fagahanpour, an adviser to the Iranian Football Federation, saying that the "measures taken regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran flag are against the law" of FIFA competitions.

"They must be held responsible," Fagahanpour said. "Obviously they want to affect Iran's performance against the U.S. by doing this."

The Islamic Republic emblem, designed in 1980, is four curves with a sword between them. It represents the Islamic saying: "There is no god but God." It also resembles a tulip or lotus.

At the top and the bottom of the flag, there are 22 inscriptions of "God is Great" as well, which honours the date on the Persian calendar when the Islamic Revolution took hold.

The flag has become a point of contention at the World Cup. Apparent pro-government supporters have waved it, shouting at those demonstrating over Amini's death. Others at matches have waved Iran's lion and sun flag, an emblem of its former ruler, the late Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

More security forces could be seen at Iran's last match against Wales. In the capital Tehran, anti-riot police — the same ones cracking down on protests — waved the Iranian flag after the Wales win, angering demonstrators.

'Forgotten' Afghan Stories Highlighted In Two New Films From Netflix, Nat Geo

Agenceis

LOS ANGELES: The world's focus has shifted to the war in Ukraine, but two major new documentaries aim to throw the spotlight back on Afghanistan, and the people left behind by the United States' rapid withdrawal last year.

National Geographic's "Retrograde" follows an Afghan general who tried in vain to hold back the Taliban advance in 2021, while Netflix's "In Her Hands" tells the story of the country's youngest woman mayor, who had to flee as the Islamists took over.

"We've forgotten about this story -- when was the last time we discussed the war in Afghanistan, or read an article about it?" said "Retrograde" director Matthew Heineman.

"Obviously there's still some coverage of it, but... not that many people are talking about this country that we left behind."

Zarifa Ghafari, the former mayor spotlighted by "In Her Hands," told AFP that back under the Taliban, Afghanistan is "the only country around the world nowadays where a woman can sell their body, their children, anything else, but are not able to go to school."

But at international political meetings, "Afghanistan is out of those discussions."

Both movies begin in the months before the US withdrawal, as their subjects tried to build a safer and more egalitarian future for their country.

The two films end with their central characters forced to watch from abroad as the Taliban rapidly erases all their work.

"Retrograde" began as a documentary with rare inside access to US special forces. In one early scene, US troops are shown having to destroy -- or retrograde -- their equipment and wastefully fire off excess ammunition that was sorely needed by their Afghan allies.

After the Americans left their base in Helmand, Afghan general Sami Sadat agreed to let Heineman's cameras stay and follow him, as he took charge of the ultimately doomed effort to stave off Taliban advances. In one scene, Sadat -- stubbornly determined to rally his men to fight on as the situation crumbles around them -- chides his aide for bringing to his war office persistent reports of nearby Afghan troops downing their weapons.

"Every neon sign was saying 'stop, give up, this is over,' and he had this blind faith that maybe, just maybe, if he held on to Lashkar Gah or Helmand, that they could beat back the Taliban," recalled Heineman. Sadat eventually had to flee, and the filmmakers shifted their lens again, to desperate scenes at Kabul airport as Afghans fought for spaces on the last American planes out.

Irish Regulator Fines Facebook \$277 Million Over Data Privacy Breach



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Dublin: Ireland's data privacy regulator imposed a 265 million euro (\$277 million) fine on social media giant Facebook on Monday, bringing the total it has fined parent group Meta to almost 1 billion euros.

The penalty resulted from an investigation, started in April 2021, related to the discovery of a collated dataset of Facebook personal data that had been made available online. Facebook

was also ordered to make a range of corrective measures.

Monday's fine is the fourth Ireland's Data Privacy Commissioner (DPC) has levied against one of Meta's companies. It is Meta's lead privacy regulator within the European Union, and has 13 more inquiries into the social media group outstanding.

In September the watchdog hit its Instagram subsidiary with a record fine of 405 million euros, which Meta plans to appeal.

The DPC regulates Apple, Google, TikTok and other technology giants due to the location of their EU headquarters in Ireland. It currently has 40 inquiries open into such firms, including the 13 involving Meta.

The Irish regulator said in a statement that other relevant EU regulators agreed with the decision issued on Monday after it shared a draft ruling with them last month under the bloc's "one-stop shop" system of regulating large multinationals.

Iran frees hundreds after World Cup win over Wales

Agenceis

TEHRAN: Iran has released more than 700 prisoners after the national team's World Cup football victory over Wales, the judiciary's Mizan Online website said Monday.

It announced that "709 detainees were freed from different prisons in the country" following the 2-0 victory on Friday.

Among those are "some arrested during the recent events," Mizan Online said, making indirect reference to demonstrations which have shaken Iran for more than two months.

It gave no further detail.

The ongoing protests were triggered by the September 16 death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, after her arrest by morality police for an alleged breach of Iran's strict dress rules for women.

Other Iranian media separately reported that prominent Iranian actor Hengameh Ghaziani had been released on bail

after her arrest for having supported the protests.

Two of the most prominent figures detained over the demonstrations -- former international footballer Voria Ghafouri and dissident Hossein Ronaghi -- were also let out on bail, reports said.

State news agency IRNA reported on Monday that former state television host Mahmoud Shahriari, 63, had been released after two months in prison for "encouraging riots."

Iran on Friday scored twice deep into stoppage time to stun Wales and breathe new life into its World Cup campaign ahead of a politically charged showdown Tuesday against the United States. Iran lost its first World Cup match to England, 6-2.

Iran's judiciary says more than 2,000 people have been charged since the start of the protests.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk last week said around 14,000 people have been arrested.



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