

How Fatima's Unborn Death Exposes Kashmir's Medical Underbelly

Syed Mohammad Burhan

FATIMA was going to be their second child, but Abida and Showkat were worried.

The doctors at the Government Medical College, Baramulla had referred "the high-risk pregnancy" case with "less blood platelets" to LD Hospital Srinagar.

Having already lost a child due to miscarriage, the couple from Tarzo Sopore was nervous but hopeful about welcoming their daughter whom they had

named Fatima.

Abida was admitted to LD Hospital on the evening of February 16, at around 08:20 pm. "She was admitted to the labor room for two days," recalls Showkat with sleep-deprived eyes and parched lips. "We were told she will be operated on Monday."

But those at the helm shifted her to the ward 'for reasons better known to them'. "We were told that the baby was healthy," the heartbroken father says.

"That is when things started to deteriorate. Nobody looked



after my wife from Saturday afternoon to Sunday evening and no senior consultant paid a

visit till 10:00 pm. She was suffering from labour pain all day." When the labour pain became

I WAS LOST AND BUSY ARRANGING A FUNERAL FOR MY DAUGHTER FATIMA TILL TODAY, Now that I'm coming to terms with what has happened, I will knock on the door of law. I've lodged a complaint in the Governor's Grievance Cell and will make sure my daughter is brought to justice."

"unbearable", Showkat started looking for the senior doctors. "But except juniors, none of the specialists was around," he says. "When the senior doctor finally came, he told to go for a Cardiotocography (CTG)."

CTG is a continuous

recording of the fetal heart rate obtained via an ultrasound transducer placed on the mother's abdomen. The procedure is widely used in pregnancy as a method of assessing fetal well being, predominantly in pregnancies with increased

risk of complications.

"The results obtained by the CTG were shocking," says Showkat. "And the baby was already dead in the womb!"

Kashmir isn't new to unborn baby deaths, but the "main cause" of such fatalities—"medical negligence"—has unsettled the valley time and again.

A young pregnant woman died at an Anantnag hospital along with her unborn babies in April 2020. The family blamed medical negligence for the cause of the casualty.

On January 17 this **More on P6**

PMFBY Extended To All 20 Districts Of J&K

PM Fasal Bima Yojana Will Provide Comprehensive Coverage Against Crop Losses By Natural Calamities, Unseasonal Rains: LG

Major Crops Of J&K Like Paddy, Maize, Wheat, Oilseed, Mango, Litchi, Saffron Covered

Observer News Service

JAMMU: In a significant move towards welfare of the farmers, the government has extended Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to the farmers of all 20 districts of J&K.

Speaking at the launching event of the extension of PMFBY at SKUAST Jammu, the Lt Governor said that the scheme will provide comprehensive coverage against crop losses arising out of natural calamities and unseasonal rains.

"The initiative will stabilize the income of farmers, encourage them to adopt innovative practices with sufficient insurance protection from climatic catastrophe. I urge all the farmers to avail the benefits of PM Fasal Bima Yojna," said the Lt Governor.

It is pertinent to mention that PMFBY launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to secure hardworking farmers from the vagaries of nature was earlier available to only four districts of farmers.

The Lt Governor noted that the implementation of PMFBY across the UT will have a positive impact on the agricultural scenario in Jammu Kashmir and also complement the efforts of



UT Administration in creating a progressive environment.

Proper dissemination of relevant information and transparency in the implementation of PMFBY will be ensured. Crop insurance mobile app, Toll free number of the insurance company will facilitate the farmers to report about the losses, the Lt Governor added.

The Lt Governor also highlighted the agriculture reforms introduced in the J&K UT in the past 30 months.

The welfare of the farmers is our top-most priority. The UT Administration has taken major decisions in the agriculture,

horticulture and allied sectors to shape the vision of inclusive development, said the Lt Governor.

I am confident that the Agriculture and allied sectors will guide the prosperous future of Jammu Kashmir. The ground-breaking 29 projects worth Rs.5013 crore for the holistic development of agriculture & allied sectors will provide an integrated solution to all issues related to agriculture & allied sectors with a mechanism to reduce wastage and increase production, he added.

With meticulous implementation of the **More on P6**

People Use Internet Data, Buy iPhones, Why Hue & Cry Over Nominal Property Tax: LG Sinha

Agencies

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Friday said that in Jammu and Kashmir, people use internet data, buy I-phones and pay to play videos but wondered why there was so much hue and cry over nominal property tax.

"I wonder why there was a hue and cry over the imposition of nominal property tax", LG Sinha said adding that the money collected from property tax will be used for the development and welfare of the people.

Addressing a function at Jammu where LG extended Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to the farmers

of all 20 districts of J&K, the LG as per KNO, said that the administration hardly gets the power tariff and water bills paid by the people. "In J&K, people pay to use internet data, buy I-phones and play videos, I wonder why there is hue and cry over imposition

of property tax," the LG said, adding that there will be a push to the GDP

J&K once property tax will be collected.

The LG said that S A K U S T -



THERE WILL BE A PUSH TO THE GDP in J&K once property tax will be collected."

Kashmir and Jammu will be made of international standards while food security will comprise proteins as well. On February 22, Jammu and Kashmir administration ordered the imposition of property tax from April 1. In exercise of the power conferred by section 71A of the Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Act, 2000, the government hereby notifies the rules for levy, assessment and collection of property tax in the municipalities and municipal councils of the UT, housing and urban development **More on P6**

THE TAX RATES WILL BE 5% OF TAXABLE ANNUAL VALUE (TAV) for residential properties and 6% for commercial properties, it stated. In another announcement, the government said that small houses were exempted from the tax and the amount fixed for commercial buildings was nominal.



Thousands thronged Dargah Hazratbal for a glimpse of holy relic and to join congregational prayers on Friday following Shab-e-Meraj. KO Pix Abid bhat

Civilian Shot at, Injured in Bijbehara

Bijbehara: A civilian was shot at and injured by unknown gunmen in Hassanpora area of Bijbehara in South Kashmir's Anantnag district, officials said on Friday.

Police said that militants fired upon a civilian in Hassanpora in which he received injuries following which he was shifted to Dub District Hospital (SDH) Bijbehara for treatment.

The injured civilian has been identified as Asif Ali Ganai, son of late Ali Mohammad Ganai of Hassan Pora Tavela.

Meanwhile, the area has been cordoned off to nab the attackers.

The officials said that the injured was shifted to 92 base hospital in Srinagar for specialized treatment.

It is worth mentioning here that the injured is the son of slain Head Constable **More on P6**

Temperature Rises Amid Dry Weather

Agencies

Srinagar- The minimum temperature increased on Friday even as the weather department forecast mainly clear to partly cloudy weather at most places in Jammu and Kashmir.

Quoting a meteorological department official, news agency GNS reported that Srinagar recorded a low of 1.6°C against the previous night's 0.6°C. Today's minimum temperature, he said, was 'below' normal by 0.7°C for the summer capital.

Qazigund, he said, recorded a low of 0.2°C against 0.0°C on the previous night and it was 0.3°C above normal **More on P6**

Ramban Police Attaches Property of 3 Militants

Agencies

Ramban: While clamping down heavily on those involved in militant activities, the immovable properties of three persons, who were involved in throwing of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) at Police Post, Ind in Gool on August 2, 2022, were on Friday attached by Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of Ramban Police.

"The attached properties included a single storey house of Abdul Majid Lone at Sesal, Ind, a single storey house of Mohammed Farooq and a chemist shop of Shahdin

Padyar," a police spokesman said in a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

"These properties were attached in presence of a Magistrate, Naib Tehsildar, Nazam Mohammed, on the orders of SDPO, Gool, Nihar Ranjan after getting due sanction of Director General of Police JK UT, under Explosive Substance Act, Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967 and Prevention of Damage of Public Property (PDPP) Act."

"Today afternoon, the SIU team led by DySP **More on P6**

End of Auction: Will New Forest Policy Empower Tribals in Kashmir?

TWO months after the policy for sustainable collection and utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) was approved in Jammu and Kashmir, the rights of tribals have resurfaced in public discourses.

The policy approved in December 2022 is officially in line with The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 which provides for the right of ownership, to access, use and dispose of minor forest produce which has traditionally been collected within or outside village boundaries.

Until 2019, a forest official told Kashmir Observer, the Forest Department had been regulating the NTFP of J&K by way of annual auction in



certain forest divisions.

"The entire trade in NTFP was restricted to a few stakeholders who participated in the departmental auction for

collection and marketing," the official said.

"However, the earlier mechanism of regulation has not resulted in meaningful

involvement of local communities who could play an important role in conservation and development of these important sustainably available resources like Guchhis, Mushkbala, Banafsha, Belladonna, etc."

NTFP includes honey, wax, medicinal plants, roots, tubers, etc.

Jammu and Kashmir, notably, forms part of north-west Himalayas with around 48 per cent of its geographical area as recorded forest.

The medicinal plants sourced from the wild or cultivated in habitats outside the forests support the livelihood of rural households and people living near forests, who are traditionally engaged in the collection of these resources

from the wild.

"Local communities (tribals) are important stakeholders in conservation of NTFPs," the official said.

"A need, therefore, was felt to empower the local communities to realise livelihood support as envisaged in the Forest Policy of J&K by discontinuing the practice of auction."

According to the policy, a copy of which lies with Kashmir Observer, the present management of NTFPs, including medicinal plants, involves collection of certain species by way of auction for royalty by the Forest Department, based on their availability.

"There is a need," the policy notes, "to empower the local communities to realise livelihood support."

Yasin Malik Identified By Eyewitness In 1989 Case

The eyewitness Corroborated That He Had Gone To Sopore At The Time Of The Kidnapping Of Rubaiya Sayeed

Press Trust of India

Jammu: Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief Yasin Malik appeared via video-conferencing before a special court here on Friday and an eyewitness identified him in the 1989 kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed, the daughter of then Union home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

The eyewitness corroborated that he had gone to Sopore in Baramulla district at the time of the kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed and identified the place

and persons connected with it, the prosecution said, terming it a major success for their side.

Malik, who is lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail serving a jail term in a terror financing case, was not produced in the court physically due to a Ministry of Home Affairs order restricting his movement.

"Today, there was a case of Yasin Malik with the special judge of TADA court with regard to the Rubaiya Sayeed kidnapping case. We had summoned two eyewitnesses -- number 7 and number 13. The eyewitness number 13 was present in the court and the eyewitness number 7 could not attend due to health reasons," senior public prosecutor S K Bhat told reporters.

The statement **More on P6**



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Scientists Use AI To Identify Nature Of Thousands Of New Cosmic Objects

Press Trust Of India

Scientists have used machine learning, a variant of artificial intelligence (AI), to identify the nature of thousands of new cosmic objects such as stars, black holes and pulsars.

The researchers at Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai, and Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST), Thiruvananthapuram, applied machine learning techniques to hundreds of thousands of space objects observed in X-ray wavelengths (0.03 and 3 nanometres) with NASA's Chandra space observatory.

The study, published in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, applied the technique to about 2.77,000 X-ray objects, the nature of most of which was unknown.

A classification of the nature of unknown objects is equivalent to the discovery of objects of specific classes, the researchers said.

This research has thus led to a



reliable discovery of many thousands of cosmic objects of classes, such as black holes, neutron stars, white

dwarfs, stars, etc, and opened up an enormous opportunity for the astronomy community for further

detailed studies of many interesting new objects, they said.

"The finding demonstrated how

a new and topical technological progress could help and revolutionise the basic and fundamental scientific research," said Professor Sudip Bhattacharyya from TIFR, one of the researchers involved in the study.

"This work has opened up an enormous opportunity for the astronomy community and demonstrated how new techniques could help and revolutionise the basic and fundamental scientific research," Bhattacharyya said.

The finding by the collaborative team, including Shivam Kumar, Professor Samir Mandal and Professor Deepak Mishra, all from IIST, will be crucial to scientifically utilise the data from current and upcoming observatories.

The researchers noted that astronomy is entering a new era, as a huge amount of astronomical data from millions of cosmic objects are becoming freely available.

This is a result of large surveys and planned observations with high-quality astronomical observatories, and an open data access policy, they added.



This work has opened up an enormous opportunity for the astronomy community and demonstrated how new techniques could help and revolutionise the basic and fundamental scientific research

New Male Voice Option For Alexa Users In India

Press Trust Of India

Indian users, for the first time, will be able to switch between Alexa's original voice and a new masculine sounding voice, Amazon said on Thursday as its virtual assistant completed five years in India. Amazon, in a statement marking the milestone, said millions of customers across India have purchased Echo devices.



"For the first-time, Indian users will be able to switch between Alexa's original voice and a new masculine sounding voice. The new voice can respond in both English and Hindi languages," the statement said.

Users can change Alexa's voice by saying "Alexa, change your voice" on the Echo device or from the Alexa app by going to individual device setting and selecting Alexa's voice.

"In 2022, requests to Alexa on Echo Smart speakers, Amazon Shopping App, Fire TV and many Alexa-enabled devices by other brands increased by 37 per cent versus 2021 - making it a household name across the country. Maximum new customers started their Alexa journey on the Amazon Shopping App (Android only) - leading to over 55 per cent increase in monthly active users year on year," it said.

IIT Delhi Developing Smart Monitoring System To Ensure Safety Of Persons Working At Height

Press Trust Of India

Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi are developing a Smart Monitoring System (SMS) to detect and alert workers about unsafe conditions while working at height.

Karam Safety Private Limited (KSPL), one of the leading global fall protection companies, and FITT, an industry interface organisation at IIT Delhi, recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in this regard.

"Falls from a height are one of the main causes of serious and fatal workplace accidents. Most of these accidents occur when a worker is wearing the safety gear but forgets to connect it to the anchor point either due to habit or in a hurry to complete work. In order to monitor whether the safety procedure is followed by the worker on height we have proposed an SMS," said Husain Kanchwala, Professor at Centre for Automotive Research and Tribology (CART), IIT Delhi.

"If the worker has not connected the safety gear while working at height, the system will alert the user by audible warning alarm and also communicate to the supervisor and the safety in-charge via an app," he added.

Sunil Jha, Professor at Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Delhi explained that the SMS module will help maintain trackability and record repeated safety violations which can be used for counselling and training.

WhatsApp Is Working On Feature To Let Users Edit Messages On iOS Beta

IANs

Meta-owned messaging platform WhatsApp is reportedly still working on a feature which will allow users to edit messages on the platform, on iOS beta.

The new feature will give users up to 15 minutes to edit their messages to fix any mistake or include any additional information to the original message, reports WABetaInfo.

This feature is currently under development and is not ready to be released to beta testers.

The report further mentioned that the company might also bring a feature in a future update of the application, which will allow users to edit media captions.

In November last year, it was reported that the messaging platform was working on this feature, for iOS beta.

Meanwhile, earlier this week, WhatsApp was reportedly working on a feature which will allow users to send photos with high



quality on iOS beta.

The new option will preserve the image

dimensions, but light compression will still be applied to the picture.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my Tour & Travel Licence bearing Regd No; /7/2171/735/DTK/L-13/P-07DT. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of Dy Director Tourism Srinagar Kashmir within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Sarfraz Ahmad Kand
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Whereas, I Saleem Zahoor S/o Zahoor Ahmad Dar R/o Ompora Budgam, Kashmir intends to apply in the department of Tourism for Registration of my proposed Travel Unit under the name and style "M/s Audel Tour & Travel" situated at Jehanji Chowk Srinagar, Kashmir under Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011-12.

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Now as per J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011/12, before my case is processed for registration by the Competent Authority, the matter is hereby notified for information of general Public/Financial Institutions/Bank/Organisation, etc for objection, if any and the same should reach to the Deputy Director Tourism Registration (e-mail Id:- ddtreg123@gmail.com) within a period of 7 days from the publication of this notice in leading local newspaper/newspapers of the Valley. No objections beyond a period of 7 days shall be entertained.

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8 Held From Budshah Nagar In Juvenile’s Death Case

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police on Friday claimed to have arrested eight accused persons in a case related to the death of a juvenile in Budshah Nagar area of Srinagar on February 15, 2023.

“On 15/02/2023 Police Station Chanapora received an information that some shopkeepers of Budshahnagar had apprehended some suspects from Sky Park, an under construction building,” a police spokesman said in a statement.

Upon this a police party rushed to the spot and found the shopkeepers had apprehended one juvenile (Name withheld). While questioning the locals and shopkeepers disclosed that four persons were found on the rooftop of the said building and the other three had fled away from the spot, police said.

“The building premises were searched by Police along with the locals / Shopkeepers and one juvenile was found lying near the corner of the building in a critical condition, he was evacuated to hospital for treatment where doctors declared him brought dead. He was identified as Farhan Bashir Wani S/O Bashir Ahmad Wani R/O Iram Lane Budshahnagar. Consequently, a case under FIR number 08/2023 under section 304 IPC was registered and investigation taken up. During the course of investigation, the apprehended juvenile (name withheld) disclosed the

names of other two juveniles (Name withheld) who were also apprehended.”

The apprehended persons disclosed that they had gone inside the building in order to consume some contraband substance. They also disclosed that the shopkeepers along with the building owner had arrived inside the building, which made all of them flee in panic, resulting in the fall of one among them, police said.

Accordingly the building owner along with other shopkeepers namely Sahil Ahmad S/O Mohd Subhan R/O Nowgam, Abdul Rashid Bhat S/O.O.Habib Ullah Bhat R/o Allochibagh, Ab Majeed Fufoo S/O Habib Ullah Fufoo R/O Mehboob Colony, Aijaz Ahmad S/O Gh Ahmad Farash R/o Mehboob Colony and Mohd Yaseen S/O Ab Gani Khan R/o Pulwama were arrested for this rash and negligent act causing death of a juvenile.

Moreover, the other three juveniles in conflict with law (friends of the deceased) were also apprehended formally and were medically examined, where it came forth that all of them were under the influence of contraband substance, police said.

“All the eight accused (including 3 juveniles in conflict with law) were produced before the court of law and necessary remand was obtained. Investigation in the case is in full swing and whole circumstances leading to death will be examined in detail,” police said.

Dr. Farooq Pays Tributes To Sheikh Nazir

Observer News Service

Srinagar : The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Vice President Omar Abdullah on Friday led party functionaries in offering Fatiha and floral tributes to the party stalwart Sheikh Nazir on his 8th death anniversary at his final resting place in Malik Sahib Shrine (RA) in Soura.

Party General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, Provincial President Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq, Senior leaders Choudhary Muhammad Ramzan, Irfan Shah, Central Zone President Ali Muhammad Dar, Political Advisor to VP Mudassar Shahmiri, State Spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar, Provincial Vice Presidents Syed Tauqeer, Ahsan Pardesi, District president Srinagar Peer Afaq, YNC Provincial President Salman Ali Sagar, Muhammad Khalil Bandh, Sheikh Muhammad Rafi, Din Muhammad Chetah, GM Mir Saqi, YNC and Media cell functionaries were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the functionaries, Dr. Farooq said, “Virtues like sincerity, conviction, perseverance, and loyalty, which are rare among the contemporary breed of politicians formed the template of

his personal life and politics. Uncompromising on his principles and beliefs, which he had inherited from Sheikh Sahab, Nazir Sahab was a go-to person for all party workers. He was a strong-spirited person whose contribution towards strengthening the party at the grass-root level will be remembered for all the times to come. On his eighth death anniversary, I pay my humble tributes to him,” he said.

Speaking on the occasion, GS Ali Mohammad Sagar said, “Nazir Sahab was a pillar of strength for the party. He was looked up to for inspiration by all. The best tribute to him on his death anniversary would be to imbibe the zest with which he served the party.”

Provincial President Nasir Aslam Wani said, “Sheikh Nazir Sb belonged to the tribe of those great men and women, who suffered immensely alongside Sheikh Sahab for the restoration of the rights of the people of J&K. On his death anniversary, I pay my earnest tributes to him.”

A commemorative function was held at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan in Jammu where NC’s Provincial President Rattan Lal Gupta led the functionaries in paying tributes to the veteran leader on his death anniversary.

quantity of drugs recovered. Mohd Mustaqeem of Nowshera, Aijaz Ahmad Dar of Kathidarwaza, Umer Ahmad Hakak of Gulabagh, Javaid Ahmad Najar of Hafizbagh, Rayees Ahmad Hakak of Gulabagh. FIR no 21/2023 in NDPS act at Nigeen PS.” Police in a tweet said.



Officials from the wildlife department continue operations at Rawalpura in the city outskirts to capture a leopard. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Thousands Throng Hazratbal Shrine On Friday Following Shab-e-Meraj

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: Thousands of devotees thronged Dargah Hazratbal shrine here to participate in congregational prayers on Friday following Shab-e-Meraj or the night of ascent.

The faithful flocked the sanctum situated on the banks of Dal Lake to have a glimpse of the holy relic or Moi-e-Muqaddas, which is widely believed to be the hair strand of the last prophet of Islam.

Amid recitation of Quranic verses, devotees were seen beseeching with moist eyes for the divine blessing.

Similar congregations were held at other major shrines and mosques in the valley including Asar Sharif Shahr-e-Kalash Pora, Asar Sharif Jenab Sahab Soura, Lal Bazar, Yaqoob Sahab Sonwar and Makhama Beerwah in central Budgam district.

Shab-e-Meraj or night of ascent is observed on 27th of Islamic month of Rajab every year.

Prayers were held at local mosques where preachers delivered lecture on the prophet’s teachings. Reports of congregational gatherings were also received from north and south Kashmir including Bandipora, Baramulla Kupwara, Shopian, Pulwama, Kulgam and Anantnag districts.

But a major gathering including men, women and children, was seen at Dargah, Hazratbal where the devotees offered Fajr and Friday congregational prayers.

Elaborate arrangements were

Elderly Akhoon Continues To Keep Date With Hazratbal

Srinagar: For the past over 50 years, an elderly man Saderbal area of Srinagar has never missed any congregational prayers at Dargah Hazratbal here, which houses the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Abdul Gaffar Akhoon in his 80’s, was among the thousands of devotees, who thronged Dargah Hazratbal shrine today to attend the congregational prayers on Friday following Shab-e-Mehraj.

Akhoon, who walks with the support of a walking stick, said that it has been over 50 years now since he is participating in the congregational prayers at Dargah.

“It gives a sigh of relief whenever I visit here and offer prayers,” he said, adding that there was a time when the lawns and shrine used to remain jam-packed with the devotees on special occasions like today, but

today, such flow of devotees is not visible anywhere.

“I always remain in a ready mode to throng Dargah Hazratbal, especially on the special occasions. I always find peace here. I have never missed Eid and other congregational prayers here except during Covid times,” he said.

However, Akhoon has been finding it difficult to throng Dargah Hazratbal for the past three years as he has met with an accident three years ago, due to which his left leg has suffered injuries. “My health is not good now and after the accident, I find it very difficult to attend the prayers here. However, my friend is carrying me on his two-wheeler and thus helps me to participate in the congregational prayers here,” he said.

“Till I am alive, I would always prefer to attend congregational prayers at Dargah Hazratbal,” he said.

put in place by the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board for smooth gathering of devotees at Dargah

Hazratbal while the Traffic police department had issued a route plan for the smooth traffic movement.

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR

04 Shaban
1444

PRAYERS

FAJR	5:44
ZUHR	12:44
ASR	4:43
Magrib	6:25
ISHA	7:45

This Day In History

- 138 - The Emperor Hadrian adopts Antoninus Pius, effectively making him his successor
- 1497 - Italians troops reconquer Taranto on France
- 1910 - Dalai Lama flees Tibet for British India to escape Chinese troops
- 1916 - Battle of Verdun: German troops conquer Fort Douaumont without firing a shot, the largest and highest fort defending the city of Verdun during World War I
- 1921 - Tbilisi, capital of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, occupied by Bolshevik Russia
- 1921 - The Living Buddha, Hutuktu, is crowned King of Mongolia as the country declares independence from China
- 1925 - Diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union established
- 1930 - Check photographing device patented
- 1932- Austrian immigrant Adolf Hitler gets German citizenship
- 1945 - US aircraft carriers attack Tokyo
- 1954 - Abdul Nasser appointed Egyptian premier
- 1956 - Nikita Khrushchev denounces Joseph Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- 1962 - India Congress Party wins elections
- 1964 - Muhammad Ali [Cassius Clay] TKOs Sonny Liston in 7 for his first world heavyweight championship title
- 1966 - Syrian military coup under General Hafiz al-Assad
- 1969 - Mariner 6 launched for fly-by of Mars
- 1979 - Soyuz 32 carries 2 cosmonauts to Salyut 6 space station is launched
- 1986 - Thousands of Egyptian military police riot, destroy 2 luxury hotel
- 1988 - South Korea adopts constitution
- 1989 - 1st independent blue-collar labor union in Communist Hungary forms
- 1989 - Javed Miandad scores 271 v NZ at Eden Park
- 1990 - Australia beat Pakistan 2-0 to win cricket's World Series Cup
- 1992 - Khojaly massacre: about 613 civilians killed by Armenian armed forces during the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan

From KO Archives

Truce Extended For Three months

Agencies

NEW DELHI - India extended its cease-fire against mujahideen in Kashmir for three months, but warned it would take firm action against any group that continued with violence.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee told parliament, the ceasefire, due to expire on Monday would now be extended until the end of May.

"Having examined all aspects of the question in its totality the government has decided to further extend the period up till the end of May, said Vajpayee today Shiv Sena MPs, including three ministers, boycotted the Lok Sabha when prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made the statement.

A bullet for a bullet should be our policy, party leader in the Lok Sabha Anant Geete, said adding the extension of the ceasefire would result in increased threat to country's security. Our demand is that the cease-fire be immediately scrapped, he said. National Security advisor and principal secretary to Vajpayee, Brajesh Mishra said the extension of cease-fire should not be construed as a sign of weakness and indecisiveness.

We look for friendship and peace with neighbours, but at no time should it be seen as weakness or indecisiveness, Mishra said during an interactive session with the media and academics of the Jawahar Lal Nehru University after releasing a book Kargil and after, challenges for India here.

Mishra said there was strong evidence that showed that Pakistan could control the level of violence in Jammu and Kashmir. What Pakistan has done is stop shelling across the border, but it has continued to support materially and otherwise the militant acts in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mishra ruled out any third party mediation on the Kashmir issue in spite of growing favourable international opinion on India's stand on Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray, a known critic of unilateral cease-fire, has expressed concern over the growing violence in Jammu and Kashmir and dismissed as a foolish idea any possible talks between Vajpayee and Pakistani military ruler Pervez Musharraf.

According to people, it is a foolish idea. What is to discuss when they have a categorical demand for Kashmir... It is not your personal property, it is not a birthday cake. My country is not a birthday cake so you can cut your piece and eat, Thackeray told CNN in an interview.

'Not under pressure' Defence minister George Fernandes said the decision had not been taken under any pressure. It was taken in view of the challenges before the nation and also in consideration of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, he told reporters. He said India extended the cease-fire to provide an opportunity to militants to come forward for talks.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 25 February, 2001)

Police Arrests 5 Drug Peddlers At Dargah

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Police on Friday said they arrested five drug peddlers at Dargah locality of Srinagar. Police have lodged an F.I.R in this regard.

"05 drug peddlers arrested at Dargah. Huge

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The Case for Mother Tongue

Amir Suhail Wani

“The answer shall awaken the readers as to why I maintain that we are receding from the nucleus of our mother tongue and in our sentence of ten words; four are from Urdu, three from English and the remaining in Kashmiri. It must not be inferred that I decry the possibility of absorption of words from other languages, for this process of absorption and assimilation is the vital sign of living and thriving language

Man is a creature whose existence is mediated by language and whose horizon of possibilities is defined by the scaffold of language. “Man acts”, says Martin Heidegger “as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man”. Language concerns us primarily as the denomination of our social transaction with fellow humans, but rarely do we realise the role and ratio of language in shaping us as humans, in making us what we are and being the defining features that set us apart and ahead of our evolutionary cousins from the animal kingdom. The necessity for this quasi-philosophical introduction arises because of our negligence and an attitude of indifference to language – the indifference that can, at times, subterfuge our structures of consciousness and reflect in consequences that are not only social, but existential and psychological in nature, distorting for us not only the picture of external world, but destabilising our imagination of the self and setting us in vertiginous conceptualization of the self and the world. If language sets limits on our imagination (Something known as linguistic determinism), is it any wonder that our imagination will constrict and deflate unimaginably in proportion to the abrasion and metamorphosis suffered by our language?

Let’s tone it down from the high horses of philosophical abstraction and see what is the import of “mother tongue”, what are the contours it proliferates into, what are language conservation movements all about and what are the factors that go into linguistic dynamics. Language is the vehicle of culture and the chariot of civilization, something that guarantees our identity and individuality in the swarm of fusing globalization and helps one to retain his indigenous and native mores in the face of monopolization of civilization and annihilation of cultures and traditions. In the face of gnawing Westoxification and modernization, the native and indigenous cultures and collapsing in the similitude of time worn buildings razed to the ground by shaking earthquake. Now why should one bother so much about preservation and continuation of indigenous cultures and by corollary the local, regional and native languages? These traditions and languages are the repositories, the treasure houses and the guardians and shepherds of traditional wisdom, the mediators of human diversity and cultural multiplicity and inexhaustible source of folklore, poetry, literature, history, biographical material, annals, anecdotes, aphorisms, hagiography and much more. What shall become of this treasure in case people lose their touch with their mother tongue and are no longer in a position to read/write/understand it?

To this end, there are people who understand Kashmiri, few who can read it and very few able to write it – a situation pointing to



“Language concerns us primarily as the denomination of our social transaction with fellow humans, but rarely do we realise the role and ratio of language in shaping us as humans, in making us what we are and being the defining features that set us apart and ahead of our evolutionary cousins from the animal kingdom

crisis and the dwindling interest in the language both at individual and structural level. A saying goes that if you want to eliminate a nation or civilization, make them oblivion of their language and the saying can be seen playing out perfectly in Kashmir, where we seem to be racing with one another as to who abandons the mother tongue first. I shall not claim that the threat is immediate and Kashmiri as a language is destined to vanish but there are other indicators, pressing and immediate, that catch our imagination. How many of us understand Lal’e Ded and how easily do the sayings and couplets of Sheikh Ul Aalam yield to our linguistic understanding? True, they are people of the yore and language must have changed substantially thence. But do we understand Rahman Dar, Ahmad Batwari, Shamas Faqeer; the more recent Amin Kamil, Rehman Rahi, Mehjoor, Samad Mir, Ahad Zargar? The answer shall awaken the readers as to why I maintain that we are receding from the nucleus of our mother tongue and in our sentence of ten words; four are from Urdu, three from English and the remaining in Kashmiri. It must not be inferred that I decry the possibility of absorption of words from other languages, for this process of absorption and assimilation is the vital sign of living and thriving language. What bothers

me, and therefore any conscious Kashmiri is that we tend to metamorphose our language to the degree where it loses its Kashmiri superstructure and in the guise of flexibility revolts against its own essence.

It so happens that people watch the spectre of drowning people and the crowd thus gathered is mistaken as saviours. Similar is the case with conservation and revival movements which rise with the slogan of preserving culture, protecting language and bringing to it the glory and prestige that may place it at par with the lingua franca of the times. Nothing can be farther from the facts and more imaginative, for culture and languages are not remnants of the past in need of dedicated space to be preserved, enriched and perpetuated. They thrive in the wild, in their natural state, undisturbed and in the spirit of their own elan. Any attempt to bring in artificial measures does more harm than good and like the archaeologist who explores a brick while destroying the building, the cultural crusaders bring in more vulnerability and risk than is usually anticipated.

Views expressed in the article are the author’s own and do not necessarily represent editorial stance of Kashmir Observer
The author is a Srinagar based columnist

Is Artificial Intelligence A (Job) Killer?

Marko Robnik-Šikonja

There’s no shortage of dire warnings about the dangers of artificial intelligence these days.

Modern prophets, such as physicist Stephen Hawking and investor Elon Musk, foretell the imminent decline of humanity. With the advent of artificial general intelligence and self-designed intelligent programs, new and more intelligent AI will appear, rapidly creating ever smarter machines that will, eventually, surpass us.

When we reach this so-called AI singularity, our minds and bodies will be obsolete. Humans may merge with machines and continue to evolve as cyborgs.

Is this really what we have to look forward to?

AI’s checkered past

Not really, no. AI, a scientific discipline rooted in computer science, mathematics, psychology, and neuroscience, aims to create machines that mimic human cognitive functions such as learning and problem-solving.

Since the 1950s, it has captured the public’s imagination. But, historically speaking, AI’s successes have often been followed by disappointments – caused, in large part, by the inflated predictions of technological visionaries.

In the 1960s, one of the founders of the AI field, Herbert Simon, predicted that “machines will be capable, within twenty years, of doing any work a man can do.” (He said nothing about women.)

Marvin Minsky, a neural network

pioneer, was more direct, “within a generation,” he said, “... the problem of creating ‘artificial intelligence’ will substantially be solved”.

But it turns out that Niels Bohr, the early 20th century Danish physicist, was right when he (reportedly) quipped that, “Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future.”

Today, AI’s capabilities include speech recognition, superior performance at strategic games such as chess and Go, self-driving cars, and revealing patterns embedded in complex data.

These talents have hardly rendered humans irrelevant.

Chinese Go player Ke Jie reacts during his second match against Google’s artificial intelligence program. May 25 2017. Reuters

New neuron euphoria

But AI is advancing. The most recent AI euphoria was sparked in 2009 by much faster learning of deep neural networks.

Artificial intelligence consists of large collections of connected computational units called artificial neurons, loosely analogous to the neurons in our brains. To train this network to “think”, scientists provide it with many solved examples of a given problem.

Suppose we have a collection of medical-tissue images, each coupled with a diagnosis of cancer or no-cancer. We would pass each image through the network, asking the connected “neurons” to compute the probability of cancer.

We then compare the network’s responses with the correct answers, adjusting connections between “neu-

“

Scientists have seen no improvement in AI’s understanding of what images and text actually mean. If we showed a Snoopy cartoon to a trained deep network, it could recognise the shapes and objects – a dog here, a boy there – but would not decipher its significance (or see the humour).

rons” with each failed match. We repeat the process, fine-tuning all along, until most responses match the correct answers.

Eventually, this neural network will be ready to do what a pathologist normally does: examine images of tissue to predict cancer.

This is not unlike how a child learns to play a musical instrument: she practices and repeats a tune until perfection. The knowledge is stored in the neural network, but it is not easy to explain the mechanics.

Networks with many layers of “neurons” (therefore the name “deep” neural networks) only became practi-

cal when researchers started using many parallel processors on graphical chips for their training.

Another condition for the success of deep learning is the large sets of solved examples. Mining the internet, social networks and Wikipedia, researchers have created large collections of images and text, enabling machines to classify images, recognise speech, and translate language.

Already, deep neural networks are performing these tasks nearly as well as humans.

AI doesn’t laugh

But their good performance is limited to certain tasks.

Scientists have seen no improvement in AI’s understanding of what images and text actually mean. If we showed a Snoopy cartoon to a trained deep network, it could recognise the shapes and objects – a dog here, a boy there – but would not decipher its significance (or see the humour).

We also use neural networks to suggest better writing styles to children. Our tools suggest improvement in form, spelling, and grammar reasonably well, but are helpless when it comes to logical structure, reasoning, and the flow of ideas.

Current models do not even understand the simple compositions of 11-year-old schoolchildren.

AI’s performance is also restricted by the amount of available data. In my own AI research, for example, I apply deep neural networks to medical diagnostics, which has sometimes resulted in slightly better diagnoses than in the past, but nothing dramatic.

In part, this is because we do not

have large collections of patients’ data to feed the machine. But the data hospitals currently collect cannot capture the complex psychophysical interactions causing illnesses like coronary heart disease, migraines or cancer.

Robots stealing your jobs

So, fear not, humans. Febrile predictions of AI singularity aside, we’re in no immediate danger of becoming irrelevant.

AI’s capabilities drive science fiction novels and movies and fuel interesting philosophical debates, but we have yet to build a single self-improving program capable of general artificial intelligence, and there’s no indication that intelligence could be infinite.

Deep neural networks will, however, indubitably automate many jobs. AI will take our jobs, jeopardising the existence of manual labourers, medical diagnosticians, and perhaps, someday, to my regret, computer science professors.

Robots are already conquering Wall Street. Research shows that “artificial intelligence agents” could lead some 230,000 finance jobs to disappear by 2025.

In the wrong hands, artificial intelligence can also cause serious danger. New computer viruses can detect undecided voters and bombard them with tailored news to swing elections.

Already, the United States, China, and Russia are investing in autonomous weapons using AI in drones, battle vehicles, and fighting robots, leading to a dangerous arms race.

Now that’s something we should probably be nervous about.

*By arrangements with
The Conversation*

Why Religion is the Key

Peer Faizan Bashir

If we had the means of going back in time and having a look at the lives of the people, we would be fascinated to see how we differ from them in ways incalculable: ours era has swathes of depressed people, theirs had steel souled; ours wallow in meaningless, theirs found meaning even in an act as simple as meal-sharing. Where things went wrong?

With embracing modern atheistic narratives, it has snatched from us our millennia-cherished treasure, which is to say, religion. When one fails to have something that acts as a stopper to our thinking, we fail to distinguish between the bad and the good. Our wishes turn selfish. Wish to become too competent to care about those who are in pressing need. Wish to gain constant hits of dopamine by indulging in immoral activities. Wish to go to any extent to our satisfaction. And so forth.

From as simple as moving out of our homes to visiting brothels to causing harm to someone should our ego get hurt, humans turn into unrestrained animals. And that's what where we stand at the moment. Fist-fighting, the scene not uncommon in the alleys. Groping, the case reported ever so often. Sucking blood out of the blood-depraved, the deed we least turn our attention to nowadays.

On the spiritual level, we suffer from

the severe consequences. Unbridled rage over subtle issues, leading either to regret or more rage. Nihilistic tendencies, we find no meaning in anything whatsoever, leading to suicidal ideations or sluggishness. Setting way high expectations of things, which are hardly met, one doesn't feel satisfied with day-to-day life, thus meaninglessness takes on its form. Depressive inclinations, when there's no end to our selfish wishes, our psyche suffers disturbances.

Life gets worse beyond imagination. Religion, contrarily, sets a boundary to our thinking and acting tendencies. It gives us a caveat before we consider something. It's an oft-repeated statement that God hates those who are slothful. In the absence of any authority checking up on us, we can easily think ourselves into paying homage to slothfulness. And when we become slothful, our inner-self turns weak - consequently giving birth to our psychological and emotional issues.

There is wisdom in everything that God tells us. Obeying the commandments of the lord means saving ourselves from impending danger. Offering Salah is a reminder to restrain from actions and thoughts that are disastrous to us. Showing mental calmness in times of rage means saving ourselves from regret. Finding joy in what we have means saving ourselves from becoming nihilists. The sooner we realise this, the better.



RELIGION, CONTRARILY, SETS A BOUNDARY TO OUR THINKING AND ACTING TENDENCIES. IT GIVES US A CAVEAT BEFORE WE CONSIDER SOMETHING. It's an oft-repeated statement that God hates those who are slothful. In the absence of any authority checking up on us, we can easily think ourselves into paying homage to slothfulness

World War III Blues And The Surly Bonds Of Earth



Chidanand Rajghatta

Several times over the last few months, hashtag #WorldWarThree has trended on social media platforms. The frequency and urgency of the hashtag and related posts have intensified lately. Some of the posts have been in a lighter vein, distilling what should be an existential global crisis into memes and jokes. While you would think it is hard to make a civilisation-ending point in 280 characters, some have done it effectively with a single visual.

One post showed a man wondering why the sun is glowing late at night — moments before he is eviscerated by a nuclear explosion. Another showed people scrambling out to the far corners of the world, notably New Zealand, hoping to escape nuclear conflagration. There is, of course, the famous poster from the 1970s advising people what to do in case of a nuclear war, including spending all your money before it begins, bending down and putting your head between your legs... and kissing your backside goodbye.

Such laconic jokes aside, fears of

World War III are starting to animate global geo-political discourse. There is a growing view that the world is bumbling or sleepwalking into a nuclear war. US President Joe Biden's high-wire visit to Ukraine on Monday and Moscow's suspension on Tuesday from participating in the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) Nuclear Arms Control talks appear to be part of the slippery slope syndrome that could lead to the conflict intensifying and possibly expanding into Armageddon.

There is plenty of blame and finger-pointing going on. The US — and not necessarily all Americans — blame Russia and its leader Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine for putting the world in jeopardy with a nuclear overhang. Russia and its supporters blame the US and its NATO allies for it, saying they provoked

and backed Moscow into a corner by bringing NATO to its doorstep. Some even blame Ukraine's actor-turned-President Voldymyr Zelensky, even though he is a heroic figure for the allies, saying he is goading the US on to a dangerous path instead of cutting a deal with Moscow.

One of the more fascinating aspects of this debate is the position of the American extreme right, which has adopted the stance of "Ukraine is not our friend; Russia is not our enemy" while largely blaming President Biden for pushing the world towards a nuclear war. While it is President Putin and his aides who have been wielding the nuclear rattle, right-wing commentators in America are attacking Biden for endangering America by allegedly bombing the Nord Stream pipeline, hyping up the dangers of a purported Chinese bal-

loon gone astray, and his "provocative" five-hour dash to Kiev. In their view, it is America which is trigger-happy, not Russia. "The scary thing to me is to hear people like Zelensky and Biden administration officials speak so calmly about World War III," said Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic lawmaker and military vet who had taken a hard right line on the TV talk circuit to become a Biden critic.

One would think there would be more peaceniks on the left given the traditional national security orientation of conservatives in a party that gave America and the world war-mongering neo-cons. Instead, we have the radical right blaming Democrats for leading the US towards a World War III situation, which, in the words of former President Donald Trump, "has never been closer than it is right now". In stunning remarks he delivered on Tuesday, Trump took aim at the US establishment, blasting bureaucrats and politicians in Washington DC and saying, "we need to clean the house

of all the warmongers and 'America Last' globalists in the Deep State, the Pentagon, the State Department and the National Security industrial complex."

"One of the reasons I was the only President in generations who didn't start a war is that I was the only President who rejected the catastrophic advice of many of Washington's generals, bureaucrats, and the so-called diplomats who only know how to get us into conflict, but they don't know how to get us out," Trump raged, calling his opponents "candidates of war" and warning that "we're teetering on the brink of World War III and a lot of people don't see it, but I see it. And I've been right about a lot of things."

Of course, the peace Trump claims he achieved was based on the appeasement of powerful nations riding roughshod over vulnerable countries. A Trump second term, either the one averted in 2020 or a prospective one in 2024, would almost certainly have resulted in/ would result in not only metaphorically nuking the NATO alliance, but also dismantling the traditional US

national security establishment that the former President says is full of globalist warmongers, lobbyists and big defense contractors "pushing our senior military and national security officials toward conflict, only to reward them when they retire with lucrative jobs getting paid millions and millions of dollars."

So, while leaders and politicians on earth are duking it over nuclear matters, here's what is happening at the International Space Station (ISS) some 220 miles above earth. Three astronauts left stranded there by a leak on their return capsule will get back to earth in September in a Russian Soyuz MS-23 replacement. The crew includes two Russian cosmonauts and an American astronaut. Apparently, it requires humankind to slip out of what the poet John Magee called the "surly bonds of earth" and tread the "high untrespassed sanctity of space" to achieve peace.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Khaleej Times



Such laconic jokes aside, fears of World War III are starting to animate global geo-political discourse. There is a growing view that the world is bumbling or sleepwalking into a nuclear war

India Abstains From UN General Assembly Vote On "Lasting Peace" In Ukraine

Agenceis

United Nations: India abstained in the UN General Assembly on Thursday on a resolution that underscored the need to reach as soon as possible a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace" in Ukraine in line with the principles of the UN Charter.

The 193-member General Assembly adopted the draft resolution, put forward by Ukraine and its supporters, titled 'Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine'.

The resolution, which got 141 votes in favour and 7 against, "underscores the need to reach, as soon as possible, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations." India was among the 32 countries that abstained.

The resolution called upon member states and international organisations to redouble support for diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, consistent with the Charter.

It reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, extending to its territorial waters and reiterated its demand that Russia

immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls for a cessation of hostilities.

In the year since Russia's February 24, 2022 invasion of Ukraine, several UN resolutions - in the General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council, have condemned the invasion and underlined the commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

India has abstained on the UN resolutions on Ukraine and consistently underlined the need to respect the UN Charter, international law and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.

New Delhi has also urged that all efforts be made for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an urgent return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

Last September, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had said in his address to the high-level UN General Assembly session that in this conflict, India is on the side of peace and dialogue and diplomacy.

"As the Ukraine conflict continues to rage, we are often asked whose side are we on. And our answer, each time, is straight and honest. India is on the side of peace and will remain firmly there."

Students Planning To Study In US Can Apply For Visa A Year In Advance

Agenceis

Washington: In a much-needed relief for foreign students looking to study in the US, the Biden administration has announced they can now apply for a visa up to a year before their academic term begins.

The State Department, however, said that international students will not be allowed to enter the country on a student visa more than 30 days before the start of their programme.

International students are normally issued two categories of US visas - F and M. "Student (F and M) visas for new students can be issued up to 365 days in advance of the start date for a course of study," the State Department said.

"However, you will not be allowed to enter the United States on your student visa more than 30 days before the start date," it said on Tuesday.

A student can enter the US before 30 days of the start of their programme on a valid visitor (B) visa.

A student visa is issued by US embassies and consulates based on the I-20 form issued by their academic institutions.

The State Department mandates that all students must be registered in the Student and Exchange Visitor System (SEVIS).



The spouse and minor children, if they intend to live in the United States with the student, each need to receive an individual Form I-20 from the academic institution of the student, it said. According to the State Department, foreign students in the United States with F visas must depart the US within 60 days after the programme end date listed on Form I-20, including any authorised practical training.

The new announcement means that universities can accept and issue I-20 forms 12-14 months before term time.

Earlier, visa interviews could be scheduled only up to 120 days, and I-20 forms 4-6 months before the term started.

The update comes after Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services, Julie Stuft told PTI the US is "putting every ounce of its energy" to eliminate the long

visa wait time in India.

India broke the record for most student visas last year and it may do so this year again, she said, adding that India is now number two in the world in terms of international students coming to the United States.

"We are really, we're putting all of our efforts now focusing on this visa for visitors and those, in particular, if you don't need an interview, you don't need to wait very long at all for a visa renewal. And that's also one part of our strategy as well," she said.

There have been growing concerns in India over the long waiting period for first-time visa applicants, especially for those applying under B1 (business) and B2 (tourist) categories. The waiting period of first-time B1/B2 visa applicants in India was close to three years in October last year.

Adani Row: Supreme Court Rejects Request To Gag Media Until Verdict

Agenceis

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea seeking to gag the media from reporting on the Adani-Hindenburg issue till the court pronounces its order.

The Supreme Court had reserved its order on February 20 on a batch of PILs on the recent Adani Group shares crash triggered by the Hindenburg Research's fraud allegations.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud declined the plea of advocate ML Sharma who mentioned the matter.

"We are not going to issue any injunction to the media," the bench also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala said.

The top court on Monday had refused to take on record the suggestion of one of the petitioners and a report published by Forbes in a batch of PILs.

The top court on February 17 had refused to accept in a sealed cover the Centre's suggestion on a proposed panel of experts for strengthening regulatory measures for the stock market. Observing that it wants to maintain full transparency in the interests of investors, it said it would rather not accept the Centre's suggestion in a sealed cover.

"We will not accept the sealed cover suggestion by you because we want to maintain



full transparency," the bench had said.

On February 10, the top court had said the interests of Indian investors need to be protected against market volatility in the backdrop of the Adani Group stock rout and asked the Centre to consider setting up a panel of domain experts headed by a former judge to look into strengthening the regulatory mechanism.

Till now, four PILs have been filed in the top court on the issue by lawyers M L Sharma and Vishal Tiwari, Congress leader Jaya Thakur and activist Mukesh Kumar.

Adani Group stocks have taken a beating on the bourses after Hindenburg Research made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share price manipulation, against the business conglomerate. The Adani Group has dismissed the charges as lies, saying it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

How Fatima's

year, an infant was found dead in the mother's womb soon after the delivery at the Emergency hospital in Qazigund. Again, the medical negligence was blamed for the casualty.

In year 2020 alone, the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir registered 1345 infant deaths as compared to 1670 in 2019.

Although the data on the unborn baby deaths remains work in progress, the valley hospitals register these deaths every now and then. The families majorly blame medical negligence for these casualties.

Meanwhile, at LD Hospital, the couple's trauma didn't end with their daughter's death.

Showkat recalls requesting the doctors for a C-Section, so that the dead baby is taken off the body as soon as possible.

"Later in the night," he recounts, "my wife was kept waiting for hours in the theatre before finally operated upon."

All this happened, Showkat says, when he had already informed doctors about his wife's miscarriage history.

The couple blames senior doctors at LD Hospital for what they call a "wrongful death".

However, the hospital administration pleaded they are not aware of the consequences that led to the death of the unborn child.

"Nobody brought the case to my notice," Dr. Muzaffar Sherwani, Medical Superintendent Lal Ded Hospital, told Kashmir Observer.

"The attendant should come to me so that we will verify the allegations and check what went wrong. They should see me in the office and I assure them I will personally look into the matter."

Amid all this, Showkat is happy about his wife's recovery and sad about his daughter's death.

"I was lost and busy arranging a funeral for my daughter Fatima till today," Showkat says. "Now that I'm coming to terms with what has happened, I will knock on the door of law. I've lodged a complaint in the Governor's Grievance Cell and will make sure my daughter is brought to justice."

PMFBY Extended

Holistic Agriculture Development Plan, we can achieve 12% growth in the agriculture sector, the Lt Governor observed.

Jammu Kashmir is the first region in the country where agriculture reforms are being attempted on such a large scale. It is our endeavour to generate large scale employment in the agriculture sector, ensure economic stability for farmers especially the small and marginal farmers and facilitate the setting up of new agri business enterprises, the Lt Governor said.

We are moving ahead with a strong resolve to bring prosperity in the lives of our farming community and other stakeholders associated with the agriculture and allied sector, the Lt Governor added.

The administration is also promoting entrepreneurship in the sheep and goat sector and encouraging the farmers to adopt millet crops, the Lt Governor said.

The Lt Governor appreciated the Agriculture production and allied departments for providing training to a large number of farmers.

He further emphasized on dedicated and collective efforts to transform J&K into the number one region in terms of farmers' income and sought people's participation in implementation of government policies.

The Lt Governor reiterated the administration's commitment to safeguard the interest of the people.

Citizen participation is crucial to foster economic growth, strengthening of infrastructure and services to achieve the goal of a prosperous society, he said.

Progressive farmers also shared their views on interventions of the government aiming at

growth of Agriculture & Allied Sectors in J&K.

On the occasion, Agriculture Production Department signed an MoU with National Seeds Corporation to provide good quality certified seeds to the farmers of Jammu and Kashmir.

The occasion also witnessed the release of the Milestone Report & Logo of Holistic Agriculture Development Plan and a Coffee table book "Vihan" on 29 projects under HADP by the Lt Governor.

Irrigation schedule 2023-24 for both Jammu and Kashmir divisions was released, besides sanction letters were handed over to beneficiary entrepreneurs under National Livestock Mission.

A dedicated YouTube channel of the Agriculture Production department for awareness of farmers and promoting their success stories was also launched.

People Use Internet

department principal secretary H Rajesh Prasad had said in a notification. The tax rates will be 5% of taxable annual value (TAV) for residential properties and 6% for commercial properties, it stated. In another announcement, the government said that small houses were exempted from the tax and the amount fixed for commercial buildings was nominal. The government announcement, however, evoked sharp criticism from almost all the political parties who termed the move as unjustified.

Civilian Shot at,

Ali Muhammad Ganai, who was killed last year.

"Terrorists fired upon & injured one Asif Ganai S/O Martyr Head Constable Ali Mohd Ganai outside mosque in Hasanpora Tavela area of Bijbehara #Anantnag. He was immediately shifted to hospital for treatment. Area cordoned off. Further details shall follow," Kashmir Zone Police tweeted.

Temperature Rises

for the gateway town of Kashmir.

Pahalgam, he said, recorded a low of minus 3.8°C against minus 4.4°C on the previous night and it was 0.2°C above normal for the famous tourist resort in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Kokernag recorded a low of 2.0°C against 2.1°C on the previous night and it was 2.7°C above normal for the place, the officials said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 3.4°C against minus 3.8°C on the previous night and it was 3.3°C above normal for the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, he said.

In Kupwara town, he said, the mercury settled at minus 0.2°C against 0.3°C on the previous night and it was 0.1°C above normal for the north Kashmir area.

Jammu recorded a low of 10.2°C against 10.1°C on the previous night. It was 0.4°C 'below' normal for J&K's winter capital, he said.

Banihal, he said, recorded a low of 6.8°C (above normal by 5.6°C), Batote 7.8°C (above normal by 4.3°C), Katra 10.5°C (2.0°C above normal) and Bhadarwah 3.2°C (2.6°C above normal).

Ladakh's Leh and Kargil recorded a low of minus 8.8°C and 12.8°C respectively, the official said.

The Met has forecast mainly clear weather at mainly clear to partly cloudy weather at most places in next 24 hours.

On February 26, he said, weather was likely to be generally cloudy with possibility of light rain and snow at scattered places. On February 27-28, he said, the weather was likely to be partly cloudy and on March 1-2, he said it is expected to be cloudy with possibility of light rain and snowfall at scattered places.

While Chillai-Kalan, the 40-day long harsh winter period that started on December 21 and a 20-day-long period called 'Chillai-Khurd' that followed it have ended, Kashmir is under grip of 10-day-long period 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold) which ends on March 1.

Ramban Police

Waqar Batt in presence of ASP Ramban Gaurav Mahajan, SDPO Gool Nihar Ranjan, SHO, Gool Nazir Ahmed under the overall supervision of SSP, Ramban, Mohita Sharma went to the specific locations and pasted the notices on the houses amid drum-beat proclamation in presence of local Sarpanches and Chowkidars."

Through the notice, the owners of these properties have been restrained to 'transfer, lease out, dispose off, change its nature or deal with the said property in any manner without the permission of J&K Police or the Designated Authority', the spokesman said.

Govt Gears Up

utilities are not established in such areas. He directed that necessary assistance may be taken from NDRF in this regard so that they could certify that no utility has been erected in such zones.

He asked the concerned Deputy Commissioners to facilitate all the service providers so that the facilities created at each location are appropriate and sufficient for both the devotees and facilitators. He advised them to work in coordination with each other and use

Despite being geographically distant from Kashmir how Kashmiris in West maintain cultural, social, and emotional linkages with their homeland. Tune-in to latest KO podcast



KASHMIR
OBSERVER

Chadoora Family Seeks Probe Into Son's Mysterious Death

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: A family from Chadoora town of Central Kashmir's Budgam district Friday appealed to the police to solve the case of the mysterious death of their son and arrest the guilty without any delay.

Sameer Ahmed Bhat son of Manzoor Ahmed Bhat, a resident of Dharambagh Kralpora area of Chodura died at Sub District Hospital Chodura under mysterious circumstances.

Parents of Sameer in a letter have claimed that the deceased was carrying Rs 25000, when he left the house to offer late afternoon prayers at a local mosque.

"We were surprised when

informed that the dead body of Sameer is lying at SDH Chadoora. The cash he was carrying was missing. He was brought to the hospital by his two friends. We appeal to the police to investigate the matter so that facts come to the fore," the letter addressed to SHO reads.

The family said they don't know as to what leads to the mysterious death of their kin, but want the police to investigate the matter thoroughly.

"Sameer was the father of two kids including a baby 40 days old. He left home hale and hearty only to return dead," they said adding, if his two friends took him to the hospital why they didn't inform the family and left the hospital without talking to anyone.

Ramban Admin Awards 13.50 Lakh Injury Compensation To Construction Worker

Observer News Service

RAMBAN: The Labor Department Ramban today awarded an injury compensation of Rs 13.50 lakh to Satish Chand Sharma, who was working with the Jaiprakash Associates Ltd.

Satish Chand Sharma, a resident of Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh suffered an injury in his leg during the course of employment which exacerbated to permanent disability in 2018. The injured was working in J&K since 1997 for a span of over 20 years till 2017.

The Assistant Labor Commissioner, Ramban Dr Sushant Mahajan, handed over the cheque of compensation amount to the worker under the building and other construction workers welfare scheme which aims to provide financial assistance

to workers in the construction sector.

The Assistant Labor Commissioner also interacted with the family of the injured person, expressed his grief over the incident and motivated the injured to pursue a positive approach for the future. He also emphasized the importance of providing adequate support to workers in the construction sector.

Dr Sushant Mahajan also highlighted the various initiatives taken by the government to ensure the welfare of workers in the construction sector, including the provision of health and safety measures at worksites and the establishment of a database of registered workers to ensure that they receive timely and adequate support.

70 percent Population In Kupwara Not To Pay Property Tax: DC Kupwara

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara, Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray today assured the people of Kupwara district that the confusion created regarding Property tax is totally baseless and being propagated to mislead the public.

He said about 70 percent people in Kupwara, Handwara and Langate towns do not fall in the property tax category and added that those who fall in the tax category, shall have to pay a small amount, starting from Rs150, that too annually.

The Deputy Commissioner was addressing a presser at Kupwara, after holding a joint coordination committee meeting at Administrative Complex, here.

The Deputy Commissioner convened a joint meeting of Officers and all stakeholders of Kupwara, Handwara and Langate towns including Presidents of MCs, Ward Members, Bar Association, Civil Society Members and media to clear the confusion created by some social media platforms with regard to implementation of Property Tax.

The SSP Kupwara Yougal Manhas, SP Handwara Sheema Nabi, ADC Kupwara Ghulam Nabi Bhat and other concerned were present in the meeting.

The participants were briefed by the Deputy Commissioner and other concerned through PowerPoint Presentation and the clear picture regarding Property tax



ABOUT 70 PERCENT PEOPLE IN KUPWARA, HANDWARA AND LANGATE towns do not fall in the property tax category, Dc said, adding those who fall in the tax category, shall have to pay a small amount, starting from Rs 150, that too annually"

was given out in the meeting.

During the discourse of the meeting, it was stated that there would be no tax on any small house upto 1000 square feet. There would be meager tax for those people who have houses beyond 1500 square meters. Likewise there would also be a meager calculation of tax on small business establishments.

It was also cleared that the tax amount would be used entirely for local area development in the same ward or area from which it is collected.

All the stakeholders present in the meeting also spoke on the occasion and appreciated the administration for giving clear information and facts regarding the property tax. They have also assured the Deputy Commissioner of full support from the people of all the 3 Municipalities.

The Deputy Commissioner also had a press conference in this regard and assured people that the confusion created regarding Property tax is baseless and being propagated to mislead the people.

The Deputy Commissioner cleared that about 70 percent people in Kupwara, Handwara and Langate towns do not fall in the property tax category. He added those who fall in the tax, shall have to pay a small amount, starting from 150, that too per annum.

Nab Extortionists Who Rob Five In Pulwama Village: Locals Urge Police

Observer News Service

PULWAMA: Locals from a Pulwama village Friday appealed to the police to expose and arrest extortionists, who they claimed to have looted cash and cell-phones from 5 persons.

The incident, villagers said, took place in Trichal village, when the victims were heading towards a mosque to offer Fajar (morning) prayers.

Local's five villagers who were heading towards the nearby mosque to offer Fajar prayers were intercepted by

three extortionists, who were probably carrying toy pistols.

"They asked them to show their identity cards, and during frisking, they took the cash and fled away," they said.

The victims have been identified as Tawseef Ahmed Bhat son of Ali Muhammad Bhat, Muzafar Ahmed Dar son of Ghulam Hasan Dar, Javid Ahmed Mohand son of Ghulam Hasan Mohand, Haji Ali Muhammad Dar and Muhammad Shaban Bhat son of Ali Muhammad Bhat.

Extortionists looted Rs 3,000 each from Tawseef

Ahmed and Muzafar Ahmed, Rs 6000 from Javid Ahmed, Rs 30,000 and an ATM and pan cards from the wallet of Haji Ali Muhammad and a cell phone from Muhammad Shaban Bhat.

Besides a cell phone, extortionists looted a total of Rs 42,000 from the five victims.

This is the first such incident in the village that has left the villagers in shock. They have appealed to the police to nab and expose the culprits so that no such act is repeated in the village in future.

Leave Property Tax Decision for Elected Govt: Azad

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Democratic Progressive Azad Party Chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad on Friday said the Jammu and Kashmir administration should reconsider its decision of imposing property tax in the Union Territory and leave such decisions for an elected government.

"I request the government to reconsider this issue and leave it for the elected government," Azad told reporters at the party's office in Sonwar here.

There have been no elections in Jammu and Kashmir for nine years and the people have been waiting for the conduct of elections for all this time so that such decisions are taken by an elected government, the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said.

"Unfortunately, the laws framed by the elected governments in the assemblies are being revoked. My government framed the Roshni Act. I did not frame it in my home.

"It was vetted by the Law department and the Cabinet, it was then discussed in the assembly -- it was a coalition government of many parties -- and the opposition parties also voted for it and the law was enacted," he said.

Once an assembly or the Parliament frames a law, it cannot be revoked like this or by a governor, Azad added.

He said the revocation of the Act affected about 70 per cent of the people in Jammu as well as Kashmir, Hindus as well as Muslims.

Acknowledging that there



could be loopholes in the scheme's implementation, the former Union minister questioned which schemes in the country or the world could be implemented 100 per cent in the right manner.

"It is not the Cabinet or the assembly that implements it on the ground. There are many levels -- right from the patwari to the secretary -- and there can be some misuse. But there are commissions like Vigilance and courts to see whether there is anyone who has misused the scheme through corruption or something else.

"About 10 per cent of the people will always misuse any scheme. Hang them but you cannot end the scheme for the 90 per cent," he added.

It is not the right of the current administration in Jammu and Kashmir to impose the property tax, Azad said.

"It is the right of an elected government. Governor's rule -- whether in the Congress or the BJP -- is temporary and not permanent. There have to be elections and an elected government has to take such deci-

sions," he said.

However, he added, even if there was an elected government, including his party's, it would be impossible to impose taxes in the current situation.

"I will also think 10 times about imposing taxes even as I need taxes for development. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been bearing militancy for the last 33 years. It has cost many lives, unemployment has risen and is more than 10 times higher than in the rest of the country," he said.

The former Congress leader said the government should not feel bad and roll back the decision to impose property tax.

"Even if there is any other government in place, it should not consider imposing this tax for five to six years. Ultimately, the people have to pay this tax. But first, the government should make the people (be) able to pay tax. There is no developmental work going on, our economic situation is worse... Let our tourism, horticulture, handicraft (sectors) get stabilised first," he said.

India Slams Pak for Raising Kashmir At UNGA

Press Trust Of India

UNITED NATIONS: India slammed Pakistan after it referred to Jammu and Kashmir during a special session on Ukraine in the UN General Assembly, terming the provocation as "regrettable and misplaced" and calling out Islamabad's track record of harbouring and providing safe havens to terrorists with impunity.

"I'm taking the floor today to say that India chooses this time not to respond to Pakistan's mischievous provocations. Our advice to the delegate of Pakistan is to refer to our numerous Rights of Reply that we have exercised in the past," Counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Pratik Mathur said.

Mathur exercised India's Right of Reply on Thursday after Pakistan's envoy at the UN Munir Akram referred to Jammu and Kashmir while delivering the explanation of vote on the UN General Assembly resolution on Ukraine during the Emergency Special Session.

"Pakistan has only to look at itself and its own track record as a state that harbors and provides safe havens to terrorists and does so with impunity. Such uncalled for provocation is particularly regrettable and certainly misplaced at a time when after two days of intense discussions, we have all agreed that the path of peace can be the only path forward to resolve conflict and discord," Mathur said.

3 Held With Illicit Timber In Baramulla



Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: Police in Baramulla on Friday arrested three persons, accused of being involved in timber smuggling.

A police party of Police Station Uri arrested three persons identified as Mohammad Rafiq Poswal son of Umer Din, Ishtiyaq Ahmad Thakria son of Mohammad Sager and Abdul Hamid Paswal son of Mohi-u-Din, all residents of Gowhallan and recovered illicit forest timber measuring about 45 Cft from their

possession at Gowhallan Uri.

Accordingly, a case under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Uri and investigation has been initiated.

"Our consistent actions against anti-social elements should re-assure the community members that we are making every effort to keep our society free of crime. Police have resolved to act as per law against those who indulge in criminal activities," police said in statement.

HEIs Undergoes Rapid Transformation Across Country: VC KU

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir Prof Nilofar Khan Friday said that HEIs across the country are undergoing rapid transformation with implementation of National Education Policy-2020 and it becomes very important for academics to remodel their teaching-learning techniques and approaches in accordance with the "new scheme of things".

Remarks were made by the VC KU during 88th Gurudakshina Faculty Induction Program which concluded at the UGC-Human Resource Development Centre, University of Kashmir.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Nilofar Khan chaired the valedictory session of the 30-day FIP as chief guest and spoke about the relevance of such courses in the wake of greater use of "new technology" in the teaching-learning processes in higher educational institutions (HEIs).

Appreciating HRDC for emerging as a strong platform

for advancement of teachers' skills and knowledge, Prof Nilofar said HEIs across the country are undergoing rapid transformation with implementation of National Education Policy-2020 and it becomes very important for academics to remodel their teaching-learning techniques and approaches in accordance with the "new scheme of things".

"Today, UGC's new schemes include offering students two degrees at a time, one in online mode and the other in offline mode. Our University is exploring how best we are able to implement this scheme. Such schemes call for reorientation of teachers' role for which institutions will have to gear up in advance," she said, complimenting the participants, who had joined the FIP from different parts of the country, for completing the course.

Altaf Bukhari Visits Aga Syed Mohammad Hussain Rizvi's residence

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: Bukhari visits the residence of Aga Syed Mohammad Hussain Rizvi to offer condolences to his bereaved family

Srinagar: Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari on Friday visited Sharief Abad residence of Aga Syed Mohammad Hussain Rizvi, to offer his condolences to the bereaved family.

The Apni Party leader was accompanied by the party's District President Srinagar Noor Mohammad Sheikh. Aga Mohammad Hussain Rizvi, a prominent religious and social figure passed away on Wednesday at his residence at Sharief Abad, in central Budgam district.

Bukhari, according to a statement, met the family members of Rizvi and extended his heartfelt condolences to them. He said, "Aga sahib was very close to me and because of the proximity and our family terms, his passing is a personal loss. I share the grief



Late Syed Muhammad Hussain

of the bereaved." "Aga sahib was a noble soul. Throughout his entire life, he contributed his religious and social services to society. May Almighty Allah rest him in eternal peace and grant him the highest place in Jannah." Added Bukhari

Ministry Unhappy With Top Wrestlers Skipping Int'l Meets



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Sports Ministry is apparently livid with the country's top wrestlers for opting out of international events in the wake of their ongoing stand-off with the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and its chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

The top wrestlers including Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia, Ravi Dahiya, Deepak Punia, Anshu Malik and Sangita Mor have skipped UWW Ranking Series events in Zagreb and Alexandria as a probe panel is investigating the sexual abuse allegations against WFI chief, who has stepped aside pending enquiry.

The move has irked the government, which provides financial assistance to the wrestlers under Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS) to support their preparation and training.

"We don't get it why they are not competing when their demands have been met. We need to give time to the committee to complete its probe. It is wrestlers' decision and we can't force anyone but they should not have missed the events," a ministry official said.

The sport is currently being run by a six-member Oversight Committee, led by legendary boxer MC Mary Kom.

The committee is investigating into the claims that Brij Bhushan has sexually harassed several women wrestlers and also intimidates the athletes.

HC Allows Kabaddi Players To Play In Junior C'ship In Iran

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Two teenage Kabaddi players, permission for whose participation in the Junior World Kabaddi Championship (boys) the authorities had withdrawn on account of "minor injuries", have been allowed by the Delhi High Court to represent India in the tournament in Iran.

The high court said the opportunity to play in the world cup is something which every player looks forward to in their sporting career. Both the players are in their late teenage and a decision to not send them to represent India, that too at such a late stage, without proper grounds, would be "demoralising" not only to them but also to the team as a whole, it said.

Justice Prathiba M Singh allowed the petition of 17-year-old Rohit Kumar and 19-year-old Narender, and asked the administrator of Kabaddi body AKFI and Sports Authority of India (SAI) to take immediate steps for getting the requisite documentation in place and take all necessary steps for enabling the petitioners to travel to Iran with the team.

The world cup is scheduled between February 26 and March 5 in Iran's Urmia.

Cummins Opts Out Of 3rd Test Due To Family Emergency

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Australia skipper Pat Cummins has opted out of the third Test against India due to family emergency and his deputy Steve Smith will lead the side in the contest, starting March 1 in Indore. Cummins had flown back home after Australia lost the second Test by six wickets inside three days, last week.

According to cricket.com.au, "The family emergency that saw Pat Cummins dash back to Australia after the second Test will see the fast bowler remain at home for next week's third match."

The Australian skipper's mother "is ill and in palliative care", according to media reports.

It was expected that Cummins would come back and rejoin the squad before the third Test but now there is a possibility that he could skip even the fourth Test. It will be the third time that Smith will lead Australia in Tests since he was reinstated as vice-



captain in 2021 after Cummins took over from Tim Paine. Smith had gone to Dubai with his wife Dani after the second Test and re-joined the Australia squad in Delhi on Thursday evening.

The Australian team is still training at the Ferozshah Kotla Stadium and will leave for Indore on Sunday.

Man United Draw Real Betis In EL, Arsenal Face Sporting



Agencies

Manchester United's reward for getting the better of La Liga leaders Barcelona in the Europa League playoffs is a last-16 clash with another Spanish side Real Betis, while Premier League table-toppers Arsenal will face Portuguese outfit Sporting.

United edged a thrilling play-off with Barcelona 4-3 on aggregate thanks to a 2-1 win at Old Trafford in Thursday's second leg and remain in the hunt for four trophies this season as they continue to improve under coach Erik ten Hag.

The English side are looking to secure their first trophy since their 2017 Europa League triumph under Jose Mourinho, with the Portuguese's current side AS Roma pitted against Real Sociedad in this season's last 16.

Arsenal sailed through the Europa League group stages, winning five of their six group matches and take on Sporting next, who overcame Denmark's FC Midtjylland in their play-off.

Serie A giants Juventus progressed through the playoffs at Nantes' expense thanks to a hat-trick from Argentine forward Angel Di Maria in the second leg in France, and will face Germany's Freiburg next.

Record six-time winners Sevilla are again in the mix, and must negotiate a way past Turkish side Fenerbahce to reach the last eight of this year's competition.

Ramos Ends Int'l Career After Call From Spain Coach

Agencies

MADRID: Spain veteran Sergio Ramos ended his international career on Thursday after being told by the new coach of the national team that Ramos was no longer in his plans.

In his farewell, Ramos criticized coach Luis de la Fuente for deciding not to pick him regardless of his future performances.

The Paris Saint-Germain central defender said he wished he could have played more for the national team and that his time with "La Roja" would have ended in a better way.

"I think this trajectory deserved to end either through a personal decision or because my performance was not worthy of the national team anymore, not because of age or other reasons," the 36-year-old Ramos said.

The former Real Madrid star said he "admired" and was "jealous" of veterans like Lionel Messi, Luka Modric and Pepe, who are still thriving with their national teams.

Ramos had already been left out of the national team by former coach Luis Enrique, and did not make it to Spain's World Cup squad in Qatar last year. (AP)



South Africa Enter Maiden Women's T20 World Cup Final

Press Trust of India

CAPE TOWN: Hosts South Africa qualified for their maiden Women's T20 World Cup final with a six-run win over England in the second semifinal here on Friday.

Opting to bat, South Africa rode on half-centuries by openers Laura Wolvaardt (53) and Tazmin Brits (68) to post 164 for 4.

In reply, England could only manage 158 for 8 as pacer Ayabonga Khaka (4/29) took four wickets to help the hosts cross the line.

For England, star spinner Sophie Ecclestone took three wickets. South Africa will take on Australia in the title clash on Sunday.



BRIEF SCORES:

South Africa 164 for 4 in 20 overs (Tazmin Brits 68, Laura Wolvaardt 53; Sophie Ecclestone 3/22).

England for 158 for 8 in 20 overs (Nat Sciver-Brunt 40, Danni Wyatt 34; Ayabonga Khaka 4/29).

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