

We Are Empowering Our Youth For Tomorrow: LG

'Our Youth Are Converting Opportunities Into Infinite Possibilities To Fulfill The Vision Of Strong & Atmanirbhar J&K'

Observer News Service

Jammu: Asserting that youth are converting the opportunities into infinite possibilities to fulfill the vision of strong & atmanirbhar Jammu and Kashmir, the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said Sunday that his administration is moving ahead in a planned manner & in consultation with stakeholders to provide all the support to our youth to realize their dreams.

Sinha made these remarks while addressing a youth festival at BSF Camp, Paloura, here on Sunday.

Congratulating the winners of the athletics meet and new recruits, the LG reiterated the commitment of the UT Government towards the aspirations of the younger population.



"We are empowering our youth for tomorrow. Ongoing training & skill development and Apprentice Mela are aimed to boost their career prospects and build an entrepreneurship ecosystem. We have ensured financial resources & start-up support services to encourage new business

creation," Sinha said.

He said that his administration is moving ahead in a planned manner & in consultation with stakeholders to provide all the support to our youth to realize their dream.

"We are always ready to listen to the Common man, farmer, **More on P6**

Calls For Countering Misinformation On Property Tax

The Union Territory Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said on Sunday that every person in Jammu and Kashmir has to play an equally important role to effectively counter the misinformation on property tax and convey the truth and facts to the general public. "Administration and citizens have a shared responsibility to build an inclusive &

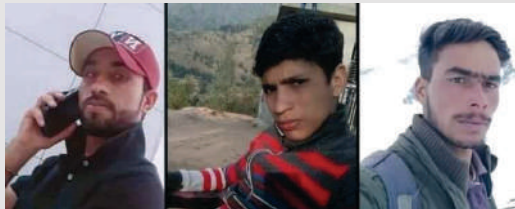
AMSHIPURA STAGED ENCOUNTER

Court Recommends Life Term For Army Captain

Sentence Awaits Confirmation By Army Brass

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Completing general court-martial proceedings in less than a year, an Army court has recommended life imprisonment for a captain in connection with the killing of three men in a 'staged' encounter in Amshipura in south Kashmir in July 2020, officials said here on Sunday.



Captain Bhoopendra Singh was subjected to court martial after a Court of Inquiry and Summary of Evidence found that troops had "exceeded" powers vested under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), they said.

The life sentence is subject to confirmation by higher army authorities, the officials said.

Declining to comment, the army sources said the process involved in such matters is still on. The three men hailing **More on P6**

MeT Predicts Dry Weather Conditions In J&K

Agencies

Srinagar: Upper reaches including Gulmarg received very light snowfall while rains lashed plains even as the weatherman on Sunday forecast isolated very light rain and dry weather over Jammu and Kashmir till March 12.

"The weather is expected to be partly cloudy with possibility of intermittent light rain (light snow over higher reaches)



at isolated places of Kashmir Division in next 24 hours," a meteorological department official here said.

He said mainly clear to partly cloudy with dry weather was expected from March 6 to 12. In last **More on P6**

Avalanche Alert In Three Districts

Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority (JKDMA) on Sunday issued an avalanche alert over higher reaches in three districts of Kashmir division. The DMA said that a 'low' danger level avalanche is likely to **More on P6**

Man Injured In Mysterious Blast Succumbs

Agencies

Srinagar: A middle-aged man from Sopore, who had sustained injuries in a mysterious blast last month, has succumbed to his injuries at SKIMS Soura, officials said Sunday.

They said that Mohammad Jamal Dar (50), a resident of Warpora was undergoing treatment at SKIMS Soura after he received critical injuries from some mysterious blast while digging earth at his kitchen garden in morning hours on February 23, 2023.

After remaining at the hospital for all these days, he eventually breathed his last this afternoon, they said.

The police had already registered a case even as investigations were going on into the incident.

Villagers Near LoC Ecstatic As Indo-Pak Truce Enters Third Year

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Mohammad Yousuf Kohli is constructing a new house for his family of six in a forward village near the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, a dream which he says is fulfilled only because of the ceasefire between India and Pakistan that entered its third year last month.

The border villagers are enjoying peace along the borders by going for normal activities like tending their land and grazing their cattle without the fear of cross-border shelling.

The villagers said they are praying for continuation of the agreement so that the schooling of their children is not affected and benefits of developmental activities reach the last village on the border.

On February 25, 2021, India and Pakistan announced implementation of renewed ceasefire along the borders in Jammu and Kashmir, which came as a major relief to the people living along the LoC



and the International Border. India and Pakistan had initially signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but Pakistan frequently violated the agreement with over 5,000 violations reported in 2020 the highest in a single year.

"For the last four years, my

family was thinking of constructing a new house but we were not able to do this as ceasefire violation was a regular scene in our village," Kohli's elder son Ibrar Ahmd, a college student, told PTI at the construction site in his Niaka village which is close to the LoC.

He said even repairing houses damaged due to shelling was a distant dream as venturing out of the house was like going into the death trap.

"No mason or labourer used to come for work in our village. But things have changed now and we are living our lives in a calm atmosphere with everyone busy in their normal routine," he said.

Niaka is the last village on the Indian side in Tarkundi sector of Manjakote tehsil and was witness of intense shelling before February 2021. Two women of the village died when a mortar shell from Pakistan hit their houses in the village in 2017.

Mohammad Nazir (41), another villager, said it was their dream to live a dignified life, where there is no threat of shelling and firing, children attend their school and farmers work in their fields without any threat to their lives.

"In those times, we were not even able to sleep inside our homes," he said.

Nazir said the **More on P6**



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Earth's Geological Model Reveals Its Past 100 Million Years: Study

Press Trust Of India

Scientists have published new research revealing a detailed and dynamic model of the Earth's surface over the past 100 million years.



To predict the future, we must understand the past. But our geological models have only provided a fragmented understanding of how our planet's recent physical features formed

flowed to the oceans, according to the research. Climate, tectonics and time combine to create powerful forces that craft the face of our planet. Add the gradual sculpting of the Earth's surface by rivers and what to us seems solid as rock is constantly changing. However, our understanding of this dynamic process has at best been patchy.

we must understand the past. But our geological models have only provided a fragmented understanding of how our planet's recent physical features formed," said lead author Tristan Salles from the University of Sydney School of Geosciences, Australia.



To predict the future, we must understand the past. But our geological models have only provided a fragmented understanding of how our planet's recent physical features formed

100 million years, it just doesn't exist," said Salles. "So, this is a big advance. It's not only a tool to help us investigate the past but will help scientists understand and predict the future, as well," said Salles. Working with scientists in France, University of Sydney geoscientists have published this new model in the journal Science. Using a framework in-

corporating geodynamics, tectonic and climatic forces with surface processes, the scientific team has presented a new dynamic model of the past 100 million years at high resolution, down to 10 kilometres, broken into frames of a million years, the research said.

"This unprecedented high-resolution model of Earth's recent past will equip geoscientists with a more complete and dynamic understanding of the Earth's surface," said second author Laurent Husson from Institut des Sciences de la Terre in Grenoble, France.

"Critically, it captures the dynamics of sediment transfer from the land to oceans in a way we have not previously been able to," said Husson. Salles said that understanding the flow of terrestrial sediment to marine environments is vital to comprehend present-day ocean chemistry.

"Given that ocean chemistry is changing rapidly due to human-induced climate change, having a more complete picture can assist our understanding of marine environments," he said. The model will allow scientists to test different theories as to how the Earth's surface will respond to changing climate and tectonic forces, the research said.



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6.50 Cr Project Report For Revival of Naqshband Sahib Shrine Finalized

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A detailed Project Report of Rs 6.50 crore has been prepared for the beautification and renovation of the Khankah Naqshband Sahib (RA) at Nowhatta area in the old city on Sunday.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad visited Khankah Naqashband Sahib (RA) to finalize the detailed project report for restoration, revival, preservation and maintenance of Architecture and Heritage of Religious Places/ Assets in the District.

The Deputy Commissioner visited Khankahi Naqashband Sahib(RA) in Nowhatta area in the old city and took stock of the measure being taken for development of 500 years old Historic Khankahi Naqashband Sahib (RA), one of the finest examples of Kashmiri ancient and medieval wooden architecture.

On the occasion, the DC was informed that a detailed Project Report of Rs 6.50 crore has been prepared for

the beautification and renovation of the Khankah.

The DC directed the concerned to take up the measure for physical works so that all works proposed in DPR are completed at the earliest. He also for speeding up the process of land acquisition undertaken to expand the Khankah compound.

The DC further asked them to construct a washroom at the shrine premises and ornamental grill around the Khanqah of Naqashband Sahib (RA).

While interacting with the local members of the Khankah, the DC assured them that all possible measures will be taken to further beautify the Khanqah of Naqashband Sahib (RA) on heritage pattern and upgrade the facilities for convenience of the devotees.

Besides, Chief Planning Officer, Mohammad Yaseen Lone, the Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by the Executive Engineers of R&B, officers of Archives, Tourism and other concerned Departments.

Two Youth Held For Stalking, Harassing Girl In Srinagar

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Two youths were arrested here on Sunday for allegedly stalking and harassing a young woman, police said. The incident happened in the Dalgate area on Saturday, they said.

The two youths were riding a scooty and made inappropriate gestures and comments against the girl, a police spokesperson said.

The girl had posted about the incident on her social media account and subsequent-

ly also approached the Nehru Park police post with a written application, the spokesperson said.

An FIR was lodged against the two accused and they were arrested, he said.

Their vehicle has also been seized and the youths will be produced in court for getting their police remand, he added.

Srinagar police reiterate its resolve to fight against harassment of women and the general public is advised to report all such incidents to police for action, the spokesperson said.

Pregnant Woman Dies At SKIMS, Family Alleges Medical Negligence

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Family members of a pregnant lady, who died at Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura on Sunday, alleged that she died of medical negligence by hospital authorities.

The family members of the deceased woman identified as Ulfat Jan resident of Wakura Ganderbal held a protest at SKIMS Soura against hospital authorities alleging that the lady died due to the negligence of the doctors as she was not given proper

treatment at the major referral hospital of the valley.

The relatives of the deceased lady have demanded stern action against the doctors, who they alleged were supposed to treat the patient.

Medical Superintendent of SKIMS, Dr Farooq Jan said “An enquiry has been initiated in this regard and the committee has been asked to submit the report within five days.

Whosoever will be found involved in any kind of negligence will be dealt with strictly as per law,” Jan added.

Expedite Process Of Land Acquisition Cases: DC Srinagar Tells Officers

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad today stressed on time bound disbursement of land compensation in favor of the affected land owners.

In order to review the status of Land acquisition cases for various government projects under execution in the District, a meeting of concerned Officers was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner(DC), Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad here at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex.

Besides, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Syed Shabir Ahmad, the meeting was attended by Collector PWD Department/CRP, Collector PDD/Transmission, Collector Land Ac-

quisition Railways, SDM East, SDM West, Collector PHE/Irrigation & Flood Control, Collector LCMA, Collector SDA, Collector, ERA and other concerned.

At the outset a threadbare discussion was held on land acquisition cases and the Deputy Commissioner was briefed about the present status of the land acquisition issues and action taken by the concerned authorities.

On the occasion as many as 82 land acquisition cases were taken up in the meeting and the Deputy Commissioner sought case wise details and directed the concerned Officers to expedite the process and resolve the issues, if any, so that developmental works are completed in stipulated time.

He further directed for maintaining inter Department coordination for expeditious resolutions of cases.



Gardeners plant flower saplings at Tulip Garden Srinagar ahead of its opening next month- Photo: Abid Bhat/ KO

RAMADAN-2023 20 Rakat Taraweeh, Khatm-E-Quran In Waqf Controlled Shrines, Mosques

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board Sunday said that 20 ‘rakat’ (prescribed movements) will be offered at all Waqf administered mosques and shrines in the valley with Khatme Quran (recitation of holy Quran from beginning to end) during the upcoming month of Ramadan.

Waqf Board, which is the custodian of all major shrines and mosques in the Union Territory will enhance monthly remuneration of all Imam’s, Kahteeb’s and Muazzin’s performing religious duties at Waqf administered shrines and mosques by 30 percent.

The decision in this regard was taken by the J&K Waqf Board Chairperson, Dr Daraksha Andarbi during a conference of Waqf Board Imam’s at Waqf head office here.

“20-Rakats Taraweeh with Khatme-Quran to be ensured at all shrines, Masjids during Ramadan” Andrabi tweeted.

She also said that those hav-

ing encroached upon the Waqf land will face law in case they won’t turn up to the Waqf office for talks. The Waqf Chairperson also said that the board is mulling to perform congregational Nikah (marriage) of 1000 girls and the efforts in this direction are on.

tion of all Imams’, Khateeb’s and Muazzin of Waqf administered shrines and mosques by 30 percent,” she told reporters after chairing the meeting.

“Waqf belongs to the people and we are its caretakers, those who think will encroach upon its land or any property will face

“The decision in this regard was taken by the J&K Waqf Board Chairperson, Dr Daraksha Andarbi during a conference of Waqf Board Imam’s at Waqf head office here.

She said Waqf was essentially established to lend a helping hand to the poor and backward section of the society.

“Today we called a meeting of all Imam’s at Waqf Board office and a threadbare discussion was held with all the representatives. We have decided to enhance the monthly remunera-

tion of all Imams’, Khateeb’s and Muazzin of Waqf administered shrines and mosques by 30 percent,” she told reporters after chairing the meeting.

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HIGHWAY STATUS

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

 HIJRI CALENDAR 13 Shaban 1444	PRAYERS	
	FAJR	5:31
	ZUHR	12:43
	ASR	4:50
	Magrib	6:34
	ISHA	7:54

This Day In History

- 1953 - Malenkov becomes chairman of the USSR
- 1957 - Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) declares independence from UK
- 1957 - Centenary of Dred Scott slavery court decision marked by rediscovery of Scott's grave
- 1959 - Farthest radio signal heard (Pioneer IV, 400,000 miles)
- 1960 - President Sukarno disbands Indonesia's parliament
- 1964 - Constantine succeeds Paul I as king of Greece
- 1975 - Algiers Accord: Iran and Iraq announce a settlement of their border dispute.
- 1981 - France performs nuclear test at Mururoa atoll
- 1981 - Soyuz 39 returns to Earth
- 1984 - Twelve-month-long strike in British coal industry begins.
- 1987 - 6.8 earthquake hits Ecuador, kills 100
- 1991 - Following Iraq's capitulation in the Persian Gulf conflict, US President George H. W. Bush told Congress that "aggression is defeated. The war is over"
- 1994 - United Arab Emirates beat Kenya by 2 wickets to win ICC Trophy
- 1994 - Referendum in Moldova results in the electorate voting against possible reunification with Romania.
- 1998 - First time the British Union Flag is flown over Buckingham Palace (following the controversy after Princess Dian's death; formerly the only flag flown was the Sovereign's standard indicating the monarch's presence.)
- 2012 - 9,000 residents are evacuated from Wagga Wagga, Australia, as the Murrumbidgee River threatens to overflow
- 2013 - Syrian rebels capture Ar-Raqqah, their first major city
- 2013 - Microsoft is fined €561 by the Euro Commission for not providing alternative web browsers
- 2013 - 9 people die after a plane crashes after being ensnared in power lines in Peru
- 2014 - Crimean parliament votes unanimously to make the Crimea part of Russia
- 2015 - NASA's Dawn space probe enters orbit around the dwarf planet Ceres
- 2017 - US President Donald Trump signs his second executive order barring travelers from 6 mostly-Muslim countries for 90 days but leaves out Iraq
- 2018 - "Highest overdose death rates ever recorded in the US", 142,000 overdoses in 2016-17 period according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- 2018 - Sri Lanka imposes first nationwide state of emergency since civil war after unrest between Sinhalese and Muslim areas in Kandy District

From KO Archives

Militant Firing In Kokernag, Farooq Cancels Poll Rally

Observer News Service

Srinagar- Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah cancelled his visit to Kokernag township of south Kashmir following firing by unidentified gunmen near the venue of his election rally. Farooq was scheduled to address public meeting there, in support of National Conference nominee for Anantnag constituency Yusuf Teng on the concluding day of hectic electioneering. However before Farooq Abdullah could reach the venue of the meeting, gunmen opened fire with people gathered their running or their safety.

Immediately after the incident, the security advisors of Farooq Abdullah advised him against visiting Kokernag which the chief minister agreed to.

This is the second such incident during electioneering by Farooq Abdullah. About fortnight ago, soldiers successfully detected and defused a powerful explosive device planted in Ganderbal, from where chief minister's motorcade was to pass.

After cancelling Kokernag meeting, Farooq addressed a thinly attended public meeting at Lal Chowk of Anantnag town. He was also scheduled to address a similar meeting in Bijbehara, but the same could not be held as the town observed complete strike, reports reaching here said.

(Kashmir Observer, 06 March, 1998)

KASHMIR
OBSERVER

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ADVENTURES IN ARCHIVES

Schools For Scandal

The unfortunate tendency of being captivated by gloss and losing sight of the dross, howsoever glaring the latter might be, has engendered a crippling sense of self-satisfaction that threatens to choke the very bloodstreams of social progress in Kashmir. Indeed, the signs have been more than evident for a long time in the most critical sector of school education. If, on the surface, the results of high school examinations expose the absolute incompetence of the massive government apparatus engaged in imparting primary and secondary education, a closer look reveals a much more disturbing scenario – even the students cleared by the staterun system barely make the grade in rudimentary literacy. The classes that have been, and are, ruling Kashmir, both in the bureaucratic and the political spheres, cloak their abysmal performance on this front in the achievements of a handful of private schools, totally ignoring the colossal waste of public funds in running a vast network of under-performing institutions.

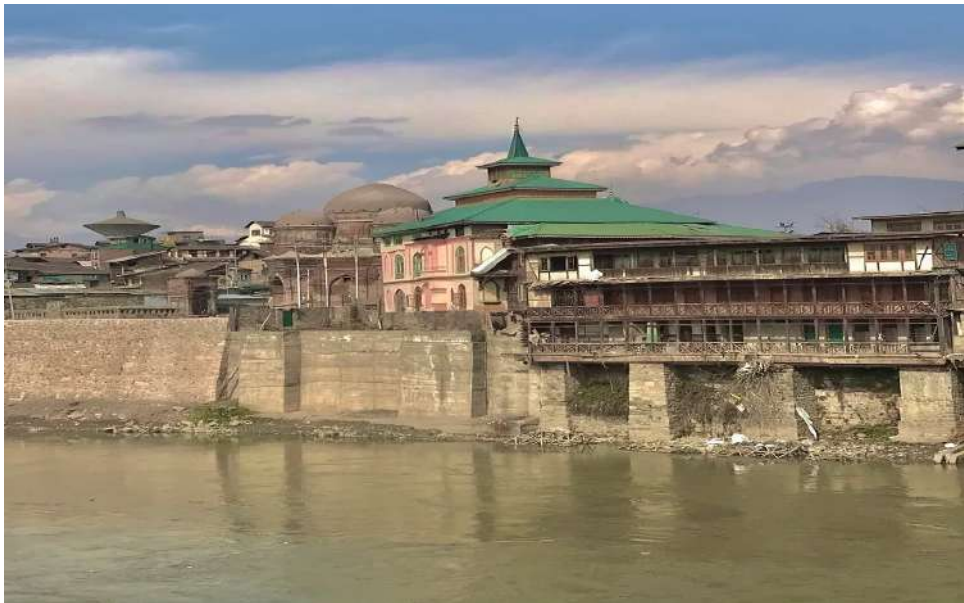
Howsoever sound the system may appear on paper, on the ground it is as rickety and run-down as the school houses spread all over rural Kashmir that are chronically starved of staff and proper equipment. Reports of undermanned schools, particularly at the primary level, are a routine feature from rural Kashmir, while institutes in the city appear to bursting at the seams with unneeded staff, making a mockery of the department of education which has grown bloated and unwieldy down the years. Schools in far-flung areas function at the sweet discretion of their often lone teachers, and instances of just one or two tutors handling multiple classes and hundreds of students are common. The standards of such schools and the education they impart can well be imagined.

The large-scale recruitments the government makes for teachers posts make such a situation incomprehensible, unless of course it is done pure on political considerations with absolutely no thought to the quality and the suitability of the manpower engaged for a highly sensitive and critical enterprise. By an ironic twist of circumstance, the teaching profession has been turned into the very last resort of the capable and the destination of choice for those who are unable to fit in anywhere else. When the screening process for entry into this vital sector - on which the entire social edifice rests - should have been highly stringent, it has been turned into a hit-and-trail exercise with the barest minimum regard to the talent, skill and temperament required of a teacher. Societal trends guided by the political elite have shorn the teaching profession of its status and sanctity, turning it into just another vocation with little to distinguish it from, say, hawking garments on the streets. The adventurous, glamorous and challenging enterprise of kindling, illuminating and enlightening tender young minds has become a lack-luster and uninspiring activity devoid of a sorely-needed missionary spirit, mainly because successive leaderships (if they deserve that name) have been too occupied with other, more lucrative, concerns to bother about what is the corner-stone of the well-being of a people. This has had a direct bearing on the condition of our schools and their performance. Having been active partners in ruining the state-run school system, the ruling classes now abdicate all responsibility by dumping the educational sector into the private lap.

This is seen in the lavish support to fashionable and prohibitively expensive private schools and the mushrooming of lesser copycats who are making a financial killing in the absence of a dependable and affordable public structure. It is nothing short of a scandal that parents should avoid sending their wards to government schools on account of the latter's dismal record, and prefer seedy and crowded private options no matter how mercenary they are. The authorities are preying on the vulnerabilities of the public by letting the situation drift in the hope that with time the growing, engineered preference for private schools would phase the government system out of existence. This is a classic case of the government abdicating its basic responsibility towards a society comprised largely of low-income, rural and agrarian classes for whom state-run schools were the mainstay of hope. Any government worth the name would take immediate remedial steps to improve the standing and image of government schools by engaging trained and motivated manpower, and allocating generous funds to equip them with the wherewithal to deliver quality education. Strict, uncompromising monitoring of schools coupled with adequate deployment of manpower even in remote areas is essential to raise the standard of teaching and restore public confidence in the system.

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

IN MY OPINION



Shallowing Mystical Heritage Through Oriental Views

Shoaib Mohammad

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

M Miftah

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

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

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

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

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

Similarly, re-visualising a couple relaxing against the juxtaposition of a revered graveyard, doing campaign shots in the inner sanctum of the women's section of Khankah Maula, using persons from socially underprivileged sections as backdrop for a 'bright heavily embellished traditional outfit' and staging shots of veiled women in public spaces, is reimagining spaces and people without an ounce of respect and ignorance of the stake in the community they are photographing. Doesn't this amount to violation of intimate spaces and undermining the dignity of the believers and subjects as we caricature them to suit our commercial and artistic interests?

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

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

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

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

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

On Reading Abdullah Saeed's 'The Qur'an: An Introduction'



Dr Tauseef Ahmad Paray

Title: The Qur'an: An Introduction
Author: Abdullah Saeed
Publication Details: Oxon, RN and New York: Routledge, 2008
Pages: xvi+268; ISBN: 9780415421249

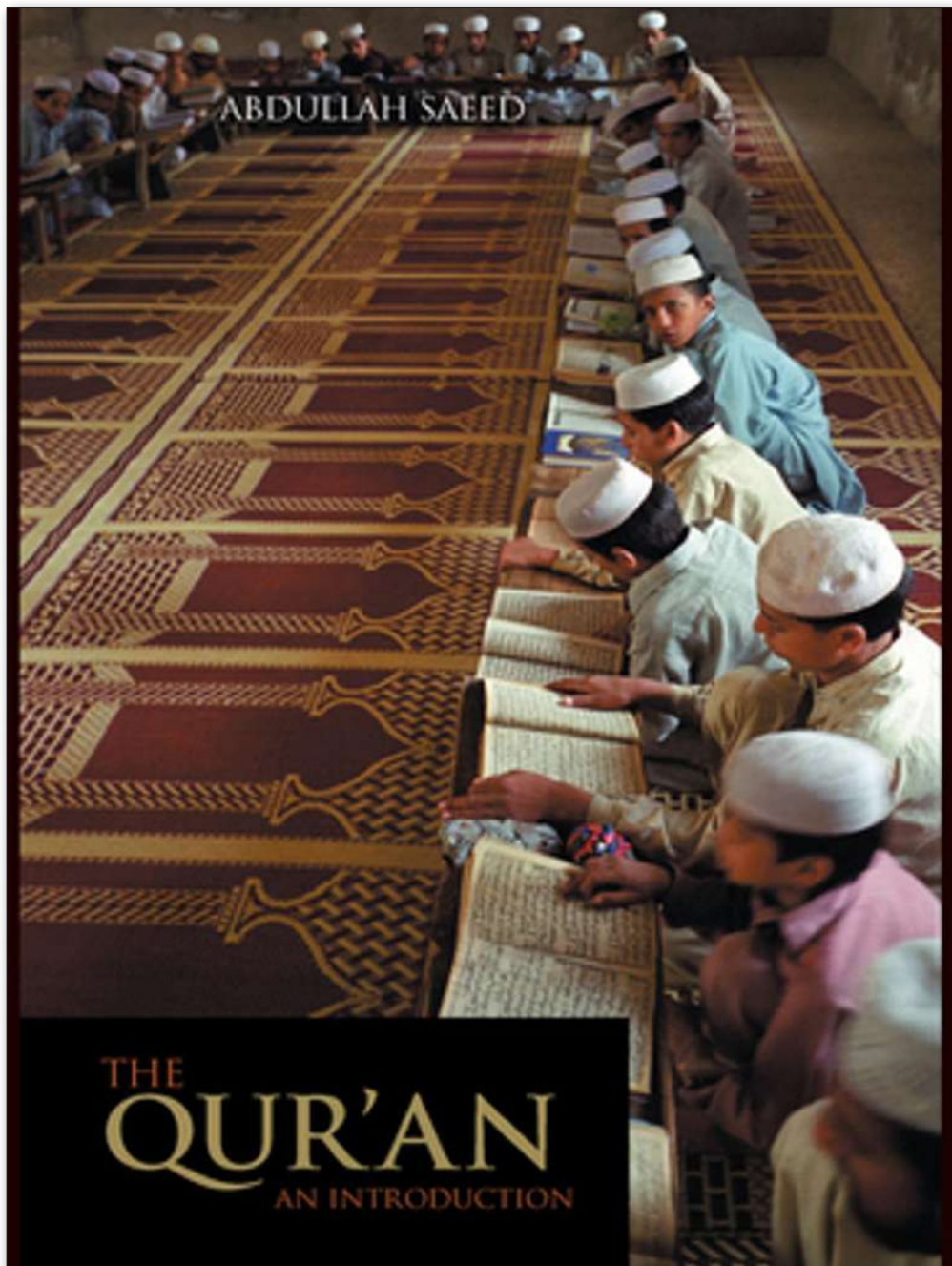
The Qur'an: An Introduction' provides a broad and engaging introduction to the study of Qur'an in a simple and concise manner'

Professor Abdullah Saeed, an internationally recognized Muslim thinker and academic, has made a significant contribution to the different aspects of Qur'anic Studies and important issues of modern Islamic thought. Born and brought up in the Maldives, he holds higher degrees from Saudi Arabia and Australia; he completed his PhD in Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne (UoM) Australia, in 1992, and since then, has been actively involved in the development of Islamic Studies in the same University. In 2004, he was appointed as the 'Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies', and in 2010, was elected Fellow of Australian Academy of Humanities. He is also the Director of the National Centre for Contemporary Islamic Studies at UoM. A strong supporter of 'reform of Islamic thought', he has published widely on a range of issues concerning modern Muslim thought. His publications cover Qur'anic hermeneutics, the (re) interpretation of the Qur'an, ijihad and Islamic law reform, Muslims in the West, extremism in Muslim societies, Islam and human rights, and other allied issues and themes. These are also his broad areas of research interest as well.

In the area of Qur'anic Studies, Saeed's major works (most of them published by Routledge) include: Contemporary Approaches to the Qur'an in Indonesia (2005); Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach (2006); The Qur'an: An Introduction (2008); Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist Approach (2013); and Contemporary Approaches to the Qur'an and its Interpretation in Iran (with Ali Akbar; 2020); etc.

Below is presented an assessment of his The Qur'an: An Introduction, which is one of his important books (in this specific area) for two reasons: firstly, in this book he has heavily relied on his previous works, and secondly, he has tried to make it 'as accessible and relevant as possible' to provide a broad and engaging introduction to the study of Qur'an.

Providing a student-friendly guide to the many ways in which the Qur'an can be read, The Qur'an: An Introduction is a concise introduction to all aspects of the Qur'an: history, understanding and interpretation, providing coverage of both pre-modern and modern periods; plenty of examples to illustrate key points and aid student understanding; and summaries, timelines and a glossary. It gives an overview of the rich interpretive traditions from the time of the Prophet (pbuh) to the present day and examines the Qur'an in the Western scholarship as well.



SAEED'S AIM AND OBJECTIVE for writing this book was to design, in an easy and accessible language, a basic introductory work, for both Muslims and Western non-Muslim students. In his own words: "Many valuable works have already been written about the Qur'an; some of these deal mainly with classical Islamic principles of interpretation and understanding; others are written by Muslim scholars for a Muslim audience, and some are written by Western scholars for a Western audience"

Written in an easy and accessible language, it is a basic introductory work, designed for both Muslims and Western non-Muslim students.

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of these perspectives by providing a holistic overview of the Qur'an, its place in history and its role in the life of Muslims today" (p. xiv).

Consisting of twelve (12) chapters, the book is preceded by Acknowledgements and Introduction and ends with Glossary, Bibliography, and Index. Some of the major themes, issues and topics covered in this book are: the historical context in which Qur'an was revealed, and the ways in which Qur'an has been understood as both 'revelation and scripture'; the important issue of the Qur'an's compilation, providing views of the traditional Muslim scholars and more recent scholarship on the subject; major themes of the Qur'an; Qur'an in

day to-day life of 'ordinary Muslims'; the history of the 'Western scholarship' on Qur'an vis-à-vis recent developments in Qur'anic studies; 'translations' of the Qur'an; Qur'anic view of 'Other Scriptures'; the 'complex subject of interpretation': exegesis, and its various types, an overview of the development of tafsir-writing as a discipline: from classical period to the modern times; contribution of some prominent scholars who are developing and have developed some 'innovative ways to interpret the Qur'an's message for the modern world' like Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud, Muhammad Shahrour, Muhammad Arkoun, and Khaled Abou El-Fadl.

A significant feature of this book is that a list of 'recommended reading', books and articles (with a brief assessment of the main theme of that work), for those readers who wish to 'enhance their knowledge of topics covered in this book' is provided at the end of each chapter. Also, each chapter provides, very briefly (and in points), an introduction of what is present in that particular chapter or what the chapter discusses, and is followed by a 'summary' of some of the main and important points discussed in each chapter.

For example, some of the important points put forth in Chapter 1, "The Qur'an in its context", are: "The message of the Qur'an is embedded in the specific context of seventh-century Arabia, and is expressed in a language and symbolism that its first audience understood"; "Many elements of pre-Islamic culture and society were not rejected entirely by the Qur'an, but were accepted in a modified form"; and "Many teachings of the Prophet were socially progressive for his time" (p. 18).

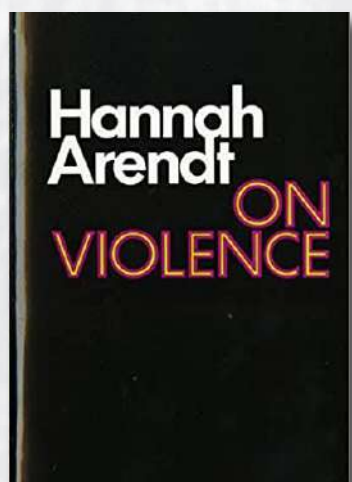
Similarly, in Chapter 6, the discussion revolves around the "Western scholarship and the Qur'an", and is divided into classical (Early), medieval (Later), and contemporary eras. Thus, the important points highlighted in this chapter include: Early Western scholarship on the Qur'an was largely polemical; Alternative Western theories about the origins of the Qur'an have questioned when it was composed, the identity of its author and what language it was originally written in; Today, the number of collaborative scholarly works on the Qur'an is increasing, as is the number of Muslim scholars based in Western institutions who combine traditional and modern approaches in seeking to understand the Qur'an (p. 113).

Moreover, in its last chapter it highlights "Modern interpretations of the Qur'an", and focuses on the works of many prominent scholars—like Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud, Muhammad Shahrour, Muhammad Arkoun, and Khaled Abou El-Fadl—and argues that Rahman "played a key role in developing notions associated with a hermeneutical approach within Islamic studies" and is, thus, described as "arguably the first modern reformist Muslim scholar to link the question of the origin of the Qur'an to both its context and interpretation"; Wadud is "a central figure in the formation of a 'hermeneutics of equality'" and Arkoun is a "pioneering figure of contemporary Islamic hermeneutics"; Shahrour, who is "influenced by postmodernism", emphasizes "the need to differentiate between the divine and human understandings of reality"; and El Fadl is a "vocal opponent of literalist interpretations of the Qur'an" (p. 222).

Thus, keeping in view the themes and topics of this book, the author justifies fairly his claim that it is designed "for Muslims and non-Muslim students" equally to serve as "a student-friendly guide to one of the most influential and important religious scriptures of the contemporary world" (p. i). Thus, taking into consideration all these aspects—coverage of the topics, broad-ranging, lucid, engaging and preciseness—Saeed's The Qur'an: An Introduction may fairly be described as a broad and engaging introduction to the study of the Qur'an.

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READ WITH KO



An analysis of the nature, causes, and significance of violence in the second half of the twentieth century. Arendt also reexamines the relationship between war, politics, violence, and power. Annotation An analysis of the nature, causes, and significance of violence in the second half of the 20th century.

Benefits Of Digital Distractions?

Marion Thain

We are in the midst of a battle for our attention. Our devices have hijacked our brains and destroyed our collective ability to concentrate – to the extent that we're even seeing the emergence of a "goldfish generation". That, at least, is the story that's increasingly being told. But should we be paying attention to it?

Journalist Johann Hari's new book, Stolen Focus, has just joined a chorus of voices lamenting the attention crisis of the digital age. His and other recent books reflect, and perhaps fuel, a public perception that our focus is under attack.

Indeed, in new research by the Policy Institute and Centre for Attention Studies at King's College London, we found some clear concerns. Faced with the kinds of findings that arose from our research, it is easy to be nostalgic about a past that existed before the digital revolution. But new technologies have been blamed for causing crises of distraction long before the digital age, so how should we re-



spond to the current challenges?

An attention crisis?

We surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2,093 UK adults in September 2021, asking about their perceptions of their attention spans, their beliefs in various claims about our ability to focus, and how they use technology today.

Half of those surveyed felt their attention spans were shorter than they used to be, compared with a quarter who didn't. And three-quarters of participants agreed we're living through a time where there's non-stop compe-

tition for our attention from a variety of media channels and information outlets.

The distraction caused by mobile phones in particular appeared to be a real issue. Half of those surveyed admitted they couldn't stop checking their phones when they should be focusing on other things – and this wasn't just an issue for the young. Despite the generational stereotypes of teenagers glued to their screens, a majority of middle-aged people said they struggle with this too.

The Conversation

IIM Jammu Annual Fest- “EMPYREAN'23” closes on a high note

OBSERVER NEWS SERVICE

Jammu: Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu under the leadership of Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu conducted its annual cultural and management extravaganza, “EMPYREAN'23” from March 3-5, 2023.

The fest was a unique blend of entertainment and learning, showcasing the brightest and most artistic minds in the nation. The event was formally inaugurated on 3rd March 2023 by Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu in presence of Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean Academics, Cmdr. Kesavan Baskaran, Chief Administrative Officer, IIM Jammu.

The three-day extravaganza featured a plethora of cultural events such as Battle of the Bands, Solo Singing, Fashion

Show, Group and Solo Dance performances, and an exciting Gaming Arena. From the 03rd to 5th March 2023, the star attractions featured EDM Night by Pro Bros, comic opera by Shri Devesh Dixit, International EDM by Kevu, and Bollywood night by a popular music duo Meet Bros from the Indian Entertainment sector.

The events provided a platform for the participants to showcase their business acumen and compete with like-minded individuals from different backgrounds. Participants had the hands-on opportunity to showcase their talents and compete with the best of the best from IIMs, IITs, and other institutes across the country. The event was graced by many dignitaries from the Govt and Corporate Sector.

In addition to the cultural events, EMPYREAN'23 also

featured an array of management games ranging from Buzz HR, AgriQuiz, Consulenza, Healthbuzz, Story Telling, Adflix, IPL Auction, Entrepreneur Quiz, BizzQuiz, and Entrepreneur.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu said, “Empyrean, the annual cultural festival of IIM Jammu, was an event that brought together a diverse group of individuals to celebrate and appreciate the various cultures represented within the institute.”

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean Academics, IIM Jammu said, “Empyrean 2023 is always a fun and memorable experience that brought the community together and showcased some of the best artistic talents from India and abroad.”

The entire event was coordinated by the Empyrean-Student committee of IIM Jammu in

close coordination with Dr. Ashish Kumar, Chairperson, Student Affairs, Dr. Apurva Yadav, Co-Chairperson, Student Affairs, and Student Affairs office, IIM Jammu.

The event witnessed performances by renowned national and international artists, where the participants got a chance to interact with industry experts and academicians through various talks and panel discussions.

With a wide range of events, EMPYREAN'23 was one of its kind experiences that combines entertainment and learning. The event was supported by Tata Motors, Audi, Hero, Benelli, Kawasaki, Central Bank of India, Union Bank of India, Canara Bank, Indian Oil Corporation, Cry Foundation, JK Tourism, Campus Express, Radio Mirchi, Kailas Fashion Studio and Espa Events.

Opposition Leaders Write To PM On 'Misuse' Of Central Agencies; Slam Sisodia Arrest

Press Trust of India

Hyderabad: Nine opposition leaders, including Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee, Arvind Kejriwal, K Chandrasekhar Rao, have written a joint letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging “blatant misuse” of central agencies against members of the opposition.

The other signatories of the letter are Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Tejashwi Yadav (RJD), Sharad Pawar (NCP), Farooq Abdullah (Jammu & Kashmir National Conference), Uddhav Thackeray (Shiv Sena, UBT) and Akhilesh Yadav of Samajwadi Party.

“The blatant misuse of central agencies against the members of the opposition appears to suggest that we have transitioned from being a democracy

to an autocracy the misuse of central agencies and constitutional offices like that of the Governor - to settle scores outside of the electoral battlefield is strongly condemnable as it does not bode well for our democracy,” the letter said.

Highlighting Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's arrest by the CBI in connection with the irregularities in Delhi Liquor Policy, the leaders said the charges against the AAP leader were “outrightly baseless and smack of a political conspiracy”.

His arrest has enraged people across the country. Sisodia is recognised globally for transforming Delhi's school education. His arrest will be cited worldwide as an example of a political witch-hunt and further confirm what the world was only suspecting - that India's democratic values

stand threatened under an authoritarian BJP regime, they alleged.

Citing Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and former TMC leaders Suwendu Adhikari and Mukul Roy as examples, the leaders claimed that the investigation agencies go slow on cases against opposition politicians, who join the BJP.

“Since 2014, there has been a marked rise in the number of raids conducted, cases lodged against and arrest of the opposition leaders. Be it Lalu Prasad Yadav (Rashtriya Janata Dal), Sanjay Raut (Shiv Sena), Azam Khan (Samajwadi Party), Nawab Malik, Anil Deshmukh (NCP), Abhishek Banerjee (TMC), central agencies have often sparked suspicion that they were working as extended wings of the Centre,” they said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

We Are Empowering

laborer, businessman, employee, and make necessary intervention to safeguard their interest,” he added.

The LG shared the new milestones achieved by the J&K in Youth Empowerment under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“Our Youth are converting the opportunities into infinite possibilities to fulfill the vision of Strong & Atmanirbhar J&K,” he said.

“J&K UT had established the highest number of PMEGP units last year & with a record number of entrepreneurs, dreams of becoming job creators instead of job seekers are being realized. The credit for this historic achievement goes to the youth of Jammu Kashmir who have made the country proud,” he added.

Under the guidance of PM, Sinha said, his administration has filled more than 30,000 vacant government posts in the last three years while the process to fill 20,000 vacant posts in administration will start soon.

“More than 6 lakh youth of J&K have been extended with technical support & financial assistance to become entrepreneurs. In just 10 days of Back to Village and My Town, My Pride, UT administration has created 75,000 new entrepreneurs,” he added.

The LG further said that the Central Government was spending one lakh crore rupees to build highways and tunnels in J&K. He said over Rs 5000 Cr has been made available for doubling agriculture's contribution in J&K's GDP in the next 5 years.

Highlighting the efforts of the government to realize the true potential of the youth of Jammu Kashmir, the LG said the Jammu Kashmir administration is running about 17 self-employment schemes and employment fairs are also being organized in every district, in which the private companies from across the country are providing on spot offers to youth.

“Jammu Kashmir, which used to be at the bottom of the medal tally, is now bringing laurels to the nation at the international events. My Youth, My Pride, University Athletic Championship and LG Rolling Trophy are providing a proper platform to lakhs of budding sportspersons. More than 50 lakh children and youth get the sporting opportunity under My Youth, My Pride and 42,000 youth from the Union Territory participated in the LG Rolling Cricket Trophy,” he said.

He also informed about the Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Mela to be organized on March 20 in 6 districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sinha congratulated all the trainers and officials associated with Center for District Youth Training and Empowerment Trainees (C-DYTE) and advised them for upskilling and developing new skills among the youth as per the modern day requirements.

The Youth Festival was organized by District Administration Jammu in collaboration with Mission Youth. Entrepreneurs, who have benefitted from the schemes of different departments, were also felicitated with appreciation certificates.

Villagers Near LoC

government needs to focus more on the border villages to undertake developmental activities to ensure basic facilities, including potable water, good roads and electricity.

“The residents of Ratti Mitti, Chiti Bakri, Niaka, Chamba, Panjgrian, Peryali and others are economically weaker and are facing a lack of basic amenities, including good schools and health centres, which are just for the name-sake,” he said.

Farooq Ahmad, a farmer, said silence of guns on the LoC came as a big relief for them and they are moving around, tending their fields and grazing cattle without any tension.

“The ceasefire should last forever. There is nothing like a peaceful atmosphere,” he said.

Mohammad Yousif, a social activist, said things have improved to a major extent due to the ceasefire in the last two years and everyone in the area wants this peace pact to continue.

“Only we know the hardships of cross-border shelling. No outsider can even imagine the life in those nightmare days,” he said, recounting the horror when people were forced to spend several days inside their houses due to heavy shelling.

“We have struggled to live and are fortunate enough that no bullet or mortar shell brought our death despite dozens of shells falling very close to our houses,” he said, pointing that there are no houses in the village without a splinter mark.

Calls For Countering

developed J&K. It is time for everyone to introspect because rights & duties are two sides of the same coin. We must pay for services wherever necessary so that UT moves faster on the development trajectory,” Sinha said.

He made these remarks after inaugurating new facilities at the Jammu Club here on Sunday. He appreciated 3000 members of the club for working as change agents and the consciousness of the society.

The LG said Amrit Kaal is an opportune occasion to remove all traces of colonial mindset and promote our clubs as a medium for community development and to inspire social change.

“We are working with dedication, commitment and with a people-first approach to transform the life of the common man. Each one of us will have to play an equally important role to effectively counter the misinformation on property tax and convey the truth and facts to the general public,” Sinha said.

He said the society does not progress only because of infrastructure and material comforts, but by discharging responsibilities.

Speaking on Property tax, the LG said that Jammu Kashmir is the last among the states/UTs to introduce the provision of property tax which is the least as compared to other regions.

“Out of 5,20,000 houses in urban areas, 2,06,000 i.e. 40% houses which are less than 1000 sq ft are completely exempted. Minimum tax has been imposed on other houses. We have made such arrangements that out of 5,20,000 houses, 4,09,600 houses (80%) are either be totally exempted or will have to pay less than Rs.1000 as property tax annually. Similarly,

out of 1,01,000 shops in urban areas, around 76,000 i.e. 75% shops are such that they will be paying less than Rs 2000 property tax annually and 45% i.e. 46,000 shops out of 1,01,000 shops will have to pay less than Rs 700 tax annually,” he said.

“This is a very nominal amount as compared to other cities of the country like Shimla, Ambala, Dehradun,” he added.

The LG said that some people are deliberately trying to spread misinformation and create a false narrative.

“We are ready to consider better suggestions and solutions. We will implement genuine suggestions. In every decision that we have taken so far, the interest of the common man and business community has been paramount,” he said.

“Common man has no issue with property tax. Only some special people are troubled by it, who had gathered fortunes for many generations by hoodwinking the common masses of J&K,” he added.

The LG further observed that we have become the fifth largest economy of the world and under the guidance of the Prime Minister, we are aspiring to become the third largest economy of the world.

Sinha said that the work culture in the administration has been completely overhauled.

“Maximum public services have been made online. We are integrating around 32 services into auto appeal mode and fine will be levied on officials who fail to provide public services in the set timeline,” he said.

“J&K was among the states, registering positive growth during covid. One lakh crore rupees worth highway and road projects are under execution in the UT. Our health infrastructure is better and we are leading in health parameters on the national level. We are the first to launch Universal health insurance coverage of Rs 5 Lakh to all households of the UT,” he added.

Maintaining that J&K has the best industrial development scheme, the LG said that land banks have been developed across the UT, besides land retrieved during anti-encroachment drives will be used for developing infrastructure of various sectors, he added.

Court Recommends

from Rajouri district of Jammu region - Imtiyaz Ahmed, Abrar Ahmed and Mohammed Ibrar - were killed in a remote hilly village in Shopian district on July 18, 2020 and labelled as “terrorists”.

However, as doubts were raised on social media over the killings, the Army promptly constituted a Court of Inquiry which found prima facie evidence that the troops had “exceeded” powers vested under AFSPA.

The Court of Inquiry was followed by the Summary of Evidence, which was completed in the last week of December 2020.

The Army had issued a statement saying “the process of recording the Summary of Evidence has been completed.

“The same is being examined by the authorities concerned in consultation with legal advisors for proceeding further.”

“The Indian Army is committed to the ethical

conduct of operations,” it had said.

The officials said the court martial proceedings were then initiated against Captain Singh for violating the powers vested under the AFSPA and for not following the dos and don'ts of the Army as approved by the Supreme Court.

The Army had also called Mohammed Yusuf, the father of Abrar Ahmed, from Rajouri for depositing in the court martial proceedings during which he was asked to provide a missing report about his son.

The Jammu and Kashmir Police had also constituted a Special Investigation Team which filed a charge sheet against three people, including Captain Singh, for “staging a fake encounter”.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha had visited the families in Rajouri in 2020 and conveyed to them Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message that the government stood with the aggrieved families and they would be taken care of with all support from the government.

The identity of the three youths was subsequently confirmed through a DNA test. The bodies were handed over to their families in Baramulla in October 2020 and buried in their native village in Rajouri.

Yusuf told PTI from Rajouri that after the killing of his son, the family was in shambles.

“The compensation of Rs 5 lakh handed over by the government has been consumed in fighting the case.

“Now his child is also growing and the promise of the government to provide a job to one of the family members is still pending,” Yusuf said.

The SIT charge sheet alleged that Captain Singh provided wrong information to his superiors and the police about the recovery made during the staged encounter.

The other two named by the police in its charge sheet are Tabish Nazir and Bilal Ahmed Lone, both civilians.

“By staging the encounter,” the three accused “have purposefully destroyed evidence or real crime that they have committed and also have (been) purposefully projecting false information as part of a criminal conspiracy hatched between them with the motive to grab” cash rewards, it said.

The army had, however, denied that its captain staged the encounter for a cash reward, saying there was no such system for its personnel for any acts in combat situations or otherwise in the line of duty.

MeT Predicts

24 hours till 0830 hours, he said, Srinagar recorded 0.6mm of rain, Qazigund 1.8mm, Pahalgam 16mm, Kokernag 4.4mm, Gulmarg 2.4mm, Bahihal 2.8mm, Batote 3.0mm, Bhaderwah 0.3mm while Gulmarg received 0.6cm snowfall.

A meteorological department official here said that Srinagar recorded a low of 7.4°C against 6.4°C on the previous night and it was above normal by 5.2°C for the summer capital.

Qazigund, he said, recorded a low of 6.5°C against 4.2°C on the previous night while Pahalgam recorded a low of 1.2°C.

Kokernag recorded a low of 4.7°C against

4.8°C on the previous night and it was 3.8°C above normal for the place, the officials said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 1.8°C against minus 1.0°C on the previous night and it was 2.7°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 3.6°C against 4.2°C on the previous night and it was 2.6°C above normal for the north Kashmir area.

Jammu recorded a low of 13.0°C against 13.2°C on the previous night. It was 0.7°C above normal for J&K's winter capital, he said.

Banihal, he said, recorded a low of 6.8°C (above normal by 0.7°C), Batote 6.0°C (above normal by 0.2°C), Katra 12.0°C (1.5°C above normal) and Bhadarwah 4.4°C (2.3°C above normal).

Ladakh's Leh and Kargil recorded a low of minus 5.2°C and minus 1.6°C respectively, the official added. (GNS)

Avalanche Alert

occur above 2500 metres above sea level in Ganderbal district.

It similarly expressed apprehension of a ‘medium’ danger level avalanche above 2400 to 2500 metres in Bandipora and Kupwara districts.

People living in these areas have been in the meantime advised to take precautions and avoid venturing in the avalanche prone areas till further orders.

3.9 Magnitude

was 10 km below the ground,” it said. “Earthquake of Magnitude:3.9, Occurred on 05-03-2023, 06:57:12 IST, Lat: 34.42 & Long: 74.88, Depth: 10 Km, Location: 38km N of Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India,” it tweeted.

Soldier Injured

afternoon, they said.

The injured soldier was immediately given medical aid and was later airlifted to a military hospital in Jammu for specialised treatment, the officials said.

As part of an anti-infiltration obstacle system, the forward areas are dotted with land mines which sometimes get washed away by rains resulting in such accidents, they said.

Man Shoots

village of Bhalla tehsil around 8 am.

He said Kumar's elder brother is a village defence guard (VDG) member who is allotted a rifle. Kumar reportedly used the weapon to kill himself, the officer said.

The motive behind him taking such an extreme step was not known immediately, he said, adding police have registered a case and further investigation is on.

The body has been sent for post-mortem and will be handed over to his family for last rites after completion of legal formalities, he said.

VDGs, formerly known as Village Defence Committees, comprise local volunteers and policemen to guard remote hilly villages against militant attacks.

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

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PRI Representatives, Several Deputations Call On LG



Observer News Service

JAMMU: A delegation of PRI representatives from Udhampur called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhanwan here on Sunday.

The delegation led by Lal Chand DDC Chairperson Udhampur apprised the Lt Governor of various issues of the PRIs and the district including Aspirational Block Development programme of Moungrî & Basantgarh blocks, an official spokesperson said.

The LG, he said, assured that all the issues presented during the interaction would be taken up meticulously for early redressal and genuine demands would be looked into earnestly.

Also, the spokesperson said, a delegation of Goswami Shree

Guru Nabha Dass Samaj Kalyan Parishad J&K led by Dr DK Maniyal, former Minister also called on the Lt Governor and informed him about the arrangements for the 450th Prakash Utsav of Goswami Shree Guru Nabha Dass Ji Maharaj.

Dr Sandeep Gupta, Regional Director IGNOU Jammu accompanied by Dr Asha Upadhyay, Assistant Regional Director IGNOU briefed the Governor on the educational programmes for the government employees and specialized courses for police personnel.

Later, J&K Government's Lifetime Achievement awardee, Ramesh Hangloo, Founder/Director, Radio Sharda also met the Lt Governor and discussed the promotion of Sharda Lipi.

JMC Commissioner Sensitizes Traders On Property Tax



Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Commissioner Rahul Yadav held a series of interactions with different market associations and traders to sensitize them about property tax, an official said on Sunday.

The meetings over the past week were held with office bearers of different trade bodies, including president of Ware House Traders Association Deepak Gupta, the official said.

Addressing the meetings, the JMC commissioner apprised the traders and market associations that property tax announced by the government is intended for strengthening municipal finances and will benefit common people in terms of better service delivery.

"Property tax is one of the

essential pillars of municipal financing across the world. It is being levied by municipalities to augment their resources," Yadav said.

With poor finances, he said the Urban Local Bodies across Jammu and Kashmir were not able to deliver to their fullest.

"The tax rates are one of the lowest in the country and residential houses up to a built-up area of 1000 square feet have been exempted. All places of worship are also exempt from payment of property tax," the JMC commissioner said, seeking cooperation of the people in this regard.

The official said concerns and doubts of representatives of different associations were also addressed in the meeting, and their suggestions were taken.

Dr Farooq Leaves Saudi To Perform 'Umrah'



Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: National Conference president Farooq Abdullah Sunday left for Saudi Arabia to perform 'Umrah', a minor pilgrimage to the twin Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

A party leader said here that Abdullah (85), a Member of Parliament from Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, was accompanied by party colleague

Aijaz Jan.

"Jenab Dr. Farooq Abdullah Sahib leaving for the Haramain Sharifain to perform Umrah. @ajazjan7 is accompanying him on the holy pilgrimage. May Almighty Allah accept their supplications, and strengthen their faith," Abdullah's son and NC vice president Omar Abdullah wrote in a post on Facebook.

He also shared some pictures of the two leaders.

6 Grenades, Ammo Recovered In Rajouri

JAMMU: Six hand grenades and 127 rounds of general purpose machine gun were recovered during construction of a road in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Sunday, police officials said.

The grenades and ammunition were found buried by workers engaged in construction of a link road in remote Neali village of Manja-

kote tehsil, the officials said.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Zaffer Rather said the grenades and ammunition, which were found buried, are in a rusted condition indicating that these items were kept there a long back.

The SDPO said the material was seized immediately after police were informed about it by the locals.



Govt To Train To Its Employees In Cyber Security

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday launched a Centre of Excellence in cyber security for the government workforce to ensure the security of official web portals and websites, an official said.

The centre was established by the Information Technology Department in collaboration with the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), Jammu and Kashmir, he said.

Inaugurated by Jammu and Kashmir chief secretary A K Mehta, the centre will make government officials aware of the latest trends and techniques for the safety of all cyber assets in view of increased risk and vulnerability.

Mehta enjoined upon the IT Department to make the training mandatory for its employees, besides creating separate modules for imparting basic-level training to all



employees designated by the departments and a high-level skill course for the technically proficient people who would look after the cyber security of government websites and its portals.

Stressing on making the best use of the centre by providing requisite training to the government workforce, the chief secretary asked the department to keep upgrading the skills of the employees according to the advancements in technology and techniques.

Commissioner Secretary, IT, Purna Puri said the centre

is taking 60 officers and officials each as the first batch in Jammu and Srinagar campuses of the NIELIT for their 15-day capacity building programme in cyber security.

She said more such batches will be trained at the centre in the days ahead to enhance the security of websites and data available over the internet.

"The training course would cover significant topics like cyber crimes, network security, cyber hygiene, cyber forensics, mobile and end-user security, web security and information security audit," she said.

Cong Launches 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' Campaign In J&K

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Congress launched a month-long 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' campaign from here on Sunday, with its leaders and workers chanting slogans against the imposition of property tax and calling for early restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

Led by AICC incharge of 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' yatra in Jammu and Kashmir Bharat Singh Solanki and Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Vikar Rasool Wani, the yatra began from Janipur and headed to Raipur in Jammu north assembly.

Jammu and Kashmir Congress working president Raman Bhalla, former ministers Mula Ram and Yogesh Sawhney, party chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma and other senior leaders joined the march which saw participants raise slogans against property tax and anti-encroachment drives.

They also carried placards criticising the BJP-led central government over its alleged failure to check inflation and provide employment to the educated youth.

"The Haath Se Haath Jodo yatra-cum-agitational programme is the second phase of the Bharat Jodo Yatra, which



shall culminate at the end of this month after covering various districts and constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir," AICC incharge of the yatra in Jammu and Kashmir Solanki said.

"The main focus of this programme is to highlight various issues of people like the imposition of property tax, snatching of land from the poor in the name of anti-encroachment drive, unprecedented price hike, record unemployment and other arbitrary orders of government," he said.

On February 21, the Jammu and Kashmir administration ordered the imposition of property tax in municipal areas from April 1, drawing strong protests from people from almost all walks of life. Political parties are demanding an immediate rollback of the order.

Narcotics Generated Money Used In Funding Terrorism: DGP

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Money generated from the narcotics trade is returned to Pakistan and subsequently used to fund terror activities in Jammu and Kashmir, Director-General of Police Dilbag Singh on Sunday.

Singh's comment comes close on the heels of a large stockpile of drugs, cash and weapons being recovered near the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch.

"We are faced with a new challenge where the drugs and weapons are smuggled from Pakistan together. While the weapons are delivered to the terrorists, the major part of the drug proceeds are returned to handlers (across the border) and the rest shared by the peddlers.

"The proceeds (from the drugs trade) are being utilised to keep terrorism alive (in Jammu and Kashmir)," the police chief told reporters here on the sidelines of the Jammu Marathon.

The 'Run for Fun' Jammu Marathon was organised by the police here as part of its civic action programme and drew hundreds of participants from all walks of life at Gulshan Ground.

Responding to a question on the seizure of seven kilogramme of heroin, over Rs 2.30 crore in cash and some arms and ammunition from the home of a notorious drug peddler in Mandi sector on March 3, Singh said a dozen



major peddling rackets had been busted in the recent past.

"The probes unearthed interstate connections of drug trafficking, especially connected to Punjab, and raids were conducted. We are also roping in the Narcotics Control Bureau and, like in the past, investigated various cases together.

"In this (Poonch) case, the entire module involved in the drug trafficking will be unveiled and stern action taken against those found involved," he said.

This was the second time such a huge recovery of cash was made near the Line of Control following the earlier seizure of Rs 1.50 crore in Poonch.

"The money generated from the drugs trade is returned to handlers in Pakistan who use the cash to fund terror activities. Some cash is handed over to infiltrating terrorists. Money is also sent to this side by drones," he said.

Singh said if anyone is assigned the task of triggering a

blast, he is given both the improvised explosive device and the prize money in advance by drone.

"This is the same money that is generated by the drugs trade and used by Pakistani agencies and terrorist groups operating from there," Singh said.

Asked about the criticism of security agencies by certain political leaders, he said they must refrain from making such comments and added that otherwise, action will be taken if the need arises.

"Politicians will play politics but the police and the forces have to do their own work. It is not good on the part of anyone, whether a politician or otherwise, to do something that will vitiate the peaceful atmosphere. People should desist from such things," he said.

The police chief said, "We have opposed such type of actions (criticism of police) and when, at times, the things move beyond a limit, action is being taken accordingly."

Speaking on the security arrangements for the upcoming G20 meetings, Singh said necessary measures would be ensured for the events' success.

"It is a proud moment for all of us that a few G20 events are being organised in Jammu and Kashmir. We are making adequate arrangements to ensure security.

"Such types of events are meant for the betterment of the people who are expected to participate in large numbers," he said.

Devotees Throng Tikker To Pay Obeisance To Sharda Mata Murti

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: A large number of devotees are thronging to the Tikker Ragnya Asthapan, which is also known as Matta Kheer Bhavani Asthapan Tikker, to pay obeisance to Sharda Mata Murti which is on way to Teetwal for consecration in newly constructed Sharda Yatra temple at Teetwal, Kupwara district.

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray along with SSP Kupwara,

Peeth Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir (POJK). From ancient times, an annual pilgrimage to the Sharda Peeth used to take place on the Ashtami (eighth day) of Shukla Paksha (waxing phase) of Bhadrpadma month of the lunar calendar.

A holy mace (Charri Mubarak) would be taken out from Teetwal to Sharda Peeth. This was the official pilgrimage to Sharda Peeth, out of the four traditional routes (Keran, Liddervan-Jungund, Gurez and



Yougal Manhas have also visited Tikker Ragnya Asthapan to pay obeisance to Sharda Mata Murti.

On Jan 24, Save Sharda Committee Kashmir (SSCK) began a trans nation yatra of carrying Sharda Murti from Sringeri in Karnataka to LoC Teetwal in Kupwara district. The yatra reached Tikker Kupwara a week ago after stay at Bangalore, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Gurgaon and Jammu.

Earlier, on invitation of Sringeri Dakshinayam Sharda Mutt, Save Sharda committee Kashmir (SSCK) received Panchloha (5 metals) Sharda Murti for the newly constructed Sharda Temple at LoC Teetwal.

The members of SSCK are carrying the Murti in a well decorated vehicle as per the tour schedule. The yatra is scheduled to move from Tikker to Teetwal on March 20.

On 1st Navratra" Naverh" (March 22) Consecration of Sharda Murti will be done and newly constructed Sharda Yatra temple at LoC Teetwal is being inaugurated in presence of hundreds of devotees.

Head of SSCK, Ravinder Pandita said, the Sharda Yatra temple, at Teetwal, is located on the pilgrimage route to Sharda

Teetwal), he added.

The locals of Teetwal preserved and handed over this plot to the Save Sharda Committee Kashmir on September 14 in 2021. Not only this, locals of Teetwal have donated land for construction of approach road free of cost for the temple and helped in construction of the temple.

Panchloha Sharda murti will be consecrated at Teetwal temple on Chaitra maas Shukla Paksh Pratipada on Navreh (1st Navratra), March 22 this year.

Meanwhile Mata Kheer Bhawani Asthapan Committee, Tikkar have also extended its heartfelt gratitude to District Administration Kupwara for facilitating the Sharda Chariot Yatra.

"The logistic support and the facilities provided by the district administration Kupwara to the organisers and the yatries are excellent, and the technical and administrative support is also outstanding."

The efforts made by Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray, Deputy Commissioner Kupwara and the other officers of district administration will certainly contribute to the communal harmony, brotherhood and national integration in a large way" devotees said.

Secretary Culture Visits Panchayat Kanispora In Baramulla



Observer News Service

BARAMULLA: Secretary Culture, Dr Syed Abid Rasheed Shah on Sunday visited Panchayat halqa Kanispora, Baramulla as a part of follow up programme of forth phase of 'Back to Village' (B2V-4), as Prabhari Officer.

An overwhelming response of the public was witnessed during the follow up programme.

Secretary, accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Revenue Peerzada Mumtaz Ahmad along with officers of line departments, organized Gram Panchayat and conducted inspection of several ongoing development works.

During his visit, Secretary convened a meeting of officers from line departments, PRI

members and general public to take stock of follow up of "Back to Village" phase fourth" at Panchayat halqa Kanispora.

The Prabhari officer interacted with the officers and enquired about the steps being taken up for early redressal of grievances as put forth in the Gram Sabha during Back to Village-4. The line departments apprised him of development works going on in the panchayat.

He exhorted upon the officers to work in close coordination for development of villages. He directed them to organize awareness camps regarding self employment schemes in the Panchayat so that maximum unemployed youth can benefit from these programmes. He also urged upon the local youth to take benefit of self-employment schemes.

Army Officer Dies Of 'Heart Attack'

SRINAGAR: An army officer died of a suspected heart attack on Sunday in North Kashmir's Baramulla district, officials said.

They said that the army officer of the rank of Colonel complained of chest pain following which he immediately taken to MI hospital. However, the doctors there declared him brought dead.

The deceased officer has been identified as OP Sharma, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, who was posted at Dagger Division Baramulla.

DHEW Shopian Organises Awareness Camp At Nowgam

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN: District Hub for Empowerment of Women (DHEW), Mission Shakti Shopian on Sunday organised an outreach cum awareness camp at Nowgam Shopian. The DHEW team shared awareness on different issues confronted by the women in the society including issues of domestic Violence, Drug Abuse, Psychological Problems. The participants were informed about remedies and facilities available at District level to curb such issues.

The Team also educated people about various schemes such as Mission Shakti, OSC, WHL 181, shelter Home, Marriage Assistance Scheme, CCI Child Care institution, ICPS, Old-age home, and all other women related Schemes available in various government departments.

Real Kashmir Draw 2-2 With Sreenidi, Secures Top 5 Spot In I-League

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Real Kashmir conceded two late goals to throw away a 2-0 lead, as Sreenidi Deccan FC clawed back to earn a 2-2 draw in the final I-League match of the 2022-23 season at Deccan Arena in Hyderabad on Sunday.

Real Kashmir's Meghalayan midfielder Samuel Kynshi gave his side the lead in the 19th minute, scoring his fifth goal in as many games. Snow Leopards' Ghanaian export Ernest Boateng then doubled their lead in the 84th minute, to make it 2-0 and seemingly

out of reach for the hosts.

However, Sreenidi scored two goals in seven minutes to shatter Real Kashmir's hope of ending the season with a win. Soraisham Dinesh Singh scored in the 86th and Rosenberg Gabriel found the net in the 90+1 minute of added time to complete the miraculous turnaround.

With this draw, Real Kashmir have sealed a top-five finish in the 2022-23 I-League season. The Snow Leopards accumulated 31 points from 21 games. In comparison, champions RoundGlass Punjab FC took 49 points from their 21 matches.



J&K Carrom Teams For Federation Cup Announced



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The J&K Carrom Association on Sunday announced an eight-member men's and women's team selected to participate in the upcoming 27th All India Federation Cup Carrom Tournament 2022-23, scheduled to be held from 26th March to 29th March 2023 at Jeevandeep Educational Institute Badal Pura in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

The players were selected on Sunday at SKISC, Srinagar by the Selection cum Screening Com-

mittee of the J&K Sports Council headed by Divisional Sports Officer Kashmir Nuzhat Ara and Manager SKISC Maqsood Khan, along with the members of J&K Carrom Association comprising of Adil Rashid Shah, Arif Sultan and Dawar Rashid, President, Vice President & Secretary of the association, respectively.

The men's team comprises of Furqan Nazir, Umar Rashid, Mohammad Irfan and Aasif Maqbool, while as Anzalna Rafiq, Zainab Ajaz, Kazima Khurshed and Mehak Nabi form the women's team.

Is WTC Driving Trend Towards Shorter Matches?



Agencies

Planning a trip to see the fifth day of a Test match anywhere in the world is a sign of unbridled optimism, but do so in India at the moment and you might find people questioning your sanity.

Each of the first three matches in India's series against Australia have ended inside three days with the hosts taking a 2-1 lead into the final match in Ahmedabad next week.

It reflects a wider, and not wholly unpopular, trend globally as five-day stalemates have given way to three days of frenetic action with a guaranteed outcome.

While playing a contest over five days and potentially ending in a draw has always been a source of amusement in non-cricketing nations, the length of a Test has always been part of the attraction for devotees of the longest format.

Shortened Tests are not an India-specific issue but nowhere has the trend been more evident than in the cricket-mad nation of 1.4 billion.

Of the last 15 Tests played in India, only two reached day five.

Nine ended inside three days, including the 2021 Ahmedabad Test which India won in two days against England on a pitch

rated "average" by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

The Indore surface, where 30 wickets tumbled in two days before Australia triumphed by nine wickets on Friday, has been slapped with three demerit points after being rated "poor" by the game's governing body.

The ICC does not think there is a problem with Tests rarely lasting full five days in India, however.

"If it is an issue, it would have been raised by the ICC Men's Cricket Committee," an ICC spokesperson told Reuters.

India have defended rolling out rank turners to suit their spinners but former Australia batter Mark Waugh is among those who felt the Indore track was "not up to Test standard."

Home matches have become must-win affairs since the introduction of the World Test Championship (WTC) in 2019 and many believe it is encouraging home teams to prepare extreme wickets that suit their strength.

Of the five Tests Australia played at home over the new year before arriving in India for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, only two stretched to day five.

The other three included a two-day farce in Brisbane, where Australia thumped South Africa by six wickets on a green

top at the Gabba.

Pakistan, unable to stage Test matches for security reasons for 10 years until a return in 2019, would appear to be the exception with six of the last eight matches making the final day.

India's batting coach Vikram Rathour said winning home matches had become imperative under the WTC, which may have started influencing pitch preparations.

"Yeah, since the World Test Championship started, there is more pressure on teams to win home games," Rathour told reporters during the Indore Test.

"So you want to win (all) games when you are playing at home."

India need to win the final Test in Ahmedabad, which starts on Thursday, to join Australia in the WTC final in June without having to rely on the outcome of Sri Lanka's two-Test series in New Zealand.

India captain Rohit Sharma, for one, does not get the fuss about duration of Test matches.

"People have to play well for the game to last five days," Rohit said.

"Games are not lasting five days even outside India. In Pakistan, three Test matches were played and people were saying it was boring. We are making it interesting for you guys." (Reuters)

J&K's Top Skier Stopped At Gulmarg Gondola, Calls It 'Deliberate Harassment'

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR: Alpine skier Mohammad Arif Khan, India's only athlete at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, has accused an employee of the Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation (JKCCC) of "deliberate harassment" after he was allegedly stopped from boarding the Gulmarg Gondola for training at the famous ski-resort.

In a video posted on social media, Khan said he was in Gulmarg, in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, for training when the incident took place.

"I skied with two other athletes for the past five-six days, but today an incident took place outside the Gulmarg Gondola and an employee stopped us, especially me," he said in the video posted late Saturday night.

Khan said the employee asked him for a license, "to which I simply replied that yes, I have a license and am registered and take the athletes along for practice".

"He (the employee) asked for proof, to which I replied that I had no information, otherwise, I would have kept my license along. I told the person that his seniors knew me and he should talk to them or let me in and talk to them."

"He felt I was a fraud, but I felt that it was a deliberate act. I know the person for many years now and know how he treats people. I have noticed that, but I did not tell anyone. It was deliberate harassment, which was unpleasant and he kept me waiting for about 55 minutes," the skier alleged.

There was no response to calls and messages seeking comments from the JKCCC officials.

Khan claimed he called some of the seniors of the employee "but he (the employee) refused to talk to them".

"He said even if you are a star from somewhere, I will not allow you inside till you do not show your identity. Normally, he knows me very well. But, I understood then that perhaps he had problems with my tagline of "Team India" or a problem with my representing India.



"I felt it was a suspicious activity I stood there watching his drama. Then I went and brought a pass by virtue of which I went inside. I talked to his seniors who were ashamed (about the incident)," Khan added.

The skier said he wanted the public to know that "we (athletes) work very hard, and through us the world comes to know about our land, our people, but, it is disappointing that we have to witness this situation in return, which demoralises us".

"What message does it send to the youth whom I try to encourage for taking up sports," he said.

Khan said the employees "in their defence will say that such people travel without a ticket".

"However, I always take permission from their seniors who know me," he added.

The skier claimed that he had a prolonged programme for promotion of Gulmarg for organising international events. "But, I am quitting my training and am returning to Europe. I will not plan any training here in the future."

Appealing to the administration, including J-K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, to look into the matter, Khan alleged it was like he was facing threats for representing his country.

"I felt that I had to face this because I represent India. So, I request the administration, including the LG, that should we discontinue sports in this situation as it is like I am facing threats for representing my country. Please check the reality of this matter. They will say anything in their defence, but no one is ready to tell the truth here. Please look into this matter as soon as possible," he said.

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