

'Ghost Of Panthyal To Rest, Forever': New Tunnel To End Highway Horror

T5 Tunnel To Help Travellers Bypass Most-Vulnerable Stretch Of Panthyal Along Srinagar-Jammu Highway

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Known for its unpredictability due to the sudden shooting of stones from the hillock overlooking the strategic Jammu-Srinagar national highway, the most vulnerable stretch of Panthyal in Ramban district is set to get bypassed with the inauguration of the T5 tunnel next week.

The work on the twin-tube 880-metre tunnel, part of the highway realignment project, started in 2020 and is expected to be completed within the



KO Photo, Abid Bhat

ON AN AVERAGE, OVER 10,000 TO 11,000 VEHICLES PLY ON THE highway on a daily basis (between Srinagar and Jammu). It is a lifeline and the only all-weather road so the challenges being faced by the executing agencies are much more than anywhere else."

next five days. It will put an end to the threat of shooting stones which have consumed numerous human lives.

Over the past couple of years, a temporary iron and steel tunnel at the crucial

stretch provided some relief to the people travelling on the highway. But the rolling stones continued to cause frequent disruptions in the smooth movement of traffic.

"Panthyal has remained a

critical stretch for decades. This treacherous stretch will be bypassed with the inauguration of T5 tunnel, which is more or less in the completion stage," Ramban Deputy Commissioner Mussarat Islam said.

Islam, who is monitoring the project and regularly updates the progress on social media, said the opening of the T5 tunnel would end the fear of shooting stones forever along with frequent traffic jams on the stretch.

In a tweet recently, he said the opening of the T5 tunnel will lay the **More on P6**

NYT 'Spreading Lies' About India: I&B Minister

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Friday accused The New York Times of "spreading lies" about India, describing an opinion piece published in it on the freedom of press in Kashmir as "mischievous and fictitious".

"The New York Times had long back dropped all pretensions of neutrality while publishing anything about India. NYT's so-called opinion piece on freedom of press in Kashmir is mischievous and fictitious, published with a sole motive to spread a propaganda about India and its democratic institutions and values," Thakur said on Twitter.

"This is in continuation with what NYT and a few other like-minded foreign media have been spreading lies about India and our democratically elected Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Such lies can't last long," the minister said. The strong rebuttal by Thakur **More on P6**

PROPERTY TAX

Transporters Reject Jammu Bandh Call

Agencies

Jammu: Chamber of Commerce and Industry Jammu (CCI) has given a Jammu bandh call on March 11 Saturday, against imposition of property tax by the government from April 1 this year.

The call has been supported by various social and political organizations including Yuva Rajput Sabha, Aam Aadmi Party, National Conference, various Bazaars Associations, Bar Association etc.

"Bazaar associations have told us that they are with the CCI on whatever decision we will take," president CCI Jammu, Arun Gupta told local media here. However, the **More on P6**

Protests Continue Over Hiring Of Blacklisted' Company

No Compromise On Transparency, Merit: JKSSB Chairman

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Cautioning the job seekers against certain elements trying to malign the process of recruitment, Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) chairman Rajesh Sharma on Friday assured the youth that there will be no compromise on transparency and merit.

The remarks of Sharma came amid back-to-back protests by

groups of job aspirants in the twin capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar for the past two days over the hiring of a previously blacklisted company, APTECH Limited, by the JKSSB for the conduct of computer-based written tests.

"The board is very much aware of your concerns and all efforts will be made to conduct exams in a fair, transparent and secure manner. Do not pay heed to rumour mongers and **More on P6**



KO File Photo, Abid Bhat

HC Clears Decks For JKSSB To Hold Exams

Aaqib Javed

A division bench of the Jammu & Kashmir High Court on Friday set aside judgment of single bench order canceling allotment of contract to the Mumbai-based Aptech firm for conducting job tests. The bench requested the single bench to hear and decide a fresh petition challenging **More on P6**

WE ARE COMMITTED TO CONDUCT EXAMS INCLUDING THOSE scheduled from March 16 with the highest degree of security. Our mission is to uphold the sanctity of the recruitment process."

Bukhari Re-Elected Apni Party President

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari on Friday was elected unopposed as the president of Apni Party for another three-year term, the party spokesperson said.

Bukhari was declared the winner of the Apni Party's presidential elections in the absence of any other eligible contestant.

According to a press statement issued here, the Convener of Apni Party's Election Board Vijay Bakaya on Saturday declared Bukhari unopposed winner of the presidential contest.

In this regard, Bakaya issued a notification, which reads: "The details from both election sub offices —Srinagar and Jammu — certify that Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari wins **More on P6**



TULIPS HAVE STARTED BLOOMING INSIDE Srinagar's Tulip Garden, which is set to be thrown open to the public from March 19. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Farooq Calls All Party Meet To Discuss J&K Situation

Says All Parties, Except BJP Invited To Attend Meet Today At His Gupkar Residence

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: National Conference (NC) president and former chief minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah has convened an all party meeting at his Gupkar residence on Saturday to review and discuss the current state of affairs in Jammu and Kashmir.

However, Dr Farooq said the invitation was extended to all mainstream political parties in J&K except Bharatiya Janata Party. He said the meeting was called to discuss the events unfolded in the Union Territory over the



past couple of months.

He said the issues confronting Jammu and Kashmir including property tax, demolition drive etc will be discussed thoroughly during the meeting and that any **More on P6**

'Sought Forgiveness For Informers At Kaaba'

National Conference (NC) patron Dr Farooq Abdullah said on Friday that he prayed for the peace and prosperity of Jammu and Kashmir and sought forgiveness for 'informers' too during Tawaf (circumambulation) of holy Kaaba. Farooq, who returned to Kashmir on Thursday **More on P6**

NO, BJP HAS NOT BEEN INVITED.WE HAVE INVITED all political parties to attend the meeting. I don't know who will join us, as it's purely their desecration to accept or reject the invitation, rest, whoever Allah guides will attend the meeting."

Patwaris Strike Enters Day 10 As Deadlock Continues

AJKPA Meeting With Divisional Administration Remains 'Inconclusive'



Majid Nabi

Srinagar: The indefinite strike launched by Patwaris to press for their demands, including salary hike continued for 10th straight day Friday in Jammu and Kashmir, even as an hour-long meeting with the Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir and Commissioner Secretary Revenue Piyush Singla remained 'inconclusive'. "Strike has not been suspended as the meeting of AJKPA with

Div Com remained inconclusive. Earlier news regarding deferment of strike is hereby rebutted. Decision whether to continue or call off the strike will be taken after discussion," an executive member of AJKPA said.

He said the representatives of the Patwar Association led by AJKPA President Abdul Majeed Malla were called by Div Com Kashmir at his office for negotiations. However, the meeting remained inconclusive, following which **More on P6**

S H O R T T A K E S

Last Date For Haj Forms March 20

The J&K Haj Committee has extended the last date for submission of online Haj Application Forms (HAFs) for Haj – 2023 up to 5:00 P.M of 20th March, 2023. As per an official communiqué, the J&K Haj Committee has informed that applicants possessing machine readable valid Indian International Passports issued on or before 20th March, 2023 and valid upto 3rd February, 2024 will be eligible to apply for Haj – 2023. Besides, those intending pilgrims who have already **More on P6**

4 Held For Harassing Schoolgirls

Four people were on Friday arrested for allegedly harassing schoolgoing girls in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district, police said. Taking cognizance of complaints against harassment, special parties deployed at public places, especially around schools and colleges arrested the four accused, a police spokesperson said. A drive against such anti-social elements was launched in Samba under the guidance of Senior Superintendent of Police Benam Tosh, the spokesperson said. **More on P6**

Pak Drone Carrying AK Rifle Shot Down

A drone entering into India from Pakistan carrying an AK series rifle and more than three dozen bullet rounds has been downed by the Border Security Force along the International Border in Punjab on Friday, a force spokesperson said. The hexacopter was intercepted around 1 am near Metla village in Gurdaspur district of the border state. "As per the laid down drills, troops endeavoured to intercept the drone by firing." "On day break, the whole area was cordoned in which police also participated," the **More on P6**

Ex- Legislator, Sculptor Call On LG

Devender Singh Rana, former Legislator and Senior BJP leader called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at the Raj Bhavan here on Friday. Devender Rana expressed gratitude to the Lt Governor for infrastructural & industrial development in the UT, and the initiatives taken for involving the common man in decision making, an official spokesperson said. Rana, he said, also appreciated the fast track recruitment process by the Public Service Commission. Rana discussed welfare issues of various sections of the society including **More on P6**

5 Cattle Charred To Death

Five cattle were charred alive in a midnight fire in Baila village in Mandi area in Poonch district, officials said on Friday. News agency GNS quoting officials reported that the fire started from a residential house belonging to one Muhammad Sharif son of Wali Muhammad. While five cattle, three buffaloes and two cows, inside a shed adjacent to the house were charred alive, there was no loss of human life or injury reported in the incident, they said. Soon after the fire, they said, locals, police and army rushed to spot **More on P6**

Bank Accounts Of Drug Peddlers Frozen

Three alleged drug smugglers were arrested in Kishtwar here along with 52 gram of heroin and 200 gram of poppy straw on them with police freezing several bank accounts belonging to them, a senior officer said on Friday. Senior Superintendent of Police (Kishtwar) Khalil Poswal said efforts are being made to attach the properties of Mohd Iqbal Khanday, Shahnawaz Ahmad and Umar Nazir Kichloo. Khanday, of Thakrie area, was arrested along with 52 grams of heroin. During the investigation, several bank accounts, **More on P6**

Facebook Parent Meta Building A Twitter-Like Social Media App

IANs

Facebook parent Meta is reportedly building a dedicated Twitter-like social media application for people to post text-based updates.

According to Platformer, citing sources, the project is codenamed "P92", which will let users log in through their existing Instagram credentials.

MoneyControl was the first to break this development.

"We're exploring a standalone decentralised social network for sharing text updates. We believe there's an opportunity for a separate space where creators and public figures can share timely updates about their interests," the company was quoted as saying.

Instagram head Adam Mosseri is leading the project, said the report.

The product is still in its early stages, and no release date has been set, but legal and regulatory teams have already begun to investigate potential privacy concerns surrounding the app to address them before launch, according to the report.

Moreover, several rival platforms have launched or gained traction in the months since Elon Musk took over Twitter -- among them include Mastodon, Post.news, and T2.

In December last year, Instagram introduced a new feature called Notes, allowing users to share short posts of up to 60 characters using only text and emojis.

Earlier this month, Twitter Co-founder and former CEO Jack Dorsey came back into the social media game, with the launch of his Twitter alternative called "Bluesky", which is available in the Apple App Store in the testing phase.

'Healthy Lifestyle Key To Preventing Kidney Degeneration'

Press Trust Of India

A healthy lifestyle that includes limited salt and potassium intake, quitting smoking and increased physical activity besides awareness can help not only in checking kidney degeneration but also prevent it, health experts said here.

Kidney diseases occur in five stages with kidney failure being the last one. But it's possible to completely treat the disease in the first and second stages itself, if detected early, said Dr Himanshu Verma, HoD (Nephrology), Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi, in his presentation on the last day of the virtual webinar 'Kidney Manthan' organised by AIMIL Pharmaceuticals.

"Hence, it is important that people are made aware about causes and ways to prevent renal diseases," he said.

The event spanning six days saw participation of at least 35 health experts from allopathy and ayurveda from across the country.

They discussed threadbare causes, challenges and how preventive measures like lifestyle changes can ensure health of the vital organ.

The experts also deliberated on how alternative Ayurvedic medicines like herbal formulation NeeriKFT have the potential to heal the damaged cells of an ailing kidney.

In this connection, they cited various studies that have proved efficacy of the NeeriKFT, composed of time-tested herbs like punarnava, varuna, giloy, gokhru and palash in protecting the kidney.

Jamia Hamdard's latest study is

a case in point.

Published in the Journal of Bio-sciences, the research has indicated that the ayurvedic formulation is effective in regulating the functions of at least 6 gene variants causing kidney dysfunction.



Stating that patients with diabetes and high blood pressure would be at highest risk of kidney disease, Dr Verma who touched upon the topic 'Conservative management in chronic kidney disease' further recommended keeping the body mass index (BMI) between 20-25, walking for 30 minutes every day for five days a week, reducing the consumption of pain-relieving medicines, balanced intake of water and quitting smoking etc. as effective ways to protect the vital organ.

Dr Sanchit Sharma, executive director of AIMIL Pharmaceuticals,

said the outcome of the six days long churning on the vital topic, which is assuming endemic proportion, shows "we need to adopt an integrated approach towards kidney healthcare. Also, as more and more people are looking towards

Ayurveda for holistic treatment of various kinds of diseases, it is important that players in the sector focus on evidence-based research."

Chronic kidney disease is the sixth fastest-growing cause of death globally and around 1.7 million people are estimated to die annually because of acute kidney injury globally. In India, it is estimated that a population of over 7.8 million people are living with chronic kidney diseases. Those with diabetes, hypertension and obesity are also prone to kidney diseases, as per the health experts.

SAD DEMISE



With profound grief we inform the sad demise of Syed Imtiaz Kazmi, son of late Syed Hyder Shah Kazmi of Sorehteng Rainawari, Srinagar. Inna lillah wa inna elyhe rajoun.
His Rasm-Qul shall be held on Sunday 12 March 2023 from 8.30 AM onwards at our present residence Tilisar Shribhat.

BEREAVED

Syed Altaf Kazmi
Syed Tufail Kazmi
Dr Syed Maqbool Kazmi
& rest of the family

SS

PUBLIC NOTICE

I want change the name on Electricity Bill bearing Consumer ID No: 0209010002636 from the name of my deceased father namely Habibullah dar S/o Gh Ahmad Dar R/o Khashiteng Bijbehara To My Name Imtiaz Ahmad Dar S/o Late Habibullah Dar R/o Gundinowroze Bijbehara. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Imtiaz Ahmad Dar S/o Late Habibullah Dar
R/o Gundinowroze Bijbehara

arinf

Office Of The Principal Madina Public School Ahmadpor (Recognised By J&K Govt.)

It is certified that the Student namely MURTAZA ALI BHAT S/O MOHAMMAD YASEEN BHAT R/O TANTRAYPORA, Block : Sharabad Khoor is reading in this School. According to our Admission record his date of birth is 17.04. .2015 (i.e Seventeenth of April two thousand Fifteen only.)



Mothers name:- FAHMEEDA AKTHER

BMG

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from (Old Name) Rasak Annayat Lone to (New Name) Rasak Annayat In Future I Will Be Known as (New Name) Rasak Annayat If anybody having any objection he/she may contact Passport Office, Srinagar within 7 days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

arinfo

Board Of Technical Education

Jammu (Nov To April)
Govt. Polytechnic Campus

Srinagar (May to Oct)
C-Block Old Secretariate Srinagar

email:j_k_abote@rediffmail.com

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Subject:- Trainee Profile Grievances opened for the Academic Sessions from 2014 to 2021 of NCVT Trades.

It is for the information of all the passed out trainees under Nationall Council for Vocational Training(NCVT) Scheme during the Sessions 2014 to 2021, that the Director General of Trainings, New Delhi has opened their Portal for profile grievances like correction in Name, Parentage and D.O.B, etc in the NCVT trade Certificates. In this connection all the concerned students are informed to click NCVT MIS Portal <https://ncvtmis.gov.in/Paaes/Trainee/TraineeGrievancesAuthenticate.aspx> in collaboration with the concerned ITIs from where they have passed out for resolving their grievances.

Deputy Director / JKBOTE,
Jammu/Srinagar

No: BOTE/J/AITT/2023/651-56
DIPK-18342/22 Dated: 10-03-2023

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Office Of The Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division No.II, Sgr.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

NIT No. 233/CDII/22159-69 of 2022-23 DATED:06.03.2023

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S.No.	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rupees)	Time of completion	M.H of Account	Class of Contractor
1.	Improvement of road from Gupkar Road including Grand Palace, Pale stable and Zeshita Devi links by way of road marking, Road Signages, Glow Studs and other Appurtenances.	22.44	800/-	44880/-	20 Days	G-20/ Relevant Head of Account	BEE/CEE
2.	Improvement of Shankaracharya temple Hill Road by way of road Marking, Road Signages, Glow Studs and other Appurtenances.	20.69	800/-	41380/-	20 Days		
3.	Improvement of Chashmashahi Pari Mahal road by way of Road marking, Road Signages, Glow Studs, and other Appurtenances.	17.46	800/-	34920/-	15 Days		

Position of AA4: Under Process

Position of T/S: Under Process

Project Authority: PW (R&B) Department Kashmir

1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	06.03.2023
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	07.03.2023 from 10.00 AM
3	Bid submission Start Date	07.03.2023 from 10.00 AM
4	Bid Submission End Date	12.03.2023 upto 4.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	13.03.2023 at 11.00 AM in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division 2 nd Srinagar.

2. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan under M.H-0059 in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division No.2nd, Srinagar (tender inviting authority) (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date) pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division No.2nd, Srinagar (tender receiving authority).

3. At the time of tendering, all the bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the tender receiving authority i.e. Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division 2nd Srinagar (The date of Earnest money should be between Date of Start of bid and bid submission End date). The successful bidder including M.S.M.E will have to provide Performance security @ 3% of Allotted cost in shape of CDR/FDR/BG at the time of contract award. The earnest money/bid security of 2% will be released to the successful bidder only after the submission of performance security of 3% of the total allotted cost which will be released after successful completion of the DLP.

4. The bidder should be well versed with the nature of work and should have executed same nature of work. The certificate in this regard issued by the competent authority where he has executed such work be uploaded alongwith with bid. In case the bidder failed to upload the same, the bidder shall be treated as non-responsive.

5. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Construction Division No.2nd, Srinagar (tender receiving authority).

6. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids

No. 22159-69
DIPK-18336/22
Dated: 10.03.2023

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
R&B Construction Division IIInd Srinagar

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ازعدالت سبج میونیل مجسٹریٹ سرنیگر بااجلاس: احسان ملک صاحب

سائل: اسامہ
درخواست: لغام رسول صوفی
نام: غلام رسول صوفی
تاریخ: 13-05-2019

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل اسامہ نے عدالت بذمیں ایک درخواست بشمول حلفی بغرض اندارج تاریخ وفات غلام رسول صوفی ولدمرہم شعبان صوفی ساکنہ لین نمبر 14 فردوس ابادیہ مالو سرنیگر مورخہ 09-03-2023 پیش کی ہے۔ لہذا انعام کو بذریعہ اشتہار مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ نسبت درخواست کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہونے کی صورت میں اپنے عدالت اشاعت اشتہار کے اندر دس یوم عدالت میں آکر پیش کرے۔ بعد گزرنے معیا کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔ تاریخ آئندہ عدالت بذمیں 27-03-2023 کو مقرر ہے۔
تحریر الصدر

سبج میونیل مجسٹریٹ سرنیگر nj

ازعدالت سبج میونیل مجسٹریٹ سرنیگر سائل: اسامہ: شاہد رمضان وانی

درخواست: لغام رمضان وانی
نام: غلام نبی وانی
تاریخ: 115-06-2013

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل اسامہ نے عدالت بذمیں ایک درخواست بشمول حلفی بغرض اندارج تاریخ وفات غلام نبی وانی ولدمرہم عبدالقادی وانی ساکنہ پادشاہی باغ سرنیگر مورخہ 08-03-2023 پیش کی ہے۔ لہذا انعام کو بذریعہ اشتہار مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ نسبت درخواست کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہونے کی صورت میں اپنے عدالت اشاعت اشتہار کے اندر دس یوم عدالت میں آکر پیش کرے۔ بعد گزرنے معیا کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہو گا۔ تاریخ آئندہ عدالت بذمیں 25-03-2023 کو مقرر ہے۔
تحریر الصدر

سبج میونیل مجسٹریٹ سرنیگر nj



DAK Seeks Immediate Release Of GMC Employees Salary

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Friday sought immediate release of salary of Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar employees.

“It is unfortunate that the employees of GMC Srinagar are without salary for the last five months,” DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan said in a statement.

Dr Hassan said due to the non-payment of wages, employees and their families face immense hardships. “They are not able to pay the school fee of their children and can’t even buy their daily medicines. The employees are having a difficult time even with daily bread,” he said.

The DAK President said the wages of employees have been withheld on the pretext that the employees have not uploaded one of their promo-

tion orders on JKRM portal. “The verification and updating of service records on the portal is the responsibility of college authorities,” he said.

“Employees are working round the clock in hospitals and they should get their salaries. You can’t deny wages of hospital employees who put in their blood and sweat under difficult conditions to save sick and wounded,” said Dr Nisar.

“It is difficult for employees to work without salary and without wages they can’t deliver their services efficiently which adversely affects patient care,” he said.

Dr Arshad Ali General Secretary DAK said GMC employees are agitating for the last two days demanding the release of their salary. “Government should redress their genuine demand immediately so that patient care doesn’t suffer,” he said.

Three New Integrated Routes Likely To Be Started From Next Week

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Authorities on Friday announced an integrated bus service likely to be started from Monday on three new routes to cover major areas of the city.

Regional Transport Officer (RTO) Kashmir, Syed Shah Nawaz Bukhari said the step is aimed to provide respite to commuters traveling within Srinagar and to streamline the traffic with a new formula.

“We are integrating the routes in Srinagar, and in the first phase, we will cover the three long routes which will be covering most of the city areas,” RTO Kashmir said, adding, “These are not the new routes but an integrated version of the already existing routes.”

The new integrated routes, Bukhari said, are from Parimpora to Harwan, Budgam to Hazratbal, and Panthachowk to Soura.

Explaining the route map, he said the bus service from Panthachowk to Soura will travel through Shivpora, TRC, Batamalo, Lalchowk,

“We are integrating the routes in Srinagar, and in the first phase, we will cover the three long routes which will be covering most of the city areas

Ali Jan Road and then Soura, and will return via the same route to its starting point.

For Budgam to Hazratbal, he said, the bus will cover Humhama, Peerbagh, Rambagh, LD, TRC, Rainawari, and finally to Hazratbal. From Parimpora to Harwan, the bus will cover routes leading to Lal Chowk, TRC, and finally to Harwan, he added.

The RTO Kashmir said that in the first phase, they have started integration on three routes and that they are likely to integrate more routes to ease traveling for commuters. “This will be a trial phase and we will be starting with 40 to 45 buses which will be of 25 to 32 seat capacity and their scheduling will be done after every fifteen minutes,” he added.



Seven Shops Gutted In Pre-Dawn Maisuma Blaze

Observer News Service

Srinagar: At least seven shops were gutted in a pre-dawn blaze that broke out in Maisuma market in Srinagar, officials said Friday.

A senior police official said that a fire broke out in a shopping complex owned by one Khurshid Ahmed Dar in which six shops were gutted completely while one shop suffered partial damage.

The cause of the fire is being ascertained, they said.

One of the affected shopkeepers said the fire broke out at 3:30 AM and was extinguished by firefighters with the help of police and locals.

Four shops were gutted on the first floor while the rest of three shops were damaged on the 3rd floor.

The shops gutted in the fire incident were ‘Princo Electric’ owned by Riyaz Ahmad Khan, ‘IM Enterprises’ of Irfan Shafi Gattoo and Mushraq Ahmad Dar, ‘Canniez Petz Care’ owned by Riyaz Ahmad Bhat and 3 shops by the name of ‘Paradise Engineering’ all owned by the proprietor of the building Khurshid Ahmad Dar.

The quantum of loss is being assessed, said an official.

Police in this regard have registered a case and started an investigation.

Fire Breaks Out In Meebagh, Brein Forest

Srinagar: Fire broke out in the forest area of Meebagh in the upper reaches of Brein, Nishat in Srinagar here this evening, officials said.

Officials said a fire broke out this evening in the Meebagh forest area.

They said the forest team has reached the spot and the efforts are on to douse off the flames.

SMHS Hospital Gets Mobile Charging Station

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A mobile charging station has been set up at the Shri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital here, providing much-needed relief to patients and their attendants who often struggle to keep their devices charged.

The mobile charging station was inaugurated by the hospital administration while the station is located in the hospital’s waiting area consisting of multiple charging points that are compatible with various types of mobile phones and other electronic devices.

Dr. Muzzafar Zargar, Medical Superintendent SMHS Hospital said the hospital has installed over 15 new charging stations for electronic devices. These charging stations were all installed by Jammu and Kashmir Bank, while the installation process was completed yesterday.

“The charging stations are strategically placed throughout the hospital, with a focus on the waiting areas where patients and visitors spend much of their time. With the new charging stations, individuals will be able to easily and conveniently charge their electronic

devices.

The move has been welcomed by patients and attendants, who expressed their gratitude to the hospital administration for this “thoughtful” initiative. “I have been waiting here for the last four hours, and my phone’s battery was almost dead,” said a patient from Anantnag.

The installation of the mobile charging station at SMHS Hospital is expected to set an example for other hospitals in the region to follow, as it provides a much-needed convenience to patients and their attendants during their hospital visits.

DC Srinagar Reviews Formulation Of Skill Development Action Plan

Observer News Service

Srinagar: To discuss the modalities for finalizing the Skill Development Action Plan (SDAP) for conducting Short Term Courses and Placement Drive under SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion) Scheme,



a meeting of the District Skill Committee (DSC) was today held under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner asked the Officers of all line Departments to prepare a comprehensive Action Plan for Skills Acquisition and

Knowledge Awareness for Youth of the District under SANKALP initiative to provide opportunities to skilled human resource to earn sustainable livelihood.

The DC held a detailed discussion with all the stakeholder Departments and stressed that the objective of the plan should be to upgrade the skill set of the youth by impart-

ing quality and market relevant training to them, strengthen the institutional mechanism with modern technological trends for skill development thereby ensuring timely placement to create ample opportunities of employment for the unemployed youth of the District.


The meeting discussed the various aspects related to the District

Skill Plan and also held a detailed deliberation with regard to the initiatives being taken for the socio economic upliftment of Artisans of Srinagar District and rejuvenation of the traditional and heritage craft by providing Market Interventions.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner called for involving all line Departments in the process for gap analysis and emphasized on the need to capacitate more people with skill of varied trades in Technical Institutions to meet the technical human resources, besides generating ample opportunities of employment for the local youth.

The DC asked the Departments of Horticulture and Agriculture Departments to submit the detailed lists of 20 youth each to KVK so that they are imparted short term training courses under SANKALP.

Similarly, the District Social Welfare Officer was also asked to provide a list of 20 specially abled persons to encourage them through training under SANKALP to make them able to earn their day to day livelihood with dignity.



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HIGHWAY STATUS

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



HIJRI CALENDAR

18 Shaban
1444

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5:28
ZUHR	12:43
ASR	4:53
Magrib	6:37
ISHA	7:57

This Day In History

- 502 - Ismail I crowned Shah of Persia (rules till 1524), founder of the Safavid dynasty
- 1669 - Volcano Etna in Italy erupts killing 15,000
- 1795 - Battle at Kurda India: Mahratten beat Mogols.
- 1845 - The Flagstaff War: In New Zealand, Chiefs Hone Heke and Kawiti lead 700 M oris to chop down the British flagpole and drive settlers out of the British colonial settlement of Kororareka because of breaches of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi.
- 1848 - Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin become the first Prime Ministers of the Province of Canada to be democratically elected under a system of responsible government.
- 1864 -The Great Sheffield Flood: the largest man-made disaster ever to befall England kills over 250 people in Sheffield.
- 1897 - A meteorite enters the earth’s atmosphere and explodes over New Martinsville, West Virginia. The debris causes damage but no human injuries are reported.
- 1900 - British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury rejects peace overtures from the Boer leader Paul Kruger (on 5 March) as demanding too-favourable terms
- 1915 - The British declare a blockade of all German ports
- 1917 -British forces occupy Baghdad, the capital of Mesopotamia, after Turkish forces evacuated
- 1918 - Moscow becomes capital of revolutionary Russia
- 1920 -Syria proclaims Emir Feisal king after the country has fought off French domination

From KO Archives

NC Wrests Srinagar Omar Defeats Aga By 701000 Votes

Observer News Service

Srinagar- The ruling National Conference today wrested the prestigious Srinagar lok sabha seat as the party nominee Omar Abdullah defeated his nearest Congress rival, Agha Syed Mehdi by a convincing margin of 70,839 votes. All other candidates, including ding Abdul Rashid Kabli, who fought elections on a BJP ticket, forfeited their deposits. In all 7 candidates were in the fray, including that of Bahujan Samaj Party.

The formal announcement of Omar’s victory was made by the returning officer Ashok Parmar, around noon today, in the lobby of convention complex and in presence of several National Conference ministers and legislators besides some party activists. However even before the official announcement was made, Omar was garlanded by his supporters and brought to the make shift podium in a small procession. His victory was greeted by the small crowd inside with clapping of hands. None of the opposition candidates was present on the occasion and all had left the counting hall much before the final round of counting was over.

Votes of four ballot boxes, from Khanyar assembly segment were not counted following the directions of the election commission in view of discrepancy between the presiding officers’ diary and the actual votes found in the boxes.

The seat was won in last lok sabha election by G M Mir Magami of the Congress defeating his nearest Janata Dal rival, Farooq Andrabi. The National Conference, it may be, mentioned, did not take part in the 1996 lok sabha elections.

Reacting to election results Agha Mehdi said “it is a naked fraud”. Our valid objections regarding tampering of ballot boxes by the ruling National Conference leaders were overruled.

Former union home minister Mufti Mohammad Syed, who himself is contesting from Anantnag lok sabha constituency, attributed the defeat of his party candidates in Srinagar Aand Jammu to the “failure of proper party structure in the state.”

(Kashmir Observer, 11 March, 1998)

In The Cycle Of Scams

Amir Suhail Wani

The concerned must ask themselves as to why they have normalised this cycle of despair for students here? What would it take for concerned institutions to respect the sanctity of hard work? When will these authorities and institutions work with the spirit of honesty towards making employability realisable for the deserving? This culture which students are subjected to needs to be checked

Students are aghast as the J&K administration has recently tendered a contract to a tainted firm called Aptech. Recently, the administration announced that they will hold fresh exams. However, the contract to conduct these exams was given to M/S Aptech Limited, a controversial agency that's blacklisted by Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam. The Delhi High Court has even imposed a penalty of 10 lakh on Aptech for alleged malpractices in recruitments. In December, Jammu and Kashmir High Court strongly indicted the J & K administration for allotting a contract to a tainted agency. The court had said that the decision to award the contract to M/s Aptech Limited, a blacklisted agency, is malafide and change of condition in tender was intended to favour the private agency.

The agency has a bad reputation and a shadowy past. In 2016, Aptech Limited allegedly found itself involved in Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam recruitment scam. In fact, mass irregularities and malpractices were found in the agency's recruitment process as 1,188 appointments were cancelled out of 1,300 posts in 2020 following an investigation by Uttar Pradesh's Special Task Force (STF). In 2017, Aptech was the hiring agency of Rajasthan Police constable recruitment in which irregularities were found. Later, in 2018 FIR was filed and examination was cancelled. In 2018, UP Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) hired Aptech for examination. After irregularities via system monitoring and various other modes were reported by STF, examination was scrapped and Aptech was blacklisted for a period of three years from May 2019 to May 2022. In 2018, the examination of Delhi University LLB course conducted by Aptech was also cancelled due to leak of examination papers. Delhi High Court fined Aptech Limited with Rs 10,00,000. In 2020, Assam irrigation department examination was conducted by Aptech Limited. Here again irregularities were found. Central Teacher Eligibility Test was also conducted by Aptech. The paper was leaked and irregularities came up in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Special Task Force also arrested one person in the case. The paper for the examination was later rescheduled.

If these facts were already in the public domain, and indeed it is out of consideration that the administration must not have been aware of these misgivings of the Aptech Limited, one is left thinking as to what prompted our administration to tender the contract to the company of such disrepute. Incidents like these do not have



a singular impact, confined in time, they distort and destroy the image of local recruiting agencies forever.

They not only demoralise the aspirants but have repercussions on the image of authorities, institutions and states – recall Bihar being famous for corruption. It's likely that Kashmir too will become famous for examination scams. In fact, we already have a legacy of scams in place. One is immediately reminded of scams like BOP-EE entrance scam and the recent FAA recruitment exam scandal among others.

These episodes have a detrimental impact on the aspirations and dreams of aspiring youth. The halo of suspicion that is now surrounding these exams and the conducting agencies has multiplied the anxieties and worries of the aspirants, making them doubt their own capacities and to feel uneasy even after the best of the efforts and preparation given the kind of dubiousness of the entire recruitment process.

While students from other states worry about cracking exams, students in J&K are insecure about the honesty of examinations themselves.

The concerned must ask themselves as to

why they have normalised this cycle of despair for students here? What would it take for concerned institutions to respect the sanctity of hard work? When will these authorities and institutions work with the spirit of honesty towards making employability realisable for the deserving? This culture which students are subjected to needs to be checked. We need to encourage a conducive, representative and inclusive access to opportunities. However, all that students are getting are: ill-prepared timelines, scams, corruption, nepotism, compromised exam cycles and corrupted results. The authorities must develop a moment of compunction, must realise that what is at stake goes beyond a single exam or a single post but the entire future of the nation under the threat of being jeopardized by people of incompetence, lack of merit, men of fraudulent and fallible credentials.

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 Srinagar based columnist

Two key milestones have been crossed on the road leading to the G20 summit scheduled to be held in New Delhi on September 9-10. Some vital conclusions can be drawn out of the two controversial meetings of the G20 finance and foreign ministers respectively.

Neither meeting could produce a joint communique and the reason for the failure is the inability of the host country to knock the heads together and persuade them to enter a consensual corridor. The western countries that are by far over-represented in the G20 overreached in their dogged determination to pillory and ostracise two major emerging powers – Russia and China – and the latter couldn't take bullying anymore and, understandably, pushed back.

However, there is much sophistry in the Modi government's estimation that the Ukraine crisis is all about a 'war.' But the tragedy is that the conflict was avoidable, if only the Biden Administration had signalled willingness to discuss Russia's legitimate concerns regarding NATO's expansion along its western border.

In a nutshell, the root problem is the "militarised American leadership," on which the renowned American historian of US foreign and security policies Professor Andrew Bacevich has penned a brilliant essay in Foreign Affairs magazine last week titled 'The Reckoning That wasn't'.

Yet, the US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken would rather freeze the present moment and castigate Russia for its 'aggression' in Ukraine. Great powers have phenomenal memory but in this case, the Biden Administration suffers from amnesia – in reality, it is time past that has become time present in Ukraine.

Where the host country, India, faulted was that it did a cut-and-paste job in the draft communique, lifting the relevant passage out of the Bali Declaration. A train crash was bound to happen after such a bizarre mishandling. The point is, it is lost on our mandarins that the Ukraine crisis has radically transformed in the most recent months since the Bali summit.

Today, it is an incontrovertible fact that the US and NATO are directly involved in the conflict. More importantly, Russia has gained the upper hand militarily and Ukraine stares at defeat despite all the weaponry pumped into that country by the US and its allies.

The US is forcing Russia to reduce Ukraine to a rump state. To be sure, once that happens, the US will walk away, as it did in Afghanistan – and may be in all probability, the Biden team will be heading for the Indo-Pacific for new adventures. The war has been highly profitable for the US military-industrial complex.

Second, the revelations by former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande, amongst others, that the so-called Minsk Agreements were nothing more

G20 Reality Check

M. K. BHADRAKUMAR



than an elaborate charade to hoodwink Moscow and buy time for NATO to militarise Ukraine and prepare that country to fight Russia in a conceivable future, has exposed the chicanery of the US. Washington never wanted Kiev to negotiate with Russia or have discussions with the separatist groups in Donbass regarding regional autonomy within a federated Ukraine. This is the honest historical truth.

Put differently, Russia was left with no option but to act pre-emptively to safeguard its interests just as Kiev, with backing from NATO and the US, was all set to launch a major offensive against the ethnic Russian population in Donbass for a 'final solution.'

Third, the findings by the renowned American journalist Seymour Hersh that none other than President Biden had ordered the sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines – the decision was taken even months before the Russian special military operations began in February 2022 – are a damning indictment of the US for orchestrating the complete rupture of German-Russian energy cooperation, which again throws light on Washington's diabolical agenda to exploit the Ukraine situation to strengthen its transatlantic leadership and force the Europeans to perform in a subaltern role.

Thus, although there are grave misgivings in the European mind regarding the US' proxy war, they are internalised as an independent

pathway or strategic autonomy is ruled out.

How is it possible for the Modi government to ignore all this? Worse still, how could the MEA have so flippantly got Modi to mouth a patently absurd quote – 'Today's-era-is-not-an-era-of-war' – that betrays naïveté? Plainly put, India's consensus-building inevitably narrowed down to Russia accepting exactly the same formulation as in the Bali declaration.

Indeed, Moscow understands that the Modi government is indulging in doublespeak. A commentary featured in the Kremlin-funded RT last week spotlighted that a promotional video prepared by the Observer Research Foundation, event manager for the ongoing Raisina Dialogue, has resurrected the infamous Modi quote all over again, which "exposes a duplicitous foreign policy."

The commentary adds: "Modi's words seek to hit home the point that though India will persist with buying Russian crude oil at a discounted rate despite US pressure, New Delhi will stand by its democratic beliefs. India seeks to err on the side of caution by being seen with Western democracies and its officials are hosting several American influencers ahead of the G20 foreign ministers' meeting... Does the Modi quote reinforce the argument that New Delhi is speaking with a forked tongue?"

Unsurprisingly, Russian position has hardened lately and it is entirely conceivable that

Moscow concluded that Delhi cannot be trusted as an honest broker, leave alone 'time-tested friend', in the upcoming G20 deliberations.

CNN has reported that the G20 foreign ministers' meeting "was seen as a grand test for Indian diplomacy, which ultimately didn't succeed in reaching a consensus because of Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine."

A plausible explanation could be that after being threatened with a regime change orchestrated by the western intelligence – starting with the BBC documentary, followed by the Hindenburg report, and culminating in George Soros's prognosis of a "democratic revival" in India – the ruling elite panicked.

There has even been a rushed decision to host a QUAD foreign ministers' meeting in Delhi on Friday to honour the visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, according to the American itch to show the middle finger at Moscow and Beijing. Alas, where is Indian diplomacy heading to?

In the recent weeks, the social media was full of Foreign minister S. Jaishankar defiantly holding forth against the Euro-Atlantic world, brandishing the sword of India's resoluteness and resilience, blah, blah, but all that must be for domestic consumption? It pays to hang tough during election time.

The Modi government has made a serious mistake in underestimating that the Ukraine situation is an epochal affair where it has no mediatory role. There is no Nobel Peace Prize on offer here. Russia is determined to realise its strategic objectives. And Moscow does not need Modi government's help, given the stark reality that this is an existential crisis which it simply cannot afford to lose, no matter what it takes.

And, at any rate, there is precious little Modi Govt can do to tilt the global strategic balance. Its much-vaunted global influence stands exposed after the abject failure of today's G20 ministerial. Indeed, the G20 ministerial on Thursday is a reality check. Interestingly, a second commentary by RT last week was titled 'Can India supplant China as the voice of the Global South?'

Against this sombre backdrop, Modi skipped today's G20 ministerial, although it is an extraordinary happening that India was hosting twenty foreign ministers for a single event. But that was the right thing to do – simply deliver a 'virtual message' and move on to more important affairs. Who wants to associate with failure?

A course correction is in order. The government has been giving excessive hype to the G20 summit, as if it is carnival time ahead of the 2024 general election.

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

In the Name of Competition, Why Must School Make My Daughter Sad?

A Idhries

ZEENIYA cried a lot yesterday while talking to me on the phone. Not for her doll or her chocolates, but for her studies. Hiccups followed by questions as her mom tried to make sense.

The six-year-old can't make sense of her world these days. Her school exams have started, and so have her tears. She probably, like others, is struggling with her reading skills. She lost three years of schooling to the COVID-19 pandemic and Article 370 and finds it difficult to read.

She has no difficulty speaking not one but two languages and understanding the third one. But when it comes to the reading, she finds it challenging to add words and make them into sentences.

Her support all these months has been Eshal. "Eshal Saleem". Zeeniya always corrects me. She is her life. The little ones exchange greeting cards for each other. Each card is done so meticulously that you can only envy their love, trust and faith for each other.

When either of them is absent, their day turns sombre. Zeeniya took tiny crackers to school to show to Eshal. I found out that in the evening when she came from school. "Eshal ko dikhaya bas," she said nonchalantly.

All these months, Eshal has been Zeeniya's support in reading those languages. Helping her write and sometimes attempt Zeeniya's worksheets in the classroom. Zeeniya, in turn, is assisting Eshal in speaking and making Eshal understand those English and Urdu lines. Courtesy YouTube, Zeeniya is a pro at speaking languages.

Their bond is beautiful, and they feed on each other's strengths and insecurities. Love, compassion, empathy, sharing and kindness are virtues of their bond.

Today things changed. It was Zeeniya's first term exams, and the six-year-olds had to sit according to their roll numbers. Suddenly Zeeniya, after months, was sitting with a stranger she hadn't interacted with before.

She cried, requested and cajoled her teacher into allowing her to sit next to her beloved Eshal, but they didn't bend. After all, they are following rules. The system has been laid down out for years.

That stranger had behaved like a snob. All boys are snobs at that age. He had hidden his answer sheet and not showed Zeeniya anything. And Zeeniya wasn't looking at him because "Mam said. No cheating". A new world for the little one. She learnt a new behaviour today. 'Not sharing'

She hadn't performed well as per her expectations and had come home in a bad



mood. She was crying and questioning why she couldn't sit next to Eshal.

All evening she was trying to make sense of roll numbers. "Will 15 sit after 16 and 4 after 3, and 12 after 11". She tried all her permutations, but Eshal still sat very far away. Breaking into tears every time, she tried different numbers only to get disappointed again.

Those tears and questions tore into me. They still are tearing into me as I write this. For parents, daughters are special and seeing them crying isn't lovely. It isn't pleasant.

Why couldn't she sit next to Eshal? I wanted to ask her teacher. She is just six-year-old, and even if a fellow student helped her in her writing, how would that have harmed her or any child's future in that classroom.

This gets me thinking, and I ask a larger question.

Why do our educational and grading systems initiate competition and not collaboration early on? Why can't friends or all children sit next to each other and solve problems together? Why can't we teach children to love, compassion, kindness,

and empathy from an early age?

No wonder you have seen so many people in offices around you that don't think twice to demeaning and be vile to move ahead on the corporate ladder. They don't think twice because they have been taught to compete, not collaborate. They have been taught to be unkind and not share.

And how will you create a collaborative and kind work atmosphere when you are taught from a young age to slit the throats of the competition for you to move ahead in life.

This schooling system is at complete odds with our present and future work culture, where working together is not a luxury but an absolute must. All this month, in my office, my boss has constantly been talking about working as a team, and we see virtues and results in that. It can never be us versus them, but we work together to find a solution.

This individualistic notion of "I will win at the cost of everyone else" must be old school and should have no place in our work culture.

From the beginning, we must teach

children that we must be friends, be kind, have empathy and work together to find a solution.

Competition is essential, but collaboration is paramount. We all have unique special skills, and we can run this engine together. And for that, teachers and schools need to do away with this system which breeds divisions. We need to create a system where everyone is a winner.

The early years are critical, setting the framework for children's behaviour and determining their worldview. We can always teach them to be competitive later in their lives. To start, teach them to be kind, empathetic and collaborative.

Tomorrow Zeeniya has another paper. She will cry again. I imagine her looking toward her teacher and saying. Can I sit with Eshal? "Eshal nahin. Eshal Saleem."

And the teacher wouldn't even understand the Zeeniya's plea. She had to follow the archaic system. Zeeniya will learn another behaviour tomorrow. To be unkind.

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WHY DO OUR EDUCATIONAL AND GRADING SYSTEMS INITIATE COMPETITION AND NOT COLLABORATION EARLY ON? Why can't friends or all children sit next to each other and solve problems together? Why can't we teach children to love, compassion, kindness, and empathy from an early age?

How Should Reading Be Taught In Schools?

Misty Adoniou

When my son was nine years old, he put aside the large Harry Potter novel he had been slowly, but enthusiastically, reading each evening and instead began ploughing through lots of fairly uninspiring books that he brought home from school each day.

It turned out the Year 4 teachers had devised a competition at his school - whichever class read the most books would be rewarded with an end of term pizza party.

The aim, I presume, was to motivate the children to read. It is ironic then that the effect was that my son stopped reading for pleasure and instead began reading for the numbers.

Reading is now increasingly being reduced to a numbers game in schools.

WHAT LEVEL IS YOUR CHILD AT?

At pick up time, parents quiz each other about what reading level their child is on. Inside the school staff room, teachers are directed to have children on level 15, 20 or 30 by the end of the school year.

Six year olds are deciding whether they are good readers or not based on how many books they have ticked off on their take home reader sheet.

These levels are based on algorithms that calculate the ratio of syllables to sentences, or measure word frequency and sentence length.

The rationale is that these formulae can be applied to rank books on a scale of readability and thus guide teachers to match books with children's reading ability.

There are two key problems with this numbers approach to reading. First, the algorithms are faulty. Second, publishers misuse them.

WHAT MAKES A BOOK HARD OR EASY TO READ?

The missing variables in readability algorithms are the authors' intentions, the readers' motivations and the teachers' instruction.

These are key omissions, and they seriously reduce the usability of the algorithms and the credibility of the reading levels they produce.

Fictional stories often use familiar and high frequency vocabulary, and many authors use relatively simple sentence structures.

However the use of literary tools like allegory and metaphor, along with challenging text themes, increases the difficulty of works of fiction in ways that are not captured in readability algorithms.

For example, readability formulae give Hemmingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" a reading level suitable for primary school students. They may be able to decode the words on the page but comprehension of the book is less likely.

The same formulae may rank a non-fiction book on dinosaurs, for example, as only suitable for high school students because of its uncommon vocabulary, lengthy sentences and multi-syllabic words.

Yet a child's interest and familiarity with the topic, or a teacher or parent's support and instruction, can make that non-fiction book very readable for younger children.

READING SCHEMES

As readability formulae are not always a good fit for books, the solution has been, instead, to write books which fit the formulae. And publishers have been very keen to supply those books.

These are the books that our children take home each evening. They are written according to the numbers - numbers of high frequency



When we teach children to read through schemes that tally their books, we teach them that reading is simply about quantity. If reading is about getting a reward of a pizza, then children are less likely to read for intrinsic rewards

words, numbers of syllables, numbers of words in a sentence.

What is missing in those books is author intention and craft, reader

engagement and interest, and teacher support and instruction.

Essentially, then, what is missing in these books is the very es-

sence of reading.

WHAT BOOKS SHOULD CHILDREN READ?

We have been using the reading scheme system for decades and we still have children struggling to read.

When we use these quasi books to teach reading, we are not adequately preparing them for real reading.

These books, written to fit algorithms, don't build broad vocabularies in our children. They don't teach our children how to read complex sentence structures or deal with literary language or read between the lines. In many cases, they turn children off reading altogether.

Children learn to read by reading a book that is a little beyond what

they can already read. The gap between what they can read and what they could read is reduced when the child:

- ▶ is highly motivated by the content of the book;
- ▶ has existing background knowledge about that content;
- ▶ is receiving good instruction from a teacher.

We don't need books arranged in coloured boxes labelled with level numbers to teach a child to read.

Beautifully written pieces of children's literature will do the job.

Books full of carefully crafted writing by authors whose intentions are to engage, entertain and inform.

Books that teachers can work with in the classroom showing how sounds work in words, and how words work in sentences to make us feel, see or think new things.

Beautiful books that parents can also buy and delight in reading with their children.

WHY IT MATTERS

The way we teach children to read will fundamentally influence what they understand the purpose of reading to be.

When we teach children to read through schemes that tally their books, we teach them that reading is simply about quantity. If reading is about getting a reward of a pizza, then children are less likely to read for intrinsic rewards.

The claims made for well-written children's literature are many and varied.

Reading books to your children brings you closer to them, can teach them philosophy and about world issues.

But they can do something else. They can teach our children to read.

By arrangements with The Conversation

Iran, Saudi Arabia Agree to Resume Relations, Re-Open Embassies

Observer News Desk

BEIJING: Arch rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia have reached an agreement in the China to restore their diplomatic relations and re-open embassies and missions, seven years after their ties were broken over several issues.

The agreement was struck on Friday after several days of intensive negotiations between Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani and his Saudi counterpart in the Chinese capital of Beijing. It was officially announced in a joint statement by Iran, Saudi Arabia and China.

The statement was inked by Shakhani, Musaid Al Aiban, Saudi Arabia's national security adviser, and Wang Yi, the director of the Office of the Central

Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party.

Iranian and Saudi officials have been involved in intensive talks in Beijing since Monday to find a final solution to the issues between Muslim worlds two biggest and most influential countries. The negotiations followed a meeting between Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing last month.

"As a result of the talks, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia agreed to resume diplomatic relations and re-open embassies and missions within two months," the joint statement said.

It added that the Iranian and Saudi foreign ministers will meet to "implement this decision and make the necessary

arrangements for the exchange of ambassadors."

In the footage aired by Iranian media, Wang could be heard offering "whole-hearted congratulations" on the two countries' "wisdom".

"Both sides have displayed sincerity," he said. "China fully supports this agreement."

The Saudi Press Agency confirmed the agreement when it also published the joint statement from Saudi Arabia and Iran, which said that the two countries had agreed to respect state sovereignty and not interfere in each other's internal affairs.

The statement also said that Riyadh and Tehran had agreed to activate a security cooperation agreement signed in 2001.

Iran's state-run IRNA news

agency quoted Shamkhani as calling the talks "clear, transparent, comprehensive and constructive".

"Removing misunderstandings and the future-oriented views in relations between Tehran and Riyadh will definitely lead to improving regional stability and security, as well as increasing cooperation among Persian Gulf nations and the world of Islam for managing current challenges," Shamkhani was quoted as saying.

Tensions have long been high between the regional rivals.

Riyadh broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts there.

Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shia Muslim scholar days earlier, triggering the demonstrations.

Shia-majority Iran and once Wahabi Muslim bastion Saudi Arabia support rival sides in several conflict zones across the Middle East, including in Yemen where Iran supports popular upsurge against a military coalition led by Saudi's.

But there have been more recent efforts on both sides to warm ties.

In the last couple of years, there had been meetings between Saudi and Iranian officials in Baghdad. The Iraqis started mediation talks back in 2021. Everything stopped during the Iraqi elections of 2021.

The Iranian top security official hailed great efforts by Iraq to host five rounds of talks between Tehran and Riyadh culminating in the Beijing agreement.

Iran and Saudi Arabia are on

rival sides of a number of regional issues, in countries as varied as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

Improved relations between Tehran and Riyadh could therefore have an effect on politics across the Middle East.

"The security situation in the region, like in Yemen and Lebanon, deteriorates and suffers when these two countries have differences," said Al-Jazeera.

"With this deal, it is possible that we might start to see compromises in these countries. This deal can lead to the creation of a better security situation in the region. They have a lot of leverage in these countries."

Adnan Tabatabai, the CEO of the CARPO think tank, told Al Jazeera that China "has a real big interest" in not seeing the

regional security situation "descend into chaos".

"[Like] in 2019, when the waterways of Hormuz were the sites of different explosions and attacks," he said.

"There are inherent interests for the Chinese to try and use the leverage that they have towards both Tehran and Riyadh to make some efforts to balance these relations and finalise what the Iraqis and Omanis had in fact started."

China, which recently hosted Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, is also a top purchaser of Saudi oil. President Xi Jinping, just awarded a third five-year term as president earlier on Friday, visited Riyadh in December to attend meetings with oil-rich Gulf Arab nations crucial to China's energy supplies.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

'Ghost Of Panthyal

"ghost of Panthyal to rest, forever". In another tweet, he shared the photographs of Pavement Quality Concrete (PQC) work for top-wearing layers being laid in T5.

The four-lane project of the 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, started in 2011. The work, which included a number of small and major tunnels, bridges and flyovers is likely to be completed by next year after missing several deadlines over the past decade.

"We have the most critical stretch of 66 km passing through the district (Ramban) from Nashri tunnel to Banihal tunnel. The National Highway Authority of India is working on the project. We have got three tunnels in the past year and several other small tunnels and bridges are nearing completion which will bypass other critical spots on the road," the deputy commissioner said.

He expressed hope that the travel through Ramban district will become very comfortable by July end.

"The Ramban flyover which will bypass Ramban market is expected to be thrown open by April 15, Jaishwal bridge near Karole by March 31 and 873-metre Kunfer tunnel between Peeda and Chanderkote next month as well," he said.

The officer said the Jammu-Srinagar national highway, also known as NH44, is the only highway where a four-lane project is under progress without stopping vehicular movement.

"On an average, over 10,000 to 11,000 vehicles ply on the highway on a daily basis (between Srinagar and Jammu). It is a lifeline and the only all-weather road so the challenges being faced by the executing agencies are much more than anywhere else," he said.

He said supplies to Kashmir, including perishable items, are carried via this road.

"The administration is giving full support to NHAI for the completion of the project in a time-bound manner and to ensure smooth flow of the traffic," he said.

Varinder Singh, an official working with CPPL construction company which is working on the T5 tunnel, said over 200 workers have been engaged to complete the tunnel on a fast-track basis.

"The engineers, supervisors and labourers are all working together in shifts round-the-clock to ensure the opening of the tunnel," he said.

Social activist Iftiyaz Ahmad said the opening of the tunnel will be a major breakthrough as many lives have been lost due to the shooting of stones in Panthyal.

"We request the central government to sanction some more tunnels in the slide-prone areas to make the road safer," he said.

NYT 'Spreading

came after the US-based newspaper published an opinion piece on alleged curbs on information flow in Kashmir.

"Some foreign media nourishing a grudge against India and our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi have long been systematically trying to peddle lies about our democracy and pluralistic society," Thakur said.

He said freedom of press in India is as sacrosanct as other fundamental rights.

"Democracy in India and We the people are very mature and we don't need to learn grammar of democracy from such agenda driven media," he said.

Thakur said the "blatant lies" spread by NYT about press freedom in Kashmir is condemnable.

"Indians will not allow such mindsets to run their decisive agenda on India soil," the minister said.

Transporters Reject

local transporters have decided not to support Jammu Bandh Call by Chamber and there could be a possible routine day for commuters. "Transporters have decided not to support the call for Jammu Bandh given by CCI," said Secretary All J&K Transport Welfare Association J&K UT, Sanjeev Choudhary.

He added that transporters consisting of all types of commercial vehicles including trucks, tankers, taxis, buses, minibuses, auto rickshaws, etc. are unable to extend the support to the bandh call given by the Chamber of Commerce. The transport facility will remain functional throughout J&K (UT) on 11.03.2023.

Earlier, on Thursday, the Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) had called for Jammu Bandh on Saturday against the government's decision of imposing property tax in the municipal areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing a press conference here, CCI Jammu president, Arun Gupta said that "The property tax was imposed unilaterally without consulting the elected representatives.

We were expecting that our demand would be considered but it was not done which is very unfortunate."

He said that the decision to impose tax should be left to an elected government and the elected urban local body.

He said that "Therefore, we have decided to go for a one-day symbolic bandh in Jammu on Saturday with the support of Bazaar Associations and Yuva Rajput Sabha."

"For the last 15 days, they never clarified the type of tax being imposed on commercial institutions. Why is the factual position being hidden from the business community?" said the CCI president—(KNO)

Protests Continue

those with ulterior motives, who are only here to disrupt the processes," Sharma told reporters here.

He said there would be no compromise on transparency and merit.

"Justice will be ensured, Youth's ability and merit will be respected and strict action will be taken against all those elements who are trying to harm the future of meritorious aspirants," the JKSSB chairman said.

Allaying apprehensions on the hiring of APTECH Limited, he said the agency is not blacklisted as on date, though it was blacklisted in Uttar Pradesh in May 2019 for a period of three years that expired in May 2022.

"I would like to clarify that blacklisting is a restrictive term valid for a period. It has to be distinguished from disbanding i.e. permanent blacklisting. The present protests seem to be motivated to derail the functioning of the board," he said.

Sharma said the particular agency is already conducting exams across the country and at the Centre.

"It has been and is executing prime projects in NTA, CBSE (2023) and other government bodies and has successfully completed many CBT based examinations like UGC NET (2020, 2021), JNU Entrance Examination (JNUEE 2021), Delhi University Entrance Test (DUET 2019, 2020, 2021) wherein 52 lakh candidates have participated," he said, adding the agency also conducted Income Tax (2022), RPF Jhansi (2022), Railway Vadodara (2022) exams.

"The agency has qualified the parameters prescribed for tendering and was the highest bidder on quality-cum-cost based selection (QCBS) mode. There are specific rules provided in General Financial Rules 2017 of GoI to deal with debarment/blacklisting," he said.

The official said the tendering process has been undertaken strictly as per the rules on the subject.

"It is not that Mr A or Mr B will decide blacklisting, let the court give judgement. It cannot be decided by a few on a road or in a rotary. These persons levelling unsubstantiated allegations have clear ulterior motives," he claimed.

Without identifying anyone, he said there are certain elements spreading distortion and misinformation on the issue.

"As far as the allegation against the recruitment agency is concerned, the matter is sub-judice and the high court will take a decision in the matter. The issue will be settled by the law and not by sloganeering. The instant protests seem to be an attempt to influence the high court," Sharma said.

He said before initiating the tendering process, the board held deliberations with the stakeholders and it was realised that continuous updation of systems is very vital for any agency during the conduct of exams.

"The board has not given the selection process to any single agency. Rather the board has engaged these agencies for rendering necessary

assistance to conduct the exams," he said.

He said the board is taking all safety measures like the appointment of observers by the General Administration Department, observers of district administration, magistrates, as well as additional frisking, third-party audits and installation of jammers to conduct free and fair exams.

"We are committed to conduct exams including those scheduled from March 16 with the highest degree of security. Our mission is to uphold the sanctity of the recruitment process," he said.

HC Clears Decks

engagement of the firm and maintained its interim directions shall remain in force.

Notably, the job aspirants in the J&K are up in arms against the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) for awarding the contract to a "blacklisted company" for conducting job exams.

Both the regions witnessed massive protests against the decision. It may be noted that the JKSSB has been in news for the last two years for over recruitment scams.

The petition was filed by Jammu based-activist Vinkal Sharma against the Union Territory of J&K.

In the writ petition, Sharma had noted that JKSSB be directed not to conduct the examination through M/S Aptech Limited being a black-listed agency.

Sharma had informed the court that the earlier board had ignored the successful bidder, i.e., ND Info Systems Pvt. Ltd and gave the contract to Merit Tract Services Pvt. Ltd, a black-listed firm.

Merit Tract Services Pvt. Ltd conducted the examinations of Junior Engineer (Civil), Jal Shakti Department, Sub Inspector (Home Department) and also Finance Account Assistants in the year 2022.

"However, due to various malpractices occurring during the examinations in its various centers and leakage of papers, the said examinations were scrapped by the JKSSB. The matter was investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation, filed a charge sheet in these matters but despite that the Board did not hold MeritTrac Services Pvt. Ltd. accountable or blacklisted the firm," the writ petition reads.

The petitioners while fearing unfair recruitment process further noted that Board is overlooking this big scam issued fresh tender and after manipulating certain conditions in the tender gave the tender to M/S Aptech Ltd., which also has a "tainted history", has already been accused of "malpractices" in various examinations and has also been blacklisted previously.

On 30 December 2022, the a single bench of J&K High Court directed the government to constitute a high level Committee headed by not less than a retired High Court Judge to enquire into the conduct of Jammu and Kashmir Service Selection Board for the their brazen irregularities/illegalities in changing the terms/conditions of the tender, also as to what weighed with them to award a contract to conduct an examination by an organization which has previously facilitated malpractices in public examinations and accordingly appropriate action be initiated against those found guilty.

It had further noted that the functioning of Jammu and Kashmir Service Selection Board does not "inspire confidence" in holding public examinations.

"It has become incumbent on all stakeholders to review the functioning of the Board." the court had said.

However the order was then stayed by a division bench after the government challenged

the single bench order.

The division bench allowed the board to go ahead with exams but barred it from declaring results till further orders from the court.

On Friday, the division comprising Justice Tabi Rabistan and Justice M.A Choudhary remitted the writ petition back to the writ court for deciding the matter afresh.

".....Therefore, in view of what has been discussed above, we, without discussing the merits of the case, deem it proper to dispose of the appeals and remit the writ petition back to the Writ Court for deciding the matter afresh. Ordered accordingly," the order reads.

It further said "Accordingly, the order and judgment impugned is hereby set aside, the writ petition is restored to its original number and the writ petition is remitted back to the learned Single Judge with a request to decide the matter afresh,"

The petition has been listed for next hearing on April 5, 2023 before the single bench.

Bukhari Re-Elected

the party's presidential election unopposed. Thus, he is declared the party president for the 2nd tenure. Since the process of election is completed, as per the requirements of the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party, it comes to an end with immediate effect."

Pertinently, Bukhari completed his first tenure as party president on March 8, 2023. His second term will end on March 8, 2026.

Farooq Calls

resolution passed in this direction would be made public in the proper way at a subsequent news conference later.

"This all party meeting was decided to be convened much before I left for the holy pilgrimage last week. Meeting will be held tomorrow and the issues confronting J&K at the moment will be discussed thoroughly. Any resolution passed in this regard will be made public through a news conference later," said the NC leader.

The statement by Farooq Abdullah comes a day after he returned from Saudi Arabia after performing Umrah.

He said the issues like awarding contracts to 'blacklisted' companies like Aptech will also be argued during the meeting.

When asked whether BJP has also been invited to attend the meeting and how many other political parties are expected to attend APM, he said "No, BJP has not been invited. We have invited all political parties to attend the meeting. I don't know who will join us, as it's purely their desecration to accept or reject the invitation, rest, whoever Allah guides will attend the meeting,"

Sought Forgiveness

after performing Umrah, made these comments while talking to reporters at Srinagar's Hazratbal shrine after offering congregational Friday prayers.

"During Tawaf-e-Kaaba, I prayed for peace, prosperity and progress of J&K. I sought forgiveness and prayed to the Almighty to guide us through the right path. I prayed for the forgiveness of the informers too. I prayed to Allah to bring peace in J&K and ease our burden as we are caught in trouble. Deadly diseases, immorality and substance abuse have cornered us badly," he added.

Patwaris Strike

the association decided to continue the strike.

Pertinently, All Jammu and Kashmir Patwar Association (AJKPA), began an indefinite strike on March 1 in all the 20 districts of the Union Territory to exert a pull on the administration to fulfill their demands.

Among others, the demands also include increase in the pay grade of graduate Patwaris from Rs 2400 to 2800, blanket ban on direct recruitment of Naib Tehsildars, creation of Girdawar circles and rationalizing of Patwar halqas.

"We have been fighting for our rights for year's altogether. Despite repeated assurances, none of our demands has been fulfilled as yet. We won't resume duties till our demands are fulfilled," the AJKPA executive member said.

He said the meeting with the senior officials lasted for around an hour during which the striking Patwaris highlighted their demands.

He said the Div Com gave patient hearing to their demands and assured that the government will try to address the issues confronting Patwaris as early as possible.

"We are hopeful that our demands will be considered and fulfilled as well. However, we cannot take any decision in haste. Minutes of the meeting will be shared later," he added.

Last Date For Haj

submitted their Haj Application Forms online but have NOT received their Cover Numbers through SMS till date, are requested to approach/contact J&K Haj Committee, Haj House Bemina, Srinagar during office hours either personally or through following telephone numbers so that their Cover Numbers are generated well before the last date i.e., 20th March, 2023.

4 Held For

SSP Tosh has issued directions to officers to set up checkpoints outside schools and colleges and apprehend all those involved in such activities.

Pak Drone Carrying

spokesperson said.

A drone along with an AK rifle, two magazines and 40 bullet rounds were recovered from an agricultural field near Nabi Nagar village, he said.

Ex- Legislator,

youth; PoJK displaced families, West Pakistani refugees and custodian property holders. He also highlighted the issue of pending payments under MGNREGA," he said.

The LG, the spokesperson said, assured the former Legislator that the genuine issues raised by him would be examined earnestly.

Later, he said, Ravinder Singh Jamwal, famous Sculptor, accompanied by Ms Veena Jamwal, Sarpanch Birpur informed the Lt Governor on his upcoming initiatives for the promotion of art-related activities.

5 Cattle Charred

and doused off the flames. Besides loss of cattle, goods and belongings in the house were burnt to ashes in the fire incident.

Confirming it, a police officer said that a case has been registered. He said the cause of the fire was also being investigated.

Bank Accounts

having transactions worth over Rs 1.30 crore, belonging to him were frozen, he said.

The SSP said Khanday's questioning led to the arrest of Ahmad, from Hidyal village. Six teams were formed and properties belonging to him were raided at different locations in the town and adjoining areas.

Poswal said 200 grams of poppy straw were recovered from Kichloo's house in Pochhal village and subsequently he was arrested.

Some electronic devices including three mobile phones were seized during the raids, he said, adding further investigation is underway.

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



Rajouri Gets Its First Fully Functional Drug De-Addiction Centre

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: A 15-bed fully functional drug de-addiction centre was set up in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, an official said on Friday.

The drug de-addiction centre, the first such facility in the border district, is supported by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and is being run by National Educational Society And Social Welfare Organisation (NESSWO), an NGO, he said.

The official said the outpatient department (OPD) services at the centre will start from Monday, providing an opportunity for individuals struggling with addiction to seek help and support.

"This centre will undoubtedly make a positive impact on the lives of those struggling with addiction and their families," Deputy Commissioner, Rajouri, Vikas Kundal said.

Kundal, who along with Senior Superintendent of Police,

Rajouri, Mohammad Aslam, inaugurated the facility interacted with some of the patients and their families.

The deputy commissioner emphasised the importance of seeking help for addiction and spreading awareness about the harmful effects of drugs on one's health and well-being.

He assured the patients of the administration's support in their rehabilitation and recovery process.

"The drug de-addiction centre will provide comprehensive treatment and care to those in need," Kundal said, encouraging patients not to hesitate to seek help if they are struggling with addiction.

Terming the drug de-addiction centre a significant step in addressing the drug abuse problem in the region, Aslam highlighted the need for a collective effort to fight drug addiction and emphasised the importance of community participation in addressing the issue.

Congress Holds 'Hath Se Hath Jodo' Campaign In Reasi

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: The Congress' Jammu and Kashmir unit's 'Hath se Hath Jodo' yatra on Friday reached Katra in Reasi district, with leaders taking out a march to oppose a ropeway project and imposition of property tax in the Union Territory.

Led by Pradesh Congress Committee president Vikar Raool Wani and working president Raman Bhalla, party workers raised slogans demanding that the Jammu and Kashmir administration withdraw the property tax notification.

They also alleged that the ropeway to the Mata Vaishno Devi temple on the Trikuta hills will render locals jobless and people were against the project.

Under the 'Hath se Hath Jodo' campaign, the Congress also raised issues of restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood and assembly elections in the Union Territory, a party spokesman said, adding that the march was from the Shalimar Park to the Katra Bus Stand.

"Hath se Hath Jodo yatra cum agitation programme is the second phase of Bharat Jodo Yatra. This will culminate at the end of this month, covering various districts and constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir," Wani said addressing a gathering.

He accused the BJP government at the Centre and Lt Governor-led Union Territory administration of ignoring issues of people.

Employment Survey To Start On Pilot Scale At Ganderbal

Survey Aims To Set Priority Based Targets For Self-Employment & Skill Development Schemes: DC

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: A meeting to finalize the modalities to start the Employment Survey on pilot scale in District Ganderbal was Friday held here under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Shyambir.

The survey has been proposed to start on pilot scale in Sonamarg B Panchayat initially. In the pilot survey, District Skill Committee shall note down all the obstacles which may be faced, drawbacks of the proposed data points before scaling it up to all Panchayats of the district.

The DC took assessment of the Youth Clubs members who will be responsible to conduct the survey in the district. The youth club members of Sonamarg B panchayat were acquainted to each and every data point that need to be collected in the survey and directions were passed to District Skill Committee to modify the survey form so that every member can easily understand

the questionnaire and quality data is collected.

The DC directed planning sub-committee of District Skill Committee to translate the questionnaire into Urdu also and start the survey as soon as possible.

Shyambir maintained that by Employment Survey, District Skill Committee aims to estimate the accurate employment rate so as to prepare the District Skill development Plan and District Employment Plan as per the requirement. By this survey District also aims to identify the targets and set the priority based targets for self-employment and skill development schemes, he added.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Development Ganderbal, District Statistical and Evaluation Officer, Members of District Skill Committee, Block Development Officer, Gund, Sarpanch Gram Panchayat Sonamarg-B and Youth Club members of Gram Panchayat Sonamarg-B.



TULIPS HAVE STARTED BLOOMING inside Asia's largest Tulip garden, located on the foothills of Zabarwan hills, which is set to reopen for the public on March 19.

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

Budgam Set To Be Gateway Of Investments In UT: DC

Invites Industrialists, Business Houses For Investment In The District

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, S F Hamid said on Friday that the Central Kashmir district has great potential to become number one destination in the business sector.

The DC said this, while presiding over the first of its kind session "District Level Workshop regarding Ease of Doing Business and Single Window System" held at National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) campus, Budgam.

The event was organised by District Administration Budgam in collaboration with District Industries Centre Budgam.

Giving open invitation to all industrialists and business houses for investment in the district, the DC emphasised that District Budgam has all propitious conditions like rail-

way and air connectivity and is getting better road connectivity through the ongoing Ring Road project, thus, showing enhanced growth prospects for investment and private capital.

Extending full support to the business sector, the DC said that it is the endeavour of district administration to ensure hassle-free handholding of investors across the district.

He said the workshop is aimed at bringing both investors and administration under one roof and making the stakeholders aware of the Single Window System established for investors/entrepreneurs regarding ease of doing business and giving boost to the economic sector in the district.

The DC further said that similar events including an Investors Summit shall be held soon in the district to attract our youth towards the business sector and open the doors for employment creation for unemployed youth.

He said district administration has established a "District Investment Cell" to enable inter-departmental coordination to facilitate investors.

Speaking on the occasion, General Manager DIC Budgam, Irshad Ahmad said that the workshop is aimed to attract

investment and provide better facilities to the entrepreneurs in the district.

GM DIC said that under various schemes, adequate financial assistance is provided to the entrepreneurs for their start ups and establishment of their business units in Budgam. He added that Rs 23 crores investment has been generated during the current financial year by formally registering the industrial units.

He said similarly three new industrial estates are being established including at Banderpora, Khag and Narbal to provide land and other facilities to the businessmen to establish their units.

Through a power point presentation, the participants were sensitized about how J&K revamped user friendly single windows system and its features.

Among others, Director NIFT, Javed Ahmad Wani, CEOs YDA, DDA, SDMs ACD, ACP, CMO, Tehsildars and other district officers were also present on the occasion.

Amid Dry Weather, Mercury Rises In Most Parts Of J&K

Agencies

SRINAGAR: As mainly dry weather continues, the minimum temperature recorded increase in Kashmir Valley as well as most parts of Jammu division on Friday.

A meteorological department official here said Srinagar recorded a low of 3.2°C against 2.9°C on the previous night and it was 0.1°C below normal for the summer capital.

Qazigund, he said, recorded a low of 2.0°C against 1.8°C on the previous night while Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 1.2°C against minus 1.9°C on the previous night.

Kokernag recorded a low of 4.3°C against 4.1°C on the previous night and it was 2.4°C above normal for the place, the officials said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of 0.6°C against minus 1.4°C on the previous night and it was 4.1°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 0.4°C against 0.2°C on the previous night and it was 1.4°C below normal for the north Kashmir area.

Jammu recorded a low of 14.6°C against 15.5°C on the previous night. It was 0.6°C above normal for J&K's winter capital, he said.

Banihal, he said, recorded a low of 3.8°C (below normal

by 0.3°C), Batote 8.0°C (above normal by 2.1°C), Katra 13.1°C (1.6°C above normal) and Bhardarwah 5.5°C (2.4°C above normal).

Ladakh's Leh and Kargil, he said, recorded a low of minus 5.6°C and minus 5.6°C respectively.

The MeT department has forecast dry weather in the next 24 hours. Mainly dry weather to isolated very light rain and thunder is expected for subsequent two days, he added. (GNS)

LG Honours PM Rashtriya Bal Puraskar Awardees



Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Union Territory Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Friday honoured Arushi Kotwal and S. Harmanjot Singh, awardees of Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar for the year 2022 and 2021 respectively, at the Raj Bhavan here.

The LG assured every possible support & assistance from the UT administration in their future endeavours, an official spokesperson said.

He said that while interacting with the awardees, the LG said their exceptional achieve-

ments in innovation & sports have inspired many other young children to strive for excellence.

S. Harmanjot Singh, a young innovator, had developed a Women Safety app -'Raksha' and won various Olympiads & competitions, while Ms. Arushi Kotwal who aspires to be a Grand Master has brought glory to UT and the country at many National & International Chess Championships.

The family members of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardees were present on the occasion.

41 Employees In Budgam Served Notice For Unauthorized Absence

DC Emphasizes On Punctuality, Warns Stringent Action Against Dereliction Of Duties

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: As many as 41 employees were served show-cause notice for their unauthorized absence from duties in Budgam on Friday.

Under the directions of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, an inspection team led by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Budgam, Dr Nasir Ahmad conducted surprise inspections of various office at DC Office, KPDCI and other offices and 41 employees were found un-authorisedly absent from their duties.

While checking the attendance (Bio-Metric), 41 employees of various categories have been found absent and served show-cause notice as to why action as warranted under rules shall not be initiated against them.

Meanwhile, DC Budgam S F

Hamid said that these employees were found unauthorisedly absent from their duties which is complete dereliction and lackadaisical approach towards legitimate duties and warrants disciplinary action under rules. The absentees have been directed to explain their position within stipulated timeframe, failing which action as warranted under rules will be initiated against them.

He said that the government has adopted zero tolerance against the dereliction of duties by employees.

He further directed employees to perform their duties regularly in letter and spirit and ensure prompt services delivery to the general public.

Subsidized Urea Seized From Plywood Industry In Pulwama

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A joint team of law enforcement agency of Agriculture department and the officers of District Agriculture Pulwama on Friday seized a huge quantity of fertilizer (Urea) (inside the premises of allied plywood industry) reportedly being used for industrial purposes during a surprise inspection at Lassipora Pulwama.

The inspection was led by Director Agriculture Kashmir, Chowdhury Mohammad Iqbal and was conducted after credible inputs with an aim to curb the black marketing, use of subsidized fertilizers for industrial purposes and unauthorized sale of fertilizers.

About 300 to 400 bags (23 tons) of urea were seized during the inspection.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director Agriculture said that today a team of enforcement wing of the department raided the premises of allied plywood industry and found that the huge quantity of subsidized urea fertilizer was being used by some people (in violation of insecticides act 1968 and rules 1971 thereof) for industrial purposes.

Iqbal said that the department is vigorously working and pursuing an endeavor to ensure that the subsidized fertilizers meant for the agriculture purposes reaches the consumer



(farmer) and to ensure that it may not be used for industrial or some other purposes.

He said the department has constituted district wise law enforcement teams for strict implementation of insecticides act 1968 and rules 1971 thereof. People can register their grievances with these officers for immediate action, he added.

He assured the farmers of the valley that strict action according to law shall be initiated against such people found involved in the use of subsidized fertilizers for non agriculture purposes.

The inspection team comprised Deputy Director Law enforcement, Chief Agriculture Officer Pulwama, District Agriculture Officer, Assistant Director Law enforcement, District Law enforcement Officer, District Law enforcement Inspector, Fertilizer Inspector and other concerned officers.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Nabla Bano am holding 1000 of shares of J&K Bank under Folio JKB011033 where my name has been inadvertently recorded as NABLA which is incorrect, whereas my actual name is **NABLA BANO** in this regard I am applying for correction of name under my Folio. If anybody has any objection may contact J&K bank Corporate Headquarters within Seven days from the publication of this notice after which no objection shall be entertained.

ADIL

Secretary Revenue Reviews Functioning Of Registration Department

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Appreciating the digital interventions made by the Registration Department in promoting citizen-centric and hassle-free registrations, Secretary Revenue, Dr Piyush Singla, has asked the department to adopt best practices from other States/UTs to ensure assured service delivery to the citizens with minimum human interface.

Speaking at the maiden review meeting of Registration Department, Secretary stressed upon the importance of putting in place a robust technical support system of professionals at central level for attending to development, capacity and enhancement issues of NGDRS application besides its implementation, maintenance and sustainability.

He called for roping in DIOs of NIC at the district headquarters in consultation with SDU, NIC Pune who could be instrumental in addressing the local issues of Sub-Registrars at district headquarters/ Sub Divisional level as per requirement.

Dr Singla took a comprehensive review of registration scenario and the new initiatives being implemented by the Registration Department. IGR J&K, AIGRK/J.

Officers of Revenue Department, District Registrars and Sub Registrars attended the meeting both in person and virtually.

The meeting deliberated on various aspects of document registration from slot booking to the acceptance of the document on the NGDRS portal.

The meeting was informed that registration of documents is con-

ducted online through the NGDRS portal in all the 86 Sub-Registrar offices. The slew of reforms introduced in the department viz. online booking of slot, document submission/ uploading, online payment of stamp duty and registration fee, linking of checklist of documents with Articles/Instruments, PAN verification, SMS alerts, Rapid Assessment System etc. have not only promoted transparency in document registration but also eliminated the waiting period, frivolous bookings and scope of discretion in registration. This has also resulted in sturdy increase in registration and revenue collection.

IGR J&K and his team of officers gave a detailed presentation on the registration and revenue collections, potential of the department, initiatives undertaken, facilities available in the Sub Reg-

istrar offices in the form of equipment, machinery.

A separate presentation was given on NGDRS portal, its existing work flow and linkages with various portals like SHCIL, LRIS, RAS, e-GRAS, JK Bank, PAN, Digital Locker etc and further improvements/interventions required.

Dr Singla asked the department to put an institutional arrangement in place wherein final copy of the registered document could be made available to the citizen on his login on the NGDRS portal to enable him to download the document from any location without any encumbrances and without having to visit the Sub Registrar office twice. For this purpose, the department will also explore the possibility of use of e-sign of parties and digital signatures of the Registering Officers.

Secretary Revenue also highlighted the importance of dedicated helpline/call centre exclusively of the Registration Department to address the grievances of the public and respond to queries of officers/officials. He desired that a chatbot be positioned in the departmental website to respond to the queries of the general public.

While reviewing functioning of CCTVs with two-way audio in Sub Registrar Offices, Secretary Revenue directed that a central panel be installed in IGR Office by 20th of March, 2023 for furthering transparency in the working of the Sub-Registrar Offices. He also directed the department to propose required amendments in the Registration Act, 1908 to pave way for implementation of other citizen friendly initiatives in a time bound manner on the pattern of other States.

Women Footballers Raring To Go In Police Tourney

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR: For the first time ever, women teams will take part in the All India Police Football Championships which will get underway at the renovated Bakshi Stadium in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital from this Sunday.

The event is nothing short of a dream come true for most of the players in the Sashatra Seema Bal (SSB) team who have waited for five years to see this day.

"I feel very good and excited. We were eagerly waiting for this tournament as it's the first time we got a chance to be part of this tournament," Neha Khan, who hails from UP's Gorakhpur, told PTI.

She said tournaments like these can motivate girls to make their career in sports.

"Many women are not encouraged to move out from homes. With these kinds of tournaments, they can get inspiration for getting jobs through sports quota," she added.

has played in ISL as well," Gunjan, hailing from Bihar, said.

Monika, who comes from Haryana, said her team was performing well and should attract audiences.

"Women audiences, if they come to watch our matches, will be motivated to participate in sports activities," she said.

Fittingly, it will be the first major tournament to be held at the stadium after it was renovated at a cost of Rs 50 crore. The stadium has been upgraded and equipped with world-class facilities.

"The last big tournament held in Kashmir was the Santosh Trophy that was played here in 2008. After that no big event was conducted here in Kashmir valley," Waseem Ahmad, chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Football Association, said.

According to secretary of Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council Nuzhat Gul, 34 men's teams and eight women's teams will take part in the tournament which will be played at three venues



Dharamshala Kumari, the veteran from Bihar, said while it was her first time in the All India Police tournament, she wished the next generation of women take up sports as well.

"I got support from my family in sports but joining the defence force, I faced little difficulty. But I love being in defence as it gives me an opportunity to play," she added.

Asked if the men's game was better, the women defended their game with ferocity.

"Men and women (players) are the same, both are playing well at their levels and our team

Bakshi Stadium, TRC synthetic turf stadium and Kashmir University grounds.

"Players who come from different parts of the country to play in Kashmir see and experience our culture, hospitality and peaceful atmosphere. They will become our ambassadors when they go back to their native places..."

"It's a positive step, such a national event is happening in JK. Sports have an iconic effect on our young generation who get inspiration by watching national players," Gul said.

India Reach 36/0 After Dismissing Australia For 480



Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD: India reached 36 for no loss in their first innings after dismissing Australia for 480 on the second day of the series-deciding fourth Test here on Friday.

Rohit Sharma (17 batting) and Shubman Gill (18 batting) were at the crease at the draw of stumps with India still 444 runs behind.

Ravichandran Ashwin (6/91) was the most successful bowler for India as he picked up five wickets on the second day, while Axar Patel managed to remove Usman Khawaja (180). Mohammed Shami (2/134) had taken two wickets on day one.

Earlier, resuming the day at 255 for 4, Khawaja and Cameron Green (114) kept batting with ease as they added another 123 runs to consolidate Australia's position.

After a barren morning session, Ashwin dismissed Green and Carey (0) in a space of four balls, before getting rid of Mitchell Starc (6).

Patel then trapped Khawaja, but Todd Murphy (41) and Nathan Lyon (34) added 70 runs to frustrate India.

Ashwin returned to pick up the remaining two wickets.

Brief Scores: Australia first innings: 480 all out in 167.2 overs (Usman Khawaja 180, Cameron Green 114; R Ashwin 6/91). India first innings: 36 for no loss in 10 overs (Rohit Sharma 17 batting, Shubman Gill 18 batting).

Aussies Wear Black Armbands To Honour Cummins's Mother

Agencies

Australian cricket team was seen wearing black armbands as a mark of respect for Pat Cummins's mother as she passed away on Thursday after a prolonged battle with cancer. On Friday morning in Ahmedabad, coach Andrew McDonald gathered the team before the game to share that Maria Cummins had passed away from breast cancer.

"We are deeply saddened at the passing of Maria Cummins overnight. On behalf of Australian Cricket, we extend our heartfelt condolences to Pat, the Cummins family and their friends. The Australian Men's team will today wear black armbands as a mark of respect," Cricket Australia said. Before departing for Sydney to care for his mother while she was receiving palliative care, Pat Cummins captained the team for the first two Test matches against India in the Border-Gavaskar series.

The team has praised Cummins for his leadership in the first two Tests while Steve Smith has captained in his absence. "To be able to put that to one side while he's out captaining his country and trying to win Test matches is a pretty incredible effort. I think that speaks volumes about his character and why he's been such an incredible captain for us," Peter Handscomb said last month as quoted by cricket.com.au. (ANI)



Dir Tourism Flags Off Cycle Rally At Badamwari

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: To mark the beginning of spring season in Kashmir, Directorate of Tourism Kashmir organised a cycling expedition on Friday from Badamwari, Srinagar.

Cyclists from different walks of life participated in the event.

The cycle expedition was flagged off by Director, Tourism, Kashmir, Fazlul Haseeb.

The rally passed through Rainawari, Dalgate, Boulevard, Hazratbal, Nigeen to reach back Badamwari.

Later, the Director Tourism Kashmir distributed prizes among the participants.

Addressing the gathering, the Director Tourism said the event

was held to mark the beginning of spring season and Badamwari being an iconic heritage site was chosen for this.

The Director Tourism said the Department has positioned adventure tourism particularly cycling as a priority tourism product and due to these efforts it stands fairly popularized among the youth.

Mr. Haseeb said the Tourism Department has planned many events and festivals for the year to engage and enrich the experience of tourists and locals in the Kashmir valley.

Senior officers of the Tourism Department, members of civil society and many adventure lovers were present on the occasion.

Elections of Srinagar Amateur Kabaddi Association Held

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The general elections of Amateur Kabaddi Association Srinagar were held on 08-03-2022 at Indoor Sports Complex Polo Ground Srinagar.

All the members and sports lovers of District Srinagar attended the election process. Elections were conducted under the supervision of election officer Sheikh Jahangeer (physical educator and sports promoter). Nazir Ahmad Mir was nominated as observer by J&K Amateur Kabaddi Association.

Following officials were elected for the tenure of four years as on 08-03-2023 till 08-03-2027.

Rajinder Singh was elected as the president, while as Gulzar Ahmed



Ahanger as General Secretary, Imtiyaz Aziz as Treasurer, Riyaz Ahmad Joint Secretary, Aisha Hammed Press and Publicity, Shakeel Akhoun as Event Secretary.

Shakeel Akhoun, Firdous Ahmad Malik, Saran Preet, Sikender Farooq, Irfan Ahmad, Shahnawaz Ahanger were appointed as executive members of the association.

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