

## Working Towards Full Integration Of J&K With Country: LG

### 'We Are Nearing Our Goal To Ensure J&K Part Of PM Modi's Dream Of Developed India By 2047'

Press Trust Of India

**New Delhi:** People are feeling the change in Jammu and Kashmir post August 2019 and despite hindrances by some, "we are nearing our goal" to ensure the Union Territory is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of a developed India by 2047, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha asserted Thursday.

The Modi-led BJP government revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the constitution and bifurcated the erstwhile state into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh on August 5, 2019.

"Three years down the line (after the historic development), we are nearing our goal under the guidance of the Prime Minister. Some people do not want us to reach our goal but I have full faith that with the people's support, we will reach there," Sinha said addressing the Rising India Summit organized by Network 18.

He said his administration is working towards "full integration of J&K with the country" and ensuring peace, prosperity and development of the region.

"We want J&K to be part of the Prime Minister's dream which he has envisioned for India in 2047. We want the contribution of J&K to be not less than others," he said.



**6 THE COMMON MAN IN J&K IS ALSO DREAMING** like the citizens in the rest of the country. The youth are moving with new ambitions and it all happened because of the historic and brave decision of the Modi-led government."

He said the change in the ground situation in J&K is not only visible, but the people are also feeling it and the tricolour will flutter on the rooftops of the houses till eternity.

"The place which was known for other reasons like Pulwama (terror attack) sometime back witnessed 10,000 people rallying with the tricolour on August 13 and 14. That is a big change," he said.

He said there are no separatist-sponsored strikes, cinema halls reopened, J&K Road Transport Corporation started night bus service and people can be seen enjoying Shikara ride in Dal Lake at late night hours as well.

"The common man in J&K is also dreaming like the citizens in the rest of the country. The youth are moving with new ambitions and it all happened

because of the historic and brave decision of the Modi-led government," he said.

He said a total of Rs 14,000 crore investment had taken place in J&K before 2019 but after the launch of the new industrial policy by Prime Minister Modi, proposals worth over Rs 70,000 crore were received over the past three years.

The Lt Governor said the highest ever investment of Rs 1,547.87 crore was received during the last 10 months of this year, while 500 startups have come up during the last three years with the youth of Kashmir coming up with new startups on daily basis. Sinha said J&K has witnessed an economic growth of 14.64 per cent and tax revenue has also shown growth of 31 per cent.

"Compared to 12 lakh e-transactions per day last year, the first 80 days of this year recorded 19 lakh e-transactions every day. The change happened in a place where when I took over on August 7, 2020, 217 trucks were being loaded with files to move from Srinagar to Jammu (as part of bi-annual darbar move)," he said.

The LG said the highest number of 1.88 crore tourists visited J&K, which has been among top performers in the country for implementation of schemes like Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Amrit Sarovar, SVAMITVA scheme **More on P6**

## Two Brutal Murders Shock North Kashmir

### Throat Slit Body Of Minor Found In Kupwara, 'Drug Addict' Son Kills Mother In Sopore

Syed Muhammad Burhan

**Srinagar:** The twin districts of Baramulla and Kupwara in North Kashmir are reeling under shock after witnessing two gruesome murders, including that of a minor girl within hours, sending shivers down the spine of the people. The first murder was reported from Zab village in



Kupwara, where the throat-slit body of a 9-year-old girl was found in a shed near her home on Wednesday evening. Speaking to reporters on

Thursday, the slain girl's mother said that it was a usual Ramazan evening and she was busy preparing Iftar meals before the tragedy struck the family.

"Around 20 minutes before breaking the fast, my husband left home saying he had a flat tire to repair. My daughter followed him and asked her for Rs 5. He took out **More on P6**

## J&K On Orange Alert For Heavy Rain

Agencies

**Srinagar:** The weather department on Thursday issued an orange warning for isolated heavy rain and thunder and lightning in Jammu and Kashmir on March 31.

A meteorological department official said that there was a forecast for scattered light rain and thunder over Jammu and Kashmir in the next 24 hours.

For subsequent two days, he said, there was a possibility of widespread moderate rain, thunder and snow (mainly over upper reaches).

Besides orange alert for March 31 for "isolated heavy rain thunder/ lightning" and disruption **More on P6**

## High Court Judge Wins Hearts With Transfer Request

### Justice Atul Sreedharan Shifted To High Court J&K And Ladakh

Auqib Javeed

**Srinagar:** A judge has won hearts for his honesty and integrity after seeking transfer from Madhya Pradesh High Court, where his daughter is all set to start practice next year.

The Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud has recommended transfer of Justice Atul Sreedharan from High Court of Madhya Pradesh to the High Court J&K and Ladakh.

The Collegium said that Justice Atul Sreedharan was appointed as a Judge of the High Court of Madhya Pradesh on

April 7, 2016.

Justice Atul Sreedharan has requested the Supreme Court Collegium to transfer him out of the High Court since his elder daughter would be entering law practice in the same High Court next year.

The Collegium in turn acceded to his request and in a meeting held on March 28, recommended that he be transferred to the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

"Mr Justice Atul Sreedharan was appointed as a Judge of the High Court of Madhya Pradesh on 07 April 2016. By his communication dated 23 January 2023, he has **More on P6**



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# Studying Bent Light Helps Detect An Ultramassive Black Hole For First Time

Press Trust Of India

**A**stronomers have discovered one of the biggest black holes inside a galaxy hundreds of millions of light years from Earth, through gravitational lensing for the first time, throwing the field open for detecting more black holes and investigating their origins.

Gravitational lensing is where a foreground galaxy bends the light coming from a more distant object and magnifies it.

The researchers, led by Durham University, UK, by closely examining how light is bent by the black hole, found an ultramassive black hole with a mass of over 30 billion times the mass of our Sun in the foreground galaxy - a scale rarely seen by astronomers, they said in a study.



The findings are published in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

This is the first black hole found using the technique, whereby the team simulated light travelling through the universe hundreds of thousands of times, they said.

They also said that each simulation included a different mass black hole, which changed light's journey to Earth.

When the researchers included an ultramassive black hole in one of their simulations, the path taken by the light from the faraway galaxy to reach Earth matched the path seen in real images captured by the Hubble Space Telescope, they said.

A gravitational lens occurs when the gravitational field of a foreground galaxy appears to bend the light of a background

galaxy, meaning that we observe the background galaxy more than once. The lens also magnifies it, allowing scientists to study it in enhanced detail.

"Most of the biggest black holes that we know about are in an active state, where matter pulled in close to the black hole heats up and releases energy in the form of light, X-rays, and other radiation.

"However, gravitational lensing makes it possible to study inactive black holes, something not currently possible in distant galaxies.

"This approach could let us detect many more black holes beyond our local universe and reveal how these exotic objects evolved further back in cosmic time," said lead author James Nightingale, Department of Physics, Durham University.

# 'Protein Target Found To Repair Heart Injuries Through Cell Programming Following Attac'

Press Trust Of India

Scientists have identified a group of proteins to leverage for cellular programming, enabling them to reprogram damaged heart cells to repair heart injuries in mice following a heart attack.

lished in the journal Nature Communications.

The ability of body cells to "turn on" and "turn off" selected genes, changing what they look like and what they do, forms the basis of cellular programming, an emerging approach in regenerative medicine in which

Alexandre Colas, assistant professor, Sanford Burnham Prebys.

"Cellular reprogramming could, in theory, allow us to control the activity and appearance of any cell," said Colas.

"This concept has huge implications in terms of

this problem.

"By blocking the activity of these proteins, we were able to reduce scarring on the heart and induce a 50 per cent improvement in overall heart function in mice that have undergone a heart attack," said Colas.

While being primarily focused on heart cells, the scientists determined that AJSZ could be found in all cell types, suggesting it to be a promising treatment target for a variety of diseases.

"This breakthrough is a significant step forward on our way to turning these promising biological concepts into real treatments," said Colas.

The next steps in the research involve exploring multiple options to block AJSZ proteins from functioning.

"We need to find a way to inhibit these proteins in a way we can control to make sure we are only reprogramming the cells that need it," said Colas.

"We will be screening for drugs that can help us inhibit these proteins in a controlled and selective manner in the coming months," said Colas.

About the study, Colas said, "Helping the heart heal after injury is an important medical need in its own right, but these findings also pave the way for wider applications of cell reprogramming in medicine."



The findings from Sanford Burnham Prebys, US, could help transform treatments for a range of diseases, including cardiovascular, Parkinson's and neuromuscular diseases, they said.

The findings are pub-

scientists transform cells to repair damaged or injured body tissues.

"Even if a person survives a heart attack, there could still be long-term damage to the heart that increases the risk of heart problems down the line," said lead author

helping the body regenerate itself, but barriers to reprogramming mechanisms have prevented the science from moving from the lab to the clinic," said Colas.

The researchers identified a group of four proteins, named AJSZ, that help solve

**By blocking the activity of these proteins, we were able to reduce scarring on the heart and induce a 50 per cent improvement in overall heart function in mice that have undergone a heart attack**

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## Incorrect Traffic e-Challan Drives Motorists Up The Wall

### Authorities Assure System Streamlining

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Scores of vehicle owners on Thursday alleged that they are receiving wrong e-challan of their vehicles for the reasons best known to the authorities. The aggrieved urged the authorities to look into the matter.

Many vehicle owners claimed that they are getting incorrect e-challan for a violation they never committed. "Even some e-challans are being slapped on vehicles not present in the area," they said.

"I have received one such e-challan with Rs 1000 two days ago for my scooty," said Dilawar Reshi, a resident of Malbagh area of the city.

"My scooty has been challaned for not wearing a seat belt which is totally unfair and at the time this challan was issued, my scooty

was parked in the courtyard of my home," he added.

Similarly, Sameer Ahmad, a Bandipora resident complained that a few weeks ago his two wheeler was blacklisted by the transport department for violating traffic rules at Pappachan area.

He said traffic violation was neither committed by him nor he passed through that area that time.

Motorcycle owner, Afan Ahmad said that he has also received a similar e-challan stating that he had committed some traffic violations in Srinagar despite the fact that he was at his home, when alleged violation was committed.

To solve this problem, people are now demanding from the traffic police and transport department to make necessary improvements in the system and resolve this technical glitch.

## NC Seeks Uninterrupted Power Supply During Sehri, Iftari Hours

Observer News Service

Srinagar: National Conference General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar on Wednesday impressed upon the administration to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the holy month of Ramzan, especially during Sehri and Iftari hours.

Sagar, who was interacting with the number of public and workers delegations here at the party headquarters Nawa-e-Subha, Srinagar said, "The power cuts mostly strike during Sehri and Iftari time. Unavailability of power plunges streets into darkness and makes it difficult for people to reach local mosques to offer prayers in pitch darkness. Assurances of the administration with regards to ensuring uninterrupted power supply have fallen flat. Such interruptions have become the order of

the day here. How long will people tolerate it? Why is PDD pushing consumers to hit the roads? Why are not authorities taking strong note of the issue and acting against the erring officials of the department? Why should always consumers suffer?"

Sagar said the administration has failed to ensure availability of essentials besides intensifying market checking to curb black marketing, hoarding and profiteering in the markets. "Administration is not visible on the ground. Profiteers and black marketeers are having a field day in looting people. Prices of dates, and other Ramzan specific items are touching new heights every day. Concerned departments have failed to ensure stability of rates of commodities like rice, sugar, K. Oil, LPG. Strict adherence to government approved rate lists is seeing no implementation," he added.

## NIT Srinagar Gets 8th Place In DataQuest Rankings

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar has secured 8th rank in DataQuest Ranking of Top T-Schools among government run technological institutions in India for the year 2023.

The rankings were released by DataQuest (a leading IT magazine) in 18th edition DQ-CMR Survey top-technological-schools 2023. It focuses on T-Schools and their contribution to key skills in the technology industry and ranks them

through a comprehensive evaluation process.

As per the top rankings released by DataQuest in March 2023 edition, NIT Srinagar has secured 8th rank among technological institutions in government run category in India.

Apart from that NIT Srinagar has also secured 28th rank among top 100 technological colleges both in private and government category run institutions in the country. Similarly, NIT Srinagar has also secured 9th rank in north Indian engineering government colleges.



Kashmiri Pandit women performing folk dance (Hikkat) during Shobha Yatra on the eve of Ram Navami at city center Lal Chowk on Thursday, KO Pic Abid Bhat

## Ram Navami Celebrated In Srinagar

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Ram Navami was celebrated by the miniscule Hindu population of the city by taking out a Shobha Yatra in the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

Amidst tight security, the Shobha Yatra started from Zaindar Mohalla in the old city and culminated at Tankipora after passing through Habbakadal, Barbarshah, Lal Chowk, Hari Singh High Street and Jehangir Chowk.

"We have been taking out this yatra and 'Jhanki' every year for the past 16 years. Earlier, it was stopped due to turmoil in the valley," Pawan Chetanyadas, the organizer of the Shobha Yatra, said.

He expressed gratitude to both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmir Pandits for their support in carrying out the procession.

"We pray for peace and prosperity for all people in Kashmir. We want everyone to live in harmony as bloodshed will yield nothing," he added.

## Farooq, Omar Extends Greetings

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President and Member Parliament Dr Farooq Abdullah, and Vice President Omar Abdullah, Wednesday greeted people on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami, hoping the day augurs well for the increased prospects of peace and prosperity in the country.

In his message on the Ram Navami, which is also celebrated as a spring Hindu festival on the ninth day of Chaitra Navratri, Dr. Farooq said the festival is yet another glaring example of the massive and abundant cultural richness of the

country, a source of wonder for people across the globe. He hoped that the festival is celebrated in its true traditional fervor, amity, and brotherhood, which he said have long been the template of Indian culture and ethos.

In his message, Omar Abdullah said, "May this auspicious occasion strengthen the bond of brotherhood and communal harmony in J&K and the country in general. I wish people a very Happy Ram Navami, hoping that the day augurs well for everlasting peace and prosperity in the entire region. I hope the festival is celebrated with traditional gaiety."

## Ensure Transport Fleet Adhere To Apex Court Guidelines: RTO To Schools

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Regional Transport authorities have asked the school administrations across the valley to bring their transportation fleet in compliance with the Supreme Court guidelines, indicating that a massive drive to check for rule violations will begin next week.

A top official at the Regional Transport Office (RTO) Kashmir said the move was taken as a result of several complaints received about violations on various grounds committed by school bus operators in the valley.

He said that after simplifying public transportation, a significant campaign to ensure the safety of school buses transporting children would begin next week.

"We have been receiving numerous complaints on violations and to check on that, a big push will be initiated from next week," the official said, adding that the Supreme Court has put

down certain criteria for educational institutions regarding the safety of school buses carrying children.

Although the educational institutions are already aware of the Supreme Court guidelines, our drive is aimed at ensuring that everyone follows the guidelines, he said, adding that the issue concerns the children's safety and those found violating the guidelines should not expect any concessions.

"Those who are found violating the Supreme Court guidelines will be dealt with accordingly. However, no one should expect any concession on grounds that school children will suffer, and in that case, they should plan alternate arrangements," the official said.

Mentioning some of the guidelines, he said the school bus should have a qualified attendant for children on the bus while boarding and deboarding them and the bus should be

painted yellow.

As per the Supreme Court guidelines, the school buses should be written on the back and front of the bus. The school name and telephone number should also be written and if hired 'On School Duty' should be clearly indicated. It should have up-to-date documents like a vehicle permit, fitness certificate, insurance certificate, valid token tax receipt, PUCC, SLD certificate, and GPS certificate.

"School buses will be checked for the installation of speed limit devices as there is a specific and set speed limit for them," the SC guidelines mention. "The bus should be fitted with a speed governor of specified standard with a maximum speed limit of 40 kph."

Highlighting the Supreme Court guidelines for a driver, the official said the driver should have at least 5 years experience of driving Heavy Motor Vehicles (HMs) and carry a complete list of children.

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

PRAYERS	
FAJR	4 :56
ZUHR	12:36
ASR	5: 03
Magrib	6:54
ISHA	8: 14

## This Day In History

- 1667 France & England sign anti-Dutch military accord
- 1683 - Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I and King John III Sobieski of Poland sign a covenant against Turkey, beginning of the Holy League
- 1814 - Forces allied against Napoleon capture Paris
- 1885 - Great Britain declares Bechuanaland a protectorate
- 1889 - Eiffel Tower officially opens in Paris. Built for the Exposition Universelle, at 300m high it retains the record for the tallest man made structure for 41 years.
- 1905 - Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany visits Tangier, Morocco and proclaims Germany's support of Moroccan independence and equal opportunity for all powers to trade there
- 1943 - US errantly bombs Rotterdam, kills 326
- 1951 - US tanks exceed 38° of latitude in Korea
- 1953 - UN Security Council nominates Dag Hammarskjöld for Secretary-General
- 1954 - USSR offers to join NATO
- 1958 - USSR suspends nuclear weapons tests, & urges US & Britain to do same
- 1966 - USSR launches Luna 10, 1st lunar orbiter
- 1970 - Explorer 1 re-enters the Earth's atmosphere after 12 years in orbit
- 1973 - Muhammad Ali suffers a broken jaw in a shock split-points decision loss to Ken Norton over 12 rounds in San Diego; Ali wins rematch in another controversial split decision
- 1978 - USSR launches Kosmos 1000 navigational satellite
- 1979 - The last British soldier leaves the Maltese Islands. Malta declares its Freedom Day (Jum il-Helsien).
- 1986 - 167 die when Mexicana Airlines Boeing 727 crashes
- 1988 - Pulitzer prize awarded to Toni Morrison for her novel "Beloved"
- 1991 - Albania offers 1st multi-party election in 50 years
- 1992 - UN Security Council voted to ban flights & arms sales to Libya

## From KO Archives

### Charar Shrine Reconstruction Project

## MAT Approves Traditional Model

Observer News Service

Srinagar- The Muslim Auqaf Trust (MAT) today decided to re-construct the holy shrine of great Kashmir saint, Shiekh Noorudin Noorani at Charar-i-Sharif, on its old traditional pattern. The total cost of the project will be around rupees ten crores, a high level meeting of the MAT was told. The meeting was presided over by Farooq Abdullah, who also happens to be the Chairman of the MAT.

According to a government handout issued here this evening, of the total ten crores, three will be exclusively spent on the construction of shrine. So far, the meeting was told, Rs.43 lakhs have been spent on the construction of the basic structure of the shrine. The traditional model designed by a Kashmir architect, involves 10,000 sq.ft for shrine area and 4,000 sq.ft for the mezzanine floor. The new structure, handout said will have sophisticated improvements like fire-proof system, lighting effects and concrete shingled roof (wooden), glass enclosures around the holy sanctum inside the shrine and motifs designed on traditional pattern.

The MAT also approved construction of school building at Khanyar, construction of Khankah mosque at Makhdoom sahib and many other projects involved renovation and repairs of different Auqaf properties.

(Kashmir Observer, 31 March, 1998)

### انتقال پر مملال

یہ خبر نہایت ہی دکھ اور افسوس کے ساتھ دی جا رہی ہے کہ ہماری والدہ البیہ مرحومہ عبداللہ بیٹ سائمنڈ ٹیمبرنگ خیم بروز جمعرات 8 رمضان المبارک 1444ھ بمطابق 30 مارچ 2023ء اس دار فانی سے رحلت کر گئیں۔ مرحومہ شریف النقیس اور ملنا شخصیت کی مالک تھیں۔ اس سلسلے میں مرحومہ کی اجتماعی فاتحہ خوانی 12 رمضان المبارک بمطابق 12 اپریل 2023ء بروز اتوار صبح ساڑھے 10 بجے ہمارے آبائی مقبرہ واقعہ روگن فیکٹری محلہ کھنہ میں انجام دی جائے گی۔

**سوگواران**  
ارشید احمد بیٹ 9419008581، محفل حسین بیٹ 9796500053

نوٹ: مستورات سے گڈ ارش ہے کہ وہ اپنے ساتھیوں کو کامیاب و غیرہ نہ لائیں۔

### شیخ خاندان شاہ آباد سعیدہ کدل کو صدمہ

یہ خبر انتہائی دکھ کے ساتھ دی جاتی ہے کہ ہمارے والدین مرحومہ شیمبرنگ خیم سائمنڈ ٹیمبرنگ خیم اور ملنا شخصیت کی مالک تھیں۔ اس سلسلے میں مرحومہ کی اجتماعی فاتحہ خوانی بروز جمعرات 8 رمضان المبارک 1444ھ بمطابق 30 مارچ 2023ء اس دار فانی سے رحلت کر گئیں۔ ان کے آبائی مقبرہ واقعہ شاہ آباد سعیدہ کدل کو صدمہ ہو گا۔

**سوگواران**  
شیخ امین احمد (فرزند)، فاروق احمدی وارث مرحومہ (فرزند سہیل)

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RESULT NOTIFICATION  
Doctor Of Philosophy  
Umer Hameed Shansaz S/O Abdul Hameed Shansaz bearing University Registration No. 40629-S-2006 who pursued Integrated Ph.D. programme on whole-time basis in the discipline of Zoology, Department of Zoology, School of Biological Sciences, submitted thesis titled "Feeding ecology, habitat preferences and conservation issues of Pheasants in and around Dachigam National Park" under the joint supervision of Dr. Bilal Ahmad Bhat, Assistant Professor & Dr. Fayaz Ahmad, Professor, Department of Zoology University of Kashmir, Srinagar is of Ph.D. Degree on March 09, 2023.

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Friday | 31-03-2023

## Lingering Poll Uncertainty

**T**he Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday yet again didn't give any date for Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing a press conference to announce schedule for Karnataka Assembly election, Kumar said that the Election Commission is aware of the "vacuum" in J&K and is taking steps to fill it. He also pointed out that the delimitation process and the special summary revision of the electoral rolls in J&K had already been completed. Recently, the poll panel had ordered a fresh special summary revision of the electoral rolls in Jammu and Kashmir. April 1 has been set as the qualifying date for the summary revision and May 10 is the date for publication of the final electoral rolls.

The takeaway is that we can't immediately look forward to Assembly elections in the union territory, something the former J&K Chief Minister Omer Abdullah has also said. Taking to Twitter, Omer said that the Election Commission seemed to be in no hurry to conduct the assembly polls in J&K and managed to find "new excuses to delay" the elections, Omer said it has been eight years since the last assembly elections were conducted in the UT and five years since it had an elected government, blaming the delay on the BJP's fear to face the electorate.

Even as the country braces for 2024 general elections, there are no signs that the Assembly elections will be held in Jammu and Kashmir. And with every passing month, the hope that the polls will be held in the union territory before the national elections is fading fast. This, despite the fact, that the entire political class in the UT, except the BJP, want the elections to be held in the near future.

J&K has not had an elected government since June 2018 when Governor's rule was imposed after the PDP-led coalition government lost its majority following the withdrawal of support by the BJP. Subsequently, on August 5, 2019, New Delhi abrogated Article 370 that granted J&K special status under India's constitution. Since then the Lieutenant Governor has taken over from Governor.

Earlier this month, a delegation of political leaders led by National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah met the Election Commission of India, seeking early elections in the Union Territory. The delegation requested the ECI to hold elections as soon as possible now that the delimitation process had been completed. The political leaders also submitted a memorandum to the ECI, in which they called for the restoration of the democratic process in the UT. But there has been no election-related move from the Election Commission to hold the polls in the UT. And this is happening at a time when, for once, there is a palpable desire for elections in the region.

### OTHER OPINION

## Looming Scorched Summer

**A**t the time that T.S. Eliot wrote about April being the cruellest month, the world was yet to experience the real extent of the vagaries of climate change. Ironically, the Anthropocene — the geological epoch that has witnessed significant human-induced disruptions in weather and ecologies — has now proved the poet right. As India heads towards another April — it is a day away — it is a day away — it is a day away — the country faces the prospect of yet another cruel summer manifest in the form of extreme heat events. Studies argue that the subcontinent is particularly vulnerable to heat events. The impact of heat on public health is alarming. A Lancet study had found that between 2017 and 2021, 31,000 Indians perished due to heat. The corresponding global figure was over three lakh. The economy will be lashed too. Reports suggest that already 50% of the GDP is dependent on labour that is exposed to heat. Given that exposure to heat lowers working hours, the economy, yet to recover from the long-lasting effects of the pandemic, is likely to be affected adversely. Agriculture, ever-dependent on a fickle-minded weather, would suffer, with crop failures pushing up food prices. Metropolitan lifestyle is not insulated either. Rising heat enhances the strain on the power sector, heightening the possibility of outages.

There seems to be some movement in terms of policy when it comes to tackling the situation. The India Meteorological Department has decided to publish heat indexes in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of heat-related weather phenomenon. But there is a lot more that needs to be done when it comes to shaping policy responses to heat. A report by the Centre for Policy Research has found, for instance, that the heat action plans that are in place in the states suffer from such ailments as paucity of funds and a weak legal edifice. Worse, they prioritise a centralised — national — approach to assessment, making them unsuitable to measure local realities. This is particularly worrying since the HAP data are unlikely to map the extent of the damage from heat on localised demographic groups like the elderly, labourers and pregnant women. Policy frameworks based on the assessments of HPAs are likely to be lopsided. India is not ready to face the heat. It must — to survive.

Telegraph India

Asad Mirza

**China's balancing act is more articulated than just signing similar partnership agreements with both partners. While economic relations are unequivocally unbalanced in Saudi Arabia's favour, China guarantees Iran political support and a financial lifeline in the face of U.S. pressure**

# Saudi-Iran Rapprochement A Victory for China



SAUDI PRESS AGENCY/DPA/REUTERS

**T**he manner in which China has brokered a peace deal between two arch foes: Saudi Arabia and Iran may help China to emerge as a global peacemaker, eclipsing the USA

Recently, a major diplomatic coup was staged by China, when it announced the results of its successfully mediated efforts, of bringing two old foes at the negotiating table and signing a friendship deal.

The Chinese-brokered Saudi-Iran rapprochement comes as a major diplomatic breakthrough between two regional neighbours after years of mutual animosity, suspected attacks and tales of rivalry between the two countries.

The move also represents Beijing's first foray into Middle Eastern politics, an area that has always been regarded as a prerogative of the US, since when most of these nations become a free and independent entity, after the end of the colonial era.

On 10 March, both Riyadh and Tehran announced that after seven years of severed ties they would reopen embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation agreements signed more than 20 years ago.

Much of the world was stunned when the two arch-rivals announced they were restoring diplomatic relations, this was not only because of the breakthrough after years of mutual animosity, but because of the mediator, who played a key role in bringing the foes to the negotiating table, i.e. the Chinese government.

By this move China has ostensibly taken up a role that the U.S. could not have fulfilled, or it never tried to perform that role. In addition this also comes as Beijing's first major diplomatic foray into the Middle East mediation, an area where often rivalries are built around nuances and subtleties, which are hard to fathom for an outsider, though in the recent times they have up the shape of hard-nosed economic and strategic interests.

Apparently, the Saudis had been engaged in talks with Iran from around the same time as AI Ula Summit held in Saudi in

2021, which ended the blockade of Qatar and mended the internal rifts of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In the two years since, the United Arab Emirates has restored its diplomatic relations with Iran and even replaced China as Iran's top import partner; Kuwait, too, has returned its ambassador to Tehran.

The negotiations between Iran and Saudi Arabia since 2021 largely took place in Iraq and Oman. Other regional countries, including Kuwait and Pakistan, had attempted to arrange for talks between Tehran and Riyadh on numerous occasions in the past seven years, which were largely unsuccessful.

As tensions simmer between the world's two largest economies: the U.S. and China, the U.S. policymakers had sounded the alarm over competition and security concerns with China, but what does Beijing's ascendance in the region mean for the Middle East - and for the larger U.S. interests?

In recent times, China has been pushing for reconfiguring the regional security architecture in the Persian Gulf since 2020. In a U.N. Security Council meeting arranged by Russia in October of that year, China presented its proposal for security and stability in the Gulf region, arguing that with a multilateral effort, the region can become "an Oasis of Security."

Apparently, the edifice of this Chinese plan to transform into a global peacemaker seems to be the Global Security Initiative - GSI, which was unveiled by Chinese President Xi Jinping in February 2023. It is portrayed as a banner for China to reform the current international security order, especially at a time when the U.S. is prioritising alignment with countries that share the same political system and ideology, through its Democracy Summit.

Mainly, with growing power and influence China's to have a fair say in international peace and security architecture building. The GSI Concept Paper released by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 2023 identified "bringing about security changes through political dialogue and peaceful negotiation"

as core concepts and principles.

China's successful brokering of the peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran has given it the confidence that this track could work. The aspiration is that China can fill the gap in regions the U.S. has failed to lead or ignore.

According to the Chinese understanding of the region, Iran and Saudi Arabia are "pivot countries" whose political, economic, and military power make them indispensable partners for Beijing, making balance between the two the most consequential strategy.

For both countries, China is the largest trading partner. Beijing has granted Tehran and Riyadh the status of comprehensive strategic partners - the highest in China's partnership diplomacy in the Middle East.

But China's balancing act is more articulated than just signing similar partnership agreements with both partners. While economic relations are unequivocally unbalanced in Saudi Arabia's favour, China guarantees Iran political support and a financial lifeline in the face of U.S. pressure. Yet, offering different goods to equal partners often shakes the balancing act. In December, the joint China-GCC communiqué that followed Chinese President Xi Jinping's trip to Saudi Arabia generated anger in Iran, exposing the limits of China's diplomacy from the sidelines.

The GSI Concept Paper also emphasises the need to support political settlements of hotspot issues such as the war in Ukraine. Therefore, President Xi's efforts to promote a political settlement to the Russia-Ukraine conflict would be essential to watch. If another success is achieved after his Russia visit, it may lend more credence to the GSI.

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

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## Pleasures of a Paperback

**D**ESPITE living in the digital age, there are some habits which many of us simply cannot give up. Preferring to read a printed book over the online version is one such. There are multiple reasons why a large swathe of Indian readers always prefer hard copy of books to online reading. Psy-

chologically, the 'ownership' factor could be a key reason, besides the nice feeling you get while touching a new book, its fragrance, pleasure of turning the pages, easy portability, leisure reading - all make a physical book comfortably win over an e-book. However splendid the cover image of an e-book may look on screen, it is

still an image rather than a physical thing. Another major disadvantage with an e-book is that you cannot look at more than one page at once. In fact, a study from West Chester University of Pennsylvania reveals that students who read on iPads had lower reading comprehension than when they read traditional printed books. A good

physical book is like a full course of a sumptuous meal, whereas an e-book is just fast food. Said the noted American novelist Harper Lee: "The book to read is not the one that thinks for you, but the one which makes you think."

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Mindful Fridays

# The Neuroscience of Ramazan: Enhancing Emotional Intelligence



Wasim Kakroo

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Ramazan, is regarded as a time for intensified worship and devotion as well as spiritual introspection. Muslims all across the world observe Ramazan by fasting from sunrise to sunset and forgoing all physical demands, including food and drink. Ramazan is an opportunity to practice emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, all of which are crucial elements of emotional intelligence.

#### WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage our emotions and the emotions of others. It includes a range of skills and qualities that are essential for effective communication, decision-making, and building meaningful relationships with others. Emotional intelligence is critical for personal growth, professional success, and interpersonal relationships.

#### HOW DOES THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN INFLUENCE ONE'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

The month of Ramazan has a significant influence on each of the components of emotional intelligence. In this article, we will explore the impact of Ramazan on various aspects of emotional intelligence including self-awareness, self-regulation, emotional self-control, empathy, social skills, adaptability, and conflict management.

#### SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is a fundamental component of emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to recognize, understand, and manage our own emotions. Self-awareness allows us to identify our emotional triggers, recognize how we are feeling, and understand the impact of our emotions on our thoughts, behaviors, and interactions with others.

When we are self-aware, we are better equipped to manage our emotions and respond to situations in a constructive and productive way. We can identify our strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to improve our emotional intelligence. Additionally, self-awareness enables us to empathize with others and understand their perspectives, leading to more effective communication and collaboration.

During Ramazan, the practice of fasting and increased spiritual activities can

enhance self-awareness and emotional intelligence. By becoming more mindful of our physical and emotional responses to hunger and thirst, we can develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and our emotions. Through reflection on our values, beliefs, and purpose, we can gain insight into our strengths and weaknesses and improve our emotional intelligence.

#### SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation is an integral component of emotional intelligence. By practicing self-regulation during Ramazan, Muslims are also developing their emotional intelligence. Fasting can be physically and mentally taxing, and requires individuals to manage their emotions, particularly feelings of hunger, thirst,

ing so, they can learn to regulate their emotions effectively, even in challenging situations.

Moreover, emotional self-control during Ramazan can also help individuals improve their social awareness and relationship management skills, which are other critical components of emotional intelligence. By learning to manage their emotions effectively, Muslims can also develop empathy, compassion, and other social skills, which can be applied in various settings, such as the workplace, family, and community.

#### EMPATHY

Empathy during Ramazan is closely linked to emotional intelligence as it requires individuals to recognize and understand the emotions of others. It is a

culture of compassion and kindness, which benefits society as a whole.

#### SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills during Ramazan are closely related to emotional intelligence. Individuals with high emotional intelligence possess excellent social skills, which enable them to build positive relationships and communicate effectively with others.

Participating in communal prayers, breaking the fast with family and friends, and engaging in charitable activities during Ramazan require individuals to be mindful of others' feelings and needs. This mindfulness reflects emotional intelligence, which includes empathy, social awareness, and relationship management.

Through communal prayers, individu-

shift in their daily routine and lifestyle.

Fasting during Ramazan promotes adaptability in several ways. Firstly, it helps individuals break the routine of their daily life, leading to a change in their behavior, thoughts, and emotions. This break from the usual routine can allow people to experience new perspectives, ideas and challenge their thinking patterns, leading to personal growth and development.

Secondly, fasting requires individuals to be resilient and patient as they face hunger, thirst, and fatigue throughout the day. This practice helps individuals develop mental and emotional strength, which can be applied to overcome challenges in other areas of life.

Furthermore, Ramazan encourages individuals to be more empathetic and compassionate towards others, especially those who are less fortunate. This practice promotes adaptability by allowing individuals to understand and appreciate different lifestyles, cultures, and perspectives.

#### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management during Ramazan can be closely related to emotional intelligence. Effective conflict management requires individuals to have a high level of emotional intelligence, as they need to be able to control their emotions, communicate effectively, and empathize with others.

During Ramazan, Muslims are encouraged to practice self-control and patience, which are essential components of emotional intelligence. By developing these skills, individuals can remain calm and composed in the face of conflict, allowing them to respond in a constructive and positive manner.

Additionally, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation during Ramazan involves recognizing and managing one's own emotions, as well as understanding the emotions of others. This requires a high level of emotional intelligence, as individuals need to be able to empathize with the other party and understand their perspective. This can help in perspective building and hence conflict management.

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**DURING RAMADAN, MUSLIMS ARE ENCOURAGED TO PRACTICE SELF-CONTROL AND PATIENCE, WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. By developing these skills, individuals can remain calm and composed in the face of conflict, allowing them to respond in a constructive and positive manner**

and fatigue. Through self-discipline and self-control, individuals learn to regulate their emotions and maintain a calm and focused mindset.

Moreover, self-regulation during Ramazan provides an opportunity for Muslims to reflect on their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. This introspection can lead to a greater understanding of oneself, which is a fundamental aspect of emotional intelligence.

#### EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL

Emotional self-control during Ramazan is closely linked to emotional intelligence. Emotional self-control is a crucial component of emotional intelligence as it allows individuals to regulate their emotions effectively, rather than being overwhelmed by them.

During Ramazan, Muslims are required to practice emotional self-control by abstaining from food and drink. This practice helps them develop emotional intelligence by teaching them to recognize and manage their emotional responses to hunger and thirst. By do-

ing so, they can learn to regulate their emotions effectively, even in challenging situations.

Moreover, emotional self-control during Ramazan can also help individuals improve their social awareness and relationship management skills, which are other critical components of emotional intelligence. By learning to manage their emotions effectively, Muslims can also develop empathy, compassion, and other social skills, which can be applied in various settings, such as the workplace, family, and community.

Acts of kindness, such as providing food and water to those in need, visiting the sick and elderly, and helping the poor and homeless, further promote emotional intelligence by encouraging individuals to understand and respond to the emotional needs of others. By practicing empathy during Ramazan, individuals not only strengthen their emotional intelligence, but also cultivate

als develop social awareness, which enables them to understand and respect others' beliefs and practices. Sharing food and drink during the breaking of the fast promotes empathy and compassion towards others, two critical aspects of emotional intelligence.

Moreover, engaging in charitable activities during Ramazan fosters relationship management skills, which involve building and maintaining positive relationships with others. Donations and acts of kindness during this month demonstrate an individual's ability to understand and respond to others' needs, which are key components of emotional intelligence.

#### ADAPTABILITY

Ramazan provides an opportunity for individuals to cultivate adaptability as a part of emotional intelligence. Adaptability is the ability to adjust to changing circumstances and thrive in new environments. During Ramazan, Muslims abstain from food and drink from dawn to dusk, which requires a significant

## J&K Poised To Achieve Historic Milestone Of Completing 2 Lakh Works Under MGNREGA

Observer News Service

**Jammu:** In a historic achievement J&K is well on target to complete around 2 lakh works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) this financial year.

This information was given out in a meeting chaired by Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta to review the performance of Rural Development Department & Panchayati Raj schemes implemented in the UT of J&K.

Besides the Administrative Secretary, RD&PR the meeting was attended by the Administrative Secretaries of Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare Department; Jal Shakti; Forest; PWD; Labour & Employment; IT & Information; Revenue; Health; HS&S; Secretary in RDD; HoDs of Agriculture and Rural Development Departments.

The meeting was informed that as compared to previous years the Department has this year set a very high target



of 2 lakh works for it and the Department is expecting to achieve it also. It was revealed that in the current financial year so far the Department has generated more than 2.82 Cr person days of work for the inhabitants of the rural population.

It also came to fore during the meeting that during the past years the number of works completed used to be far less than what has been achieved this year so far. It was given out that during the year 2018-19 the number of works completed

under MGNREGA were mere 26,352 and increased substantially in the coming years. The number nearly doubled and reached to 54,311 works in the next year of 2019-20 thereby taking a leap reaching 67,278 in 2020-21, 84,705 in 2021-22 and this year the scheme already crossed 1,71,824 mark in the number of works completed taking a plunge of more than 200% so far, the meeting was informed.

This remarkable number of completed works has been achieved at the expenditure

of Rs 931.16 Cr. It was further given out that the percentage of women person days hovered at around 30.35% thereby extending an opportunity to the women for their empowerment through employment. The meeting was also apprised that nearly 9 lakh persons belonging to around 6.84 lakh households worked under this scheme to earn their livelihood.

It is pertinent to mention here that the average wage rate per day per person was hiked last year from Rs 213.94 to Rs 226.78 and the payments are

made exclusively through on-line mode directly into the accounts of the workers. Most of the payments had been made in a span of just 15 days after completion of work, the meeting was apprised.

Regarding the next year plan it was revealed that the Department has proposed around 2,71,474 works which includes 1,07,249 (40%) of works related to natural resources management, 80,522 works of creation of individual assets for vulnerable sections, 82,334 works of rural infrastructure besides others.

The Chief Secretary applauded the Department for this unique achievement and asked them to raise their bar of expectation in the coming years besides efficiency of achieving the targets. He enjoined upon them to utilize this opportunity under the LG administration in bringing about necessary reforms regarding the transparency, responsibility and accountability in the system thereby achieving new heights in serving the people freely as per their expectations and requirements.

## Ram Navami Celebrated With Religious Fervour At Kheerbawani Temple

Observer News Service

**Ganderbal:** Ram Navami was celebrated with religious fervour and gaiety on Thursday here at Kheerbawani Temple Tulamulla, decorated with flowers and lights.

Since early morning, thousands of devotees thronged to the temple and paid obeisance there. They also participated in Arti and Bhajansandhya.

The Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Shyambir also visited the Temple and paid obeisance there. He also wished happy and prosperous Ram Navami to the people and prayed for peace,

prosperity and development of the UT. On the occasion the Deputy Commissioner also inspected the arrangements being put in place by various departments for the devotees and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements being put in place.

Pertinently, the District administration had made elaborated arrangements for the devotees with regard to water and power supply, medical facilities, security arrangements, Bhandara service, arrangements for sanitation and cleanliness and other related arrangements to ensure visiting devotees may not face any inconvenience.

## DC Anantnag Calls For Coordinated Action Against Drug Abuse

Observer News Service

**Anantnag:** NCORD meeting was held here on Thursday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Dr Basharat Qayoom. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner called for coordinated action against drugs. He said that Police and Drug Control Officers are making efforts to ensure the supply of drugs and substances of abuse

is restricted. He said that society, teachers, health professionals and PRLs need to ensure that through counselling young minds are made aware of the threat drugs pose to them and to the society as a whole. He said that teens are most vulnerable and need special attention to keep them away from this menace and parents and teachers have best access to youth for counselling them.

## India's Borders Fully Secure, Surgical Strikes Broken Back Of Terrorists: Rajnath

**New Delhi:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said India's borders are "fully secure" and asserted that surgical strikes conducted by India have broken the back of terrorists.

Addressing a conclave here, he also said that whether it was the "standoff with China or any ill intentions from Pakistan", Indian armed forces have been giving a "befitting reply".

Singh further said that India has led the world on issues like terrorism and has been successful in garnering support to eliminate the menace.

"Our borders are fully secure.

Whether it was the standoff with China or ill intentions from Pakistan, our armed forces have been giving a befitting reply, whenever required.

"The surgical strikes against terrorism have broken the back of terrorists. A strong and clear message has gone to the world that India has the strength and it can strike (against terrorism) on its own soil, and if need be, on their (foreign) soil as well," he said.

This is the result of strong will of the government, the defence minister said.

He emphasised that countries, which use terrorism as a

tool, are well aware of the fact that India never harms anyone unnecessarily, nor does it spare anyone who tries to hurt its unity, integrity and sovereignty.

He was speaking at the 'India Rising Conclave' organised by a leading television media network.

"This is a conclave on rising India. And, the idea of rising India has been described differently by different people. Some economists see it as a rising economy of India, while some sociologists describe it as betterment in social living. Some political scientists term the political stability in the country and strengthening

of democratic values as rising India," Singh said.

However, some people speaking contrary to this too are also active, and for them, 'democracy seems to be on the wane in India', but such people are very few and far between, he said.

From secure borders and self-reliance to a strong economy and transformed global image, India is rising as one of the "strongest countries" under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the defence minister said.

He termed the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and

Kashmir as another example of the strong will of the government, asserting that the Union territory has ushered in a new era of peace and progress due to the decision.

"One can assess this from the fact that Congress party while carrying out its 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' did not face any difficulty. The Yatra left Kashmir without any issue," he said.

Singh said that the government is carrying forward the vision of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, under whose leadership nuclear test was conducted in Pokhran in

1998. "Today, we are producing big missiles, tanks, weapons and ammunition on our land. This is also a result of a strong political will," he said.

He also highlighted the government's resolve towards the development of the Northeast region, saying that it has been ensured that the region, full of beauty and natural resources, is well connected with the heart of the country.

The Northeast has come closer to Delhi and 'dil' (heart) of people due to the Centre's efforts, Singh said. There is "unprecedented

peace" in the Northeast, which has resulted in the withdrawal of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or AFSPA, from most areas, he added.

He also outlined some of the achievements of the government in the last several years, and India's vision for the future ahead.

When 5G rollout in telecom is happening, "our PM has started working on 6G", he said.

"The cheapest mobile data service in India. The reach of broadband connectivity from 20 per cent in 2014 has grown to 80 per cent now," Singh said.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Working Towards

and Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The Lt Governor said most of the social security schemes have been saturated, while nearly 50 lakh youths have participated in different sports activities this year.

Under the Digital J&K initiative, Sinha said 445 online services are being provided through e-UNNAT portal, 225 e-services have been integrated with Rapid Assessment System for real time feedback on quality of service delivery.

All the online services have been linked with the Public Service Guarantee Act in J&K, he said.

Sinha said Jammu and Kashmir is the first among states/Union Territories to have a district good governance index for assessing the public service delivery at district level.

"Aspirational Panchayat Development Programme, Aspirational Block Development Programme and Aspirational Town Development Programme are the three new initiatives being implemented in J&K," he said.

In 2018-19, 9,228 works have been completed and the number has gone up to more than 50,000 in 2021-22 and this year "we expect 70,000 works to be completed", he said. "This is the paradigm shift in the pace of development in J&K over the last three to four years."

The Lt Governor also talked about a holistic agriculture development plan to be rolled out, with 29 proposed projects at an outlay of Rs 5,012 crore over the period of next five years

to improve the lives of farmers, create job opportunities and business enterprises besides improving production in different sectors.

### Two Brutal

a Rs 10 note and handed it to her" a visibly shocked mother told reporters.

Later, she said, her daughter started playing outside while she returned home to continue with her daily chores"

"After a while, I started to look for her and she was nowhere to be seen. Later, I was joined by locals and relatives. We frantically started to look for her everywhere in the vicinity," she said.

It was after a long time she found her daughter's throat slit.

"It was way too dark and someone managed to see my daughter's feet and that is when my back broke. To my shock, I saw the throat slit body of my daughter. She had been brutally murdered and her head was covered under a cement bag. We did not touch anything and waited for the police," she added.

Victim's father, a driver by profession, said that they have no grudges with anybody and are not suspicious of anybody.

"How can a seven year old girl have enmity with anyone," he asked.

The parents of the slain girl have demanded strict punishment for the killer.

Officials from the administration say they are doing their bit and hope that the killer shall

be soon put behind the bars.

Speaking to reporters, SSP Kupwara Yougal Manhas said that Wednesday night police received information that a throat slit body of a young girl had been found in Zab village.

Police swung into action and started investigations in this gruesome murder.

Later, we registered in this regard and started legal formalities. Post mortem of the girl has been carried out in the morning.

"We are hopeful that the culprit will be brought to book soon" Manhas said.

Meanwhile, in another horrific incident, an alleged drug addict allegedly killed his mother in Baramulla, police said.

The incident took place in Dangarpura area of Sopore township of the north Kashmir district Wednesday night, they said.

"The killing is a pure case of influence of drugs. The accused is a staunch drug addict. He has confessed to the murder," a police officer said.

A case has been registered and the probe is on, he said.

### J&K On Orange

of traffic on Jammu-Srinagar Highway, the MeT department has also issued yellow warning for March 30 and April 1 to 3.

There are four types of colour codes signifying the level of caution: green which means no action, yellow—situation to be watched, orange—government agencies need to be

prepared for severe weather and red—action needed by the agencies.

Meanwhile, the minimum temperatures recorded rise at most places and settled in Qazigund and Pahalgam.

The official said that Srinagar recorded a low of 6.6°C against 5.5°C on the previous night and it was 0.5°C above normal for the summer capital.

Qazigund, he said, recorded a low of 4.6°C against 2.6°C on the previous night while the tourist resort of Pahalgam recorded a low of 0.8°C against minus 0.3°C on the previous night.

Kokernag recorded a low of 4.9°C against 4.2°C on the previous night and it was 0.2°C above normal for the place, the officials said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of 0.0°C, the same as on the previous night and it was 0.8°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 5.7°C against 4.3°C on the previous night and it was 1.2°C above normal for the north Kashmir area.

Jammu recorded a low of 18.5°C against 15.5°C on the previous night. It was 1.9°C above normal for J&K's winter capital, he said.

Banihal, he said, recorded a low of 7.0°C (above normal by 0.5°C), Batote 9.0°C (above normal by 0.5°C), Katra 15.2°C (1.4°C above normal) and Bhandarwah 6.2°C (0.8°C above normal). Ladakh's Leh and Kargil recorded a low of

minus 3.0°C and 0.5°C respectively. (GNS)

### High Court Judge

sought a transfer out of the State of Madhya Pradesh on the ground that his elder daughter would enter practice next year and would be appearing before the District Court and the Indore Bench of the High Court. Mr. Justice Atul Sreedharan has stated that he does not desire to continue in the High Court of Madhya Pradesh when his daughter enters practice," the resolution passed by the Collegium noted.

Justice Sreedharan has received applause on social media with netizens praising his honesty and integrity.

"We still have Hon. Judges who work according to their conscience. Such thinking is applauded" posted Gazi Ahmad Pandit on social media.

"Let's hope he'll hold such integrity here also and make the fastest judgments as per constitutional laws," posted another social media user S'yed Adil.

Justice Sreedharan was the junior of Senior Advocate and former Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam from 1992 to 1997.

From 1997 to December 2000, he practiced independently at Delhi before shifting to Indore in the year 2001.

He then served as counsel for the State and Central government before being appointed additional judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court in April, 2016 and a permanent judge on March 17, 2018.

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

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## Amritpal's Aide Varinder Booked Under Arms Act In Kishtwar

J&K Police Seeks To Bring Him For Questioning

Press Trust Of India

**JAMMU:** The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Thursday booked Varinder Singh, suspected to be the bodyguard of the fugitive radical preacher Amritpal Singh, under the Arms Act in connection with a gun licence issued to him in Kishtwar district, officials said.

The district administration also cancelled Varinder Singh's licence, and said it will probe how the former army jawan, who was sacked in 2015, procured the licence in 2014 and then kept getting it renewed in different districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

Police said Varinder Singh, also known as Fauji, was part of a private security set up for radical preacher Amritpal Singh, who is on the run.

A video recently showed Varinder Singh, the bodyguard of Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh, opening fire in the air.

After the clip appeared, the Punjab Police arrested him last week, slapped the National Security Act on him and lodged in a jail in faraway Assam.

Kishtwar Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Khalil Poswal told PTI on Thursday that there was also a need to investigate how Varinder Singh got the licence.

"Accordingly, we have lodged an FIR under number 52/2023 under section 3/25/30 Arms Act and provisions of IPC registered in police station Kishtwar," he said.

He further said that police has conveyed the details of the case to Punjab Police and sought documents from them. "We will seek the presence of that person. He (Varinder Singh) will be brought here to conduct investigation and to find out how he reached here and how he got license from here."

Giving further details, he said

that the gun license was issued to him in 2014 from Kishtwar Deputy Magistrate (DM) office.

He said the CID wing of the Punjab Police recently wrote to the DM Kishtwar that there was misuse of his gun license. "The matter was activated and Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar cancelled gun license," the SSP said.

Poswal said that police will have to ascertain as to under which circumstances the gun license was issued to him in the first place as his army unit was never posted here in Kishtwar.

"He was a jawan of the 96 regiment and was terminated in 2015. After issuance, his gun licence was getting renewed. The licence has been validated till 2025 from Ramban, Reasi, Baramulla and Kathua. There is a need to investigate the case," the SSP said.

As for verification by Police before granting gun license to him, he said that there was a letter from the then commandant to DM. "On that certificate, the gun licence was issued. There was certification or verification by Police in Kishtwar in this case," the SSP said.

Amritpal Singh, meanwhile, remains elusive since the police crackdown against him and members of his pro-Khalistan 'Waris Punjab De' outfit began on March 18, about three weeks after he and his supporters stormed into the Ajnala police station near Amritsar to secure the release of an arrested man.

The preacher escaped the police net in Jalandhar district on March 18, switching vehicles and changing appearances.

He and his associates have been booked under several criminal cases related to spreading disharmony among classes, attempt to murder, attack on police personnel and creating obstructions in the lawful discharge of duty by public servants



AMIDST TIGHT SECURITY, members of Kashmiri Pandit community on Thursday celebrated Ram Navami in this capital city by taking out a Shobha Yatra. KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

'Backdoor Appointments' In Courts

## SC Seeks Response Of J&K High Court Registry

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court has directed the Registrar General of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court to file its response to a plea which alleged that relatives of former judges and staff were favoured in the appointments in judicial institutions and courts in the Union Territory.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud initially suggested to a counsel, representing petitioner NGO 'Jammu and Kashmir People's Forum', that it should approach the high court with the plea.

However, the CJI, after confabulating with Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala, decided to hear the plea in the apex court itself and asked the counsel for the high court to file a response within four weeks.

"On the request of the counsel appearing on behalf of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, time for filing the counter affidavit is extended by a further period of four weeks.

The counter affidavit shall be filed by the Registrar General of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir after specifically taking instructions and directions only from the learned Chief Justice of the High Court," the top court said in its order.

The bench then fixed the plea for hearing on April 28.

Presently, Justice N Kotiswar Singh is the Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. He took the oath of office on February 15 this year.

On September 2 last year, the top court had agreed to hear the plea filed by the NGO.

It had then issued notice and sought a response from the Jammu and Kashmir High Court on its administrative side, saying it should be vetted by the Chief Justice of the High Court.

The NGO, in its plea, has alleged that several qualified youths were not considered by the high court in appointments for several administrative posts to various judicial institutions including the judicial academy, legal services

authorities, and courts from district to high court level.

The plea claimed that instead of going by the regular recruitment process, contractual workers and daily wagers who were a decade back have since been absorbed against the vacancies as regular employees without affording a chance for the general public.

It said that reservation rules were also bypassed by the High Court even though many of the posts were not sanctioned.

The plea gave names of the relatives of the judges from district to high court level, court staff, and bar association members to canvas the argument that favour was granted in the appointment process.

It sought directions for a probe by an independent agency and to the high court administration to not make any further "backdoor appointments" in judicial establishments like the state judicial academy, legal services authorities, and those recruited under the E-Court mission.

## CAG Red Flags Slow Development Of J&K Power Projects

Press Trust Of India

**JAMMU:** The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) said out of 374 identified project sites with power generation capacity of 1,725.53 MegaWatts, only 10 projects with 79.75 MW capacity had been commissioned with time overrun ranging between four months and seven years.

The hydro power potential of Jammu and Kashmir has been estimated at 20,000 MW which includes 1,500 MW in respect of small hydro projects. As of October 2021, only 2,813.46 MW (16 per cent) of this potential had been harnessed, which included 79.75 MW of small hydro projects.

"The main objective of hydro policy for small hydro project/mini hydro projects for expeditious development of available hydro power of Jammu and Kashmir was not achieved. Out of 374 identified project sites with power generation capacity of 1,725.53 MWs, only 10 projects with capacity of 79.75 MWs (five per cent) had been commissioned with time overrun ranging between four months and over seven years," the CAG said in its report tabled in the parliament on Tuesday.

The report on compliance audit for the year ended March 31, 2021 said while no action was taken for 225 sites (60 per cent) after their identification, bids were invited for 115 sites (31 per cent) only.

"No response was received for 70 sites and out of 45 sites awarded for development of hydro power projects, 32 IPPs (Independent Power Producers) either failed to fulfil commitments like obtaining statutory clearances for execution of projects or did not deposit up-front premium or the allotment of projects was terminated due to land issues, slow progress and techno economic viability reasons," the CAG said.

It said for 20 sites proposed under Prime Minister's Development Package, the Centre

had not acceded to the request of the government of J&K for release of funds in view of high project cost and unviable tariff of these 20 projects.

"Nodal agencies did not coordinate with line departments/agencies for facilitating IPPs in



obtaining clearances, approvals and finances for their projects in a time bound manner. Execution of projects was also not monitored," the report said.

It said the IPPs had also attributed poor performance in development of projects in inter alia to lack of financing by banks due to non-availability of buy back agreement with the J&K government.

"Failure of JKPCDC (Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Corporation) in ensuring completion of transmission line alongside the commission of hydro project at Dah resulted in non-utilisation of power generation of 59.37 MU and consequent loss of revenue of Rs 16.45 crore," the CAG said.

It said three projects with generation capacity of 12 MWs were selling power outside the UT thereby defeating the objective of hydro policy for providing solution to the energy problems in remote and hilly areas of the Union Territory, where the power demand was estimated at 4,217 MW (21,887 MU) ending 2021-22.

To encourage private sector participation in development of hydropower projects with a capacity of up to 25 MW, the J&K government initially brought out in October 2003 a policy to generate power through small

hydropower sources of energy.

In order to give further impetus to exploitation of hydel potential, the government revised the state hydel policy in July 2011 to facilitate projects with installed capacity of 2-100 MWs by IPPs and stipulated penalty on the failure to meet the timelines fixed for execution of projects by IPPs.

"Audit noticed that JKPCDC allotted nine projects with potential of 92.50 MW between November 2012 and July 2014. Five IPPs failed to deposit up-front premium of Rs 1.98 crore and did not take up the allotted projects.

"The timelines for financial closure of remaining four projects which were fixed between May 2015 and January 2017 were not adhered to by IPPs. However, JKPCDC did not invoke penal provisions for delay in financial closure of these projects due to which penalty of Rs 12.60 crore could not be imposed on defaulting IPPs. Further, JKPCDC had not executed implementation agreement with IPPs for timely completion of projects as mandated in the hydro policy-2011," the report said.

In its recommendations, the CAG said the lack of ease of doing business for IPPs should be addressed and hydro policy 2011 revisited.

It also suggested feasible identification of sites, prompt DPR finalisation, handholding of IPPs in land acquisition and statutory clearances as well as obtaining of finances and assistance so that IPPs could come forward for taking up projects.

The CAG also recommended the government to ensure execution of bankable power purchase agreements and ensure timely payment of dues to these IPPs.

In respect of EPC projects developed by JKPCDC, completion of projects in a time bound manner may be ensured apart from installation of power evacuation systems before commissioning of projects, it said.

## South Kashmir Woman Makes World's Smallest 'Mandala' Shikara

Press Trust Of India

**PAHALGAM:** Childhood interest in drawing and painting led Mahira Shah to the world of 'mandala' art and today she holds the world record for making the smallest mandala shikara.

Mandala is an ancient Indian art pattern which involves drawing of circles in intricate designs. The art form was popularised by Indian artist SH Raza, who created several paintings of the mandala art and became world famous for them.

Mahira Shah entered the Indian Books of Records for making the world's smallest shikara in mandala art. The artwork is more or less the size of an A3 sheet.

"During my free time, I would try my hand at mandala (art). My husband and father-in-law noticed that I had some talent and they encouraged me to take it up," Shah told PTI from her Pahalgam home.

Born and brought up in Tral township of Pulwama district, Mahira Shah got married to Inamul Haq who hails from Pahalgam. Haq is a proud husband and an unabashed admirer of his wife's work.

"She worked with the intention of breaking the world record or to set a new record. She created several mandala art pieces such as shikara, spinning wheel and kangri (a Kashmiri firepot made of wicker and clay). The India Book of

Records accepted her entry and also nominated her for the Gold medal. I am thankful to her for making me feel proud," Haq said.

Mahira's father in law, Mush-taq Ahmad Shah said he encouraged his daughter-in-law to pursue her craft when he noticed her talent.

"I treat her like my own daughter. I told her to pursue her interest and we are supporting her," Shah, a teacher by profession, said.

Shah said for their family, Mahira's record was an early Eid gift. "It is as if we celebrated even before the fasting month. We are extremely happy."

Mahira is sad, though, as no one from the administration came to appreciate her effort. "This is not just my achievement. This achievement belongs to Pahalgam, Tral, the entire Kashmir, and also India for a world record was made," she added.



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## Govt Set To Appoint 10K Youths As Lambardars, Chowkidars

Press Trust Of India

**JAMMU:** The Lieutenant Governor-led administration in Jammu and Kashmir has nearly completed the process of appointing around 10,000 young and educated people from different villages to grassroots-level posts of lambardars and chowkidars, officials said Thursday.

The information was revealed in a meeting chaired by Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Mehta, who noted that these appointees would also act as a link between people and the administration to raise their genuine grievances before the authorities for the timely redressal of such grievances.

There are a total of 7,056 sanctioned posts of lambardars (village heads) and 2,718 posts of chowkidars in the Union Territory, the officials said.

Out of these, 2,220 previously appointed lambardars and 1,165 chowkidars were found eligible to continue doing their work after verification of their character and antecedents, they said.

It was further revealed that 4,832 lambardars and 1,553 chowkidars were found worth replaceable and process was initiated to do so in accordance with the rules in vogue, they said.

The officials said the role and responsibilities of these workers are going to be revamped in line with the requirement of modern times.

This is going to ensure bringing a change in the administration transforming it towards more responsive, responsible, transparent and accountable in discharging its day-to-day affairs, they said.

Mehta applauded both the di-

visional and district administration for "achieving this feat in a record time".

He impressed upon the authorities to ensure that a training schedule is framed for these youngsters in order to sensitize them about their vital role as the grassroots level, frontline workers who have to work for the welfare and well-being of their villages.

He enjoined upon them that all these youngsters deserve to be given due respect and recognition as they would act as a bridge between the common masses and higher authorities.

The chief secretary advised them to create a WhatsApp group of these basic workers so that there is continuous communication between them and the district and divisional administration.

The top official maintained that since all of these people are educated and young with very good reputation in their villages, their services with respect to ground-level verification about implementation of different welfare programmes in the villages would be authentic, genuine and seamless.

He exhorted them that their role in reporting of malpractices like encroachment of state land by people and other incidents of laxity or unprofessional conduct on any part of government official in their respective villages would be vital in taking action against the delinquents.

Mehta also highlighted that the role of these basic workers in times of accidents and disasters in their areas would give the administration an instant information about the same for their early intervention and start of rescue operations.

## High Intensity Blast Rocks Kathua

Press Trust Of India

**JAMMU:** A suspected Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast rocked a border hamlet in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, creating a huge crater in the ground, officials said Thursday.

Security forces have been put on high alert in the border belts and along the Jammu-Pathankot highway following the blast that took place on Wednesday night.

A live grenade was recovered following a search of the area on Thursday morning. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Kathua, Shivdeep Singh Jamwal told PTI.

"Information was received about a powerful blast around 9.30 PM on Wednesday.

We launched a search operation this morning...The bomb squad team has collected the samples and sent it for test", the SSP said.

The SSP, who led the search operation in the area and adjoining

border areas this morning, said it was a high intensity blast.

"One live grenade was seized around 6.30 am today. It points out that someone lobbed the grenade after detecting presence of security forces", he said.

The SSP said prima facie it was an IED blast.

As the site of the blast is close to a police post, there is a possibility that the police post was the intended target. "It points out towards that. On Wednesday, our presence was more in this area, that is why they may have hurled grenade and after that they triggered IED blast", Jamwal said.

Block Development Committee (BDC) chairman Ram Lal Kaliya, a resident of Sanial village which is just 300 metres from the border post, said, "Around 9.30 pm on Wednesday we heard an explosion. I informed the post in-charge."

The blast site was located after one-and-a-half hours, he said, adding that a big crater was found in an agriculture field.

## 2 Chargesheeted In Udhampur Blast Cases

**JAMMU:** Two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives, including a Pakistan-based handler, have been chargesheeted in connection with the blasts in two buses in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district in September last year, an official said on Thursday.

The chargesheet against Mohammad Amin Bhat alias 'Abu Khubaib', a resident of Doda district, who is currently operating from Pakistan and trying to revive militant activities in the Jammu region, and Mohd Aslam Sheikh alias 'Adil' was filed in a special court on Tuesday, a National Investigation Agency (NIA) spokesperson said.

Bhat and Sheikh were charged under the Indian Penal Code, the Explosive Substances Act and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act following thorough investigation into the explosions inside two parked buses in Udhampur district on September 28 and 29, the of-

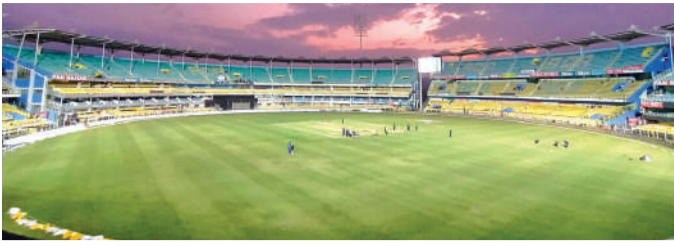
ficial said.

The spokesperson said the two LeT operatives have also been charged for their efforts towards revival of militant activities in Jammu by carrying out recruitment from the pool of Over-ground Workers and surrendered militants as well as activating and motivating them to carry out terrorist acts.

After taking over the investigation into the blast cases on November 15 last year from the Jammu and Kashmir Police, the NIA said its probe revealed that Sheikh was in touch with Bhat, also known as 'Pinna'.

Bhat has been listed as an "individual terrorist" of the LeT by the government and is operating from Pakistan, the agency said.

"Pinna recruited Adil to carry out the two IED blasts on buses parked in the public areas of Udhampur district which had inflicted injuries to two persons," the spokesperson said.



## IPL In Northeast: Guwahati To Host Two Matches

Press Trust of India

**GUWAHATI:** The Northeast is all set to debut as an Indian Premier League (IPL) host for the first time since the marquee tournament started, with two Rajasthan Royals' 'home' games scheduled in Assam's Guwahati next month.

The Assam Cricket Association (ACA) Stadium has been designated as one of the 'home' venues for RR, which will take on the Punjab Kings on April 5 and Delhi Capitals on April 8.

"We were allotted two IPL matches of RR in 2020. But, the matches couldn't happen due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We are happy two games have been scheduled here this year," ACA secretary Tridib Konwar told PTI.

He said preparations are in full swing, and ACA is working in

close coordination with the Rajasthan Royals team.

"We urge the cricket lovers of Assam as well as the entire Northeast to come and watch the matches. Rajasthan Royals has already started online ticketing for the games," Konwar said.

The Jaipur-based franchise had earlier partnered with the association for a cricket academy, which is now functional at the ACA Stadium.

Devajit Saikia, joint secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said there are a lot of aspiring cricketers who cannot make it to the national side due to tough competition, and the IPL is a good opportunity for them.

All eyes will be on local boy Riyan Parag, who plays for the Rajasthan Royals, during the two matches at Guwahati.

## Bhuvneshwar To Lead SRH In Opener Against RR

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Veteran India seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar will lead Sunrisers Hyderabad in their IPL opener against Rajasthan Royals in Hyderabad on Sunday.



Markram is in South Africa for the two-match ODI series against Netherlands and will arrive in India only on April 3. The series is vital for South Africa's direct qualification for the ODI World Cup, to be played in India later this year.

South Africa's matches will be played on March 31 and April 2.

## IPL 2023: Champions GT Take On CSK In Opener



Agencies

**AHMEDABAD:** Gujarat Titans begin the defence of their Indian Premier League (IPL) title against four-times champions Chennai Super Kings on Friday as the Twenty20 tournament returns to its traditional home-and-away format after a gap of four years.

The 2020 edition of the money-spinning league and the second half of the 2021 tournament took place in the United Arab Emirates as India battled the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year's expanded 10-team event was held mostly in Mumbai and Pune.

Ahmedabad side Gujarat, one of the two expansion teams along with Lucknow, capped a fairytale debut season by defeating inaugural champions Rajasthan Royals in front of around 100,000 fans in the final at home. Hardik Pandya's side are the bookmakers' favourites to retain the trophy but five-

times champions Mumbai Indians - the most successful IPL outfit - and Chennai will aim to reclaim the crown in the 16th edition of the event.

Home support could play a major role and Chennai's fans served up a reminder of what teams have missed with a thunderous round of applause for Mahendra Singh Dhoni during a recent practice session amid media speculation it could be his last IPL. While a return to familiar settings will be a welcome boost for teams, they will need to quickly master a new rule that adds another strategic dimension to the game.

For the first time IPL sides will be allowed to make a tactical substitution with an "Impact Player" coming in to bat or bowl as needed. Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting said the move would almost negate the need for all-rounders.

"Unless they're absolutely world class and getting picked either as a batsman or as a

bowler... I don't think you'll see many teams use the guy that might bat at seven and maybe bowl an over or two," Ponting said. "You don't need those guys anymore."

Hoping to prove the former Australian captain wrong will be Sam Curran. The England all-rounder became the most expensive ever buy in the players' auction in December by returning to Punjab Kings for 185 million Indian rupees (\$2.25 million). Australian all-rounder Cameron Green will also look to live up to his paycheck after joining Mumbai for 175 million rupees.

The IPL will also present Green and other overseas players with the chance to get used to conditions in India, where the 50-overs World Cup will be held in October and November. With one eye on that tournament, India captain Rohit Sharma has suggested his national team players should consider skipping some IPL games to manage their workload.

## Tears, Anger As Indonesian Football Fears FIFA Sanctions

Agencies

**JAKARTA:** Indonesian football players and fans reacted with tears and outrage after the country was stripped of hosting rights for the Under-20 World Cup only eight weeks before the start of the tournament amid political turmoil over Israel's participation, leaving Indonesian football at risk of further sanctions.

The youth football event was expected to be a rare turn on the global football stage for a country that hasn't been to the World Cup since winning independence. But it was officially canceled Wednesday after two regional governors said they would not allow an Israeli team to play in their territories.

FIFA said Indonesia was removed from staging the 24-team tournament scheduled to start on May 20 "due to the current circumstances," without specifying details.

striker in Indonesia's U-20 national team, "It's the players who suffer the most," he said.

Popular social media were flooded with outraged comments from disappointed fans. Many blamed politics a year ahead of a presidential election. Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation and does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

"Indonesia's name in international sports is tarnished, this is a bitter event in our football history," said Andieka Rabbani, a university student in the capital, Jakarta.

He added that Israeli delegations have been to Indonesia for sporting and diplomatic events before, including four Israelis who competed in the World Cycling Championship last month in Jakarta.

A number of members of the Israeli Parliament also attended an Interparliamentary Union



In an emotional meeting with Indonesian youth players and their coach in Jakarta on Thursday, Zainudin Amali, deputy chair of the national football association, apologized. Some players were seen shedding tears while others looked down sadly.

"It's a heartbreaking decision that ruined our dreams, and now we are confused about our future as players if FIFA imposes sanctions," said Hokky Caraka, a

conference in Bali last year and were warmly welcomed by Indonesian House Speaker Puan Maharani, the granddaughter of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, and by Bali Governor Wayan Koster, who was the first to reject the Israeli youth football team.

"Our stance on the U-20 World Cup is too politicized because a presidential election is coming," Rabbani said. (AP)

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