

Millions Bid Tearful Adieu To Month Of Fasting

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Devout Muslims thronged mosques and shrines across Kashmir on the last Friday of Ramazan bidding the holy month a tearful farewell during congregational prayers.

Largest gatherings were witnessed at Srinagar's Dargah Hazratbal and the historic Jamia Masjid.

Large congregations were also witnessed in Khanqah-e-Maula, Ziarat-e-Makhdoom Sahib and other Waqf Board controlled shrines and different Imambargahs.

Jamia Masjid, Srinagar was jam-packed with devotees who offered congregational Friday prayers at the historic mosque, which remained closed for the prayers last Friday due to government curbs.

The biggest congregation was, however, witnessed at Hazratbal shrines where the devotees from different parts of the Valley participated in the Friday prayers. Prayers were followed by display of the holy relic of the Prophet (pbuh) during which emotional scenes were witnessed all around. Many of the devout, including a large number of women, were seen praying with moist eyes.

The big congregational prayers were also witnessed at several other shrines in different districts, including shrine of Alamdar, Chararisharif, Khiram Sirhama, Kabamarg in Anantnag district,

Ahm-e-Sharif in Bandipora district and other mosques as well.

During the special prayers, the religious clerics threw light on the teachings of Islam.

Srinagar Police on Twitter said, "Jumma-tul-Vida' prayers went peacefully and smoothly in all the mosques of Srinagar district including in Hazratbal Dargah & in Jamia Masjid, Nowhatta. A huge congregation offered Friday afternoon prayers in all the mosques."

Last Friday, congregational prayers were disallowed at the Jamia Masjid by the authorities. However, Shab-e-Qadar prayers were allowed at the grand mosque on Monday night.

Meanwhile, Anjuman Auqaf Jamia Masjid, the managing body of the grand mosque, said thousands of men, women and youngsters offered the Friday prayer at the historic 14th-century mosque.

It, however, said the people were "once again disappointed over the absence of their beloved leader Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Dr Moulvi Muhammad Umar Farooq who is under house detention for the last nearly four years".

A spokesperson of the Auqaf conveyed the Eid-ul-Fitr message of the Mirwaiz to the people and appealed to them to celebrate Eid with simplicity according to Islamic teachings. "The Auqaf expresses strong resentment against the continuous illegal and arbitrary detention of [More on Page 6](#)



Thousands of devotees visited Srinagar's Jamia Masjid to offer Jumma-tul-Vida prayers held for the first time since August, 2019. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

Sun Shines After Days Of Rain, Snowfall

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid decrease in precipitation and forecast for scattered to fairly widespread light rain and thunderstorm in next 24 hours, the minimum temperature recorded a drop in Jammu and Kashmir below normal on Friday.

A meteorological department official said that "mainly dry weather to isolated very light rain and thunderstorm" was expected during two subsequent days.

While there was improvement in rainfall activity, in the last 24 hours till 0830 hours this morning, Srinagar received 0.7mm of rain, Qazigund 14.6mm, Pahalgam 9.0mm, Kokernag 3.2mm, Gulmarg 8.6mm, Jammu 7.4mm, Banihal 5.0mm, Batote 6.2mm, Bhaderwah 8.4mm, Katra 13.0mm, and Kathua 1.6mm.

Regarding temperature, the MeT official said that Srinagar recorded a low of 6.2°C against 7.9°C on the previous night and it was 2.7°C below normal for the summer capital. Qazigund, he said, [More on P6](#)

Poonch, Rajouri On High Alert, 12 People Detained

Drones, Sniffer Dogs, MI Chopper Used In Massive Manhunt For Militants



Press Trust Of India

Poonch: At least 12 people were detained on Friday for questioning in connection with the deadly ambush of five army soldiers in the dense forest area of Bata Doriya here even as a MI helicopter, drones and sniffer dogs were pressed into service in a massive manhunt for the perpetrators of last afternoon's attack. Officials said that those

detained were being questioned at various levels by the security forces to ascertain the identity of the militant group, which is believed to be active in the area for more than a year and probably comprises a sniper too.

A day after the attack, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police Dilbag Singh along with Additional Director General police Mukesh Singh was camping in neighbouring [More on P6](#)

BSF DG Reviews Border Situation

BSF Director General S L Thaosen reviewed the security situation along the International Border (IB) on the Jammu frontier on Friday, officials said, a day after a militant attack in Poonch near the LoC killed five army personnel. [More on P6](#)

Security Lapses Must Be Looked Into: Dr Farooq

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) president Dr Farooq Abdullah said on Friday that security officials should look into the lapses that led to the killing of five soldiers in a militant attack in Poonch district. [More on P6](#)

Reliance Insurance 'Scam' CBI Summons Ex-J&K Guv Malik For Questioning

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The CBI has asked former Jammu and Kashmir governor Satya Pal Malik to answer certain queries in connection with an alleged insurance scam in the Union Territory, officials said on Friday.

This is the second time in seven months that Malik, who completed his terms as the governor of various states, will be questioned by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). He was questioned in October last year after he concluded his gubernatorial responsibilities in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Goa and finally, Meghalaya.

The CBI move comes barely a week after Malik's interview to "The Wire", in which he made critical remarks about the BJP-led Centre, especially regarding its handling of Jammu and Kashmir where he served as the last governor before the erstwhile state was bifurcated into Union territories.

Reacting to the development, Malik told PTI that the CBI has asked for his presence at the agency's Akbar Road guesthouse here for "certain



clarifications".

"They want certain clarifications for which they want my presence. I am going to Rajasthan, so I have given them dates from April 27 to 29 when I am available," he said.

The CBI registered two FIRs in connection with corruption allegations levelled by Malik in the awarding of contracts for a group medical insurance scheme for government employees and civil work worth Rs 2,200 crore related to the Kiru hydroelectric power project in Jammu and Kashmir.

Malik had claimed that he was offered a Rs 300-crore bribe for clearing two files during his tenure as the Jammu and Kashmir [More on P6](#)

Eid Prayers Being Offered Today

Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the culmination of the fasting month of Ramazan, will be celebrated in the country on Saturday as the moon was sighted this evening. Fatehpuri Masjid Imam Mufti Mukarram Ahmad told PTI that the Ruet-e-Hilal Committee of the mosque contacted many places and was informed that moon was sighted at several places. Eid will be celebrated in the country on Saturday, he said. Describing Eid as a festival of brotherhood and harmony, Ahmad said "On this occasion, we pray [More on P6](#)

JUMMA-TUL-VIDA' PRAYERS WENT PEACEFULLY AND SMOOTHLY in all the mosques of Srinagar district including in Hazratbal Dargah & in Jamia Masjid, Nowhatta. A huge congregation offered Friday afternoon prayers in all the mosques."

Deep Drug Nexus Aimed At Destroying Kashmir Youth: LG

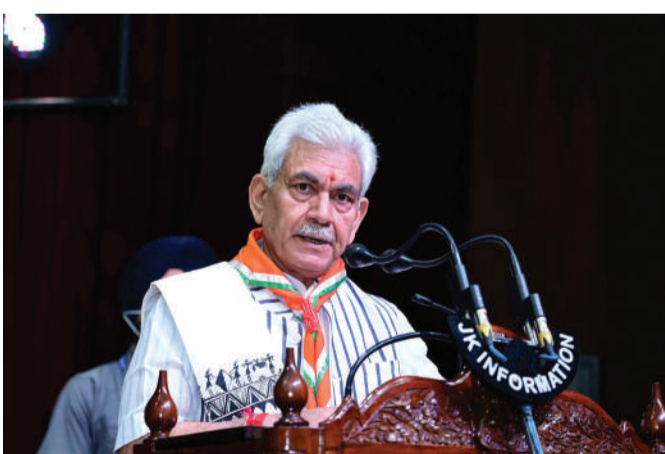
Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Siniha Friday said that under deep-rooted nexus, an attempt is being made to destroy the society and youth of Jammu and Kashmir. He, however, was quick to add that the Government will go tough against the drug peddlers and those behind the drug trade.

Siniha urged the youths to join hands with the government in eradicating the drug menace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Siniha called upon the youths while addressing the Rajya Puraskar Ceremony of J-K Bharat Scouts and Guides earlier today.

"The way the illicit trade of drugs is increasing...The way youth are being destroyed, I think



it is the right time for scouts and guides to join and take part in this campaign," he said.

Some people are trying to destroy the young generation

in the country, Siniha said. "We want to make a mechanism to take strict and strong action against those involved in the drug trade and destroying the

young generation."

Wherever you see such elements in schools, universities or in any colony, please provide us with information about them. Strong action will be taken against them, the LG said.

The police and administration are acting against it. However, there is a need for social awakening. All should join us in this campaign to put an end to this menace, he said.

Siniha further said that the young generation is the key to change and today they are eager to play a bigger role in sustainable economic growth and social cohesion.

"With their commitment to selfless service, scouts and guides are contributing to building an inclusive [More on P6](#)

KPDCL Collects Rs 1550 Cr Revenue In FY 2022-23

Agencies

Srinagar: The government on Friday said that it has collected a revenue of Rs 1550 crore in the financial year 2022-23 in the Valley.

An official in the Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) while divulging the details to a local news agency KNO, said that the corp has collected Rs 1,550 crore revenue for the financial year 2022-23 against the collection of Rs 1,385 crore in the previous financial year 2021-2022.

It is for the first time that the KPDCL has been able to recover a huge amount, which according to the officials will help in reducing the deficit.

The official said that the revenue collection is increasing



with each passing year as several measures have been taken to ensure that the collection is increasing to meet the needs. "We are expecting further increase in the revenue collection for the next financial year 2023-24," he said.

Pertinently, Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (KPDCL) has initiated several measures, including disconnecting services to defaulters, to reduce the deficit.

The officials had said that as far as KPDCL is [More on P6](#)

SHORT TAKES

LG, Advisor Greet People On Eid

The Union Territory Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Siniha and his Advisor Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar on Friday greeted the people on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr. In his message, the Lt Governor said: "Heartiest greetings and good wishes to the people on the joyous occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. The festival marks the culmination of the holy month of Ramzan and symbolizes the spirit of austerity, brotherhood, compassion and joy of sharing". May Eid-ul-Fitr usher [More on P6](#)

Record Number Visit Tulip Garden

A record 3.7 lakh tourists, including those from far-away countries like Argentina, visited Asia's largest tulip garden situated on the banks of the Dal lake here this season. The Indira Gandhi Tulip Garden, which was earlier known as Siraj Bagh, has drawn tourists from all over the country and abroad, Inamur Rehman, the in-charge of the garden said. "Today was the 32nd day of the tulip show. More than 3.7 lakh tourists have [More on P6](#)

J&K Adds 57 More Corona Cases

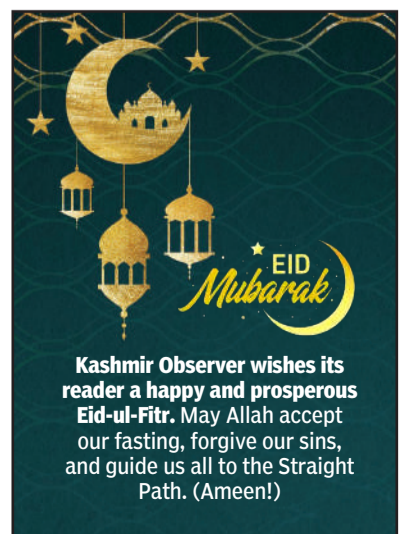
Jammu and Kashmir reported 57 fresh covid-19 cases while there was no death due to the virus during the last 24 hours, officials said on Saturday. They said that 33 cases were reported from Jammu division and 24 from Kashmir Valley, taking the overall tally to 481264. Among the cases, 174780 are from Jammu division and 306484 from Kashmir Valley. Providing district wise details of the cases, they said, Jammu reported 25, Udhampur 4, Rajouri 0, Doda 4, [More on P6](#)

Avalanche Alert In 7 J&K Districts

The Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority (JKDMA) on Friday renewed avalanche warning in seven districts of the Union Territory. Avalanche with 'low' danger level is likely to occur above 2500-3200 metres above sea level over Doda, Kishtwar, Poonch, Ramban, Baramulla and Kupwara districts in the next 24 hours, JKDMA posted on its official Twitter handle. In another Tweet, JKDMA said that [More on P6](#)

Rahul To Vacate Official Bungalow Today

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who was disqualified as MP after conviction in a defamation case, moved out all his belongings from his official residence on Friday, with sources saying he will hand over the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow to the Lok Sabha secretariat on April 22. The former Congress president was asked to vacate the premises by April 22 following his disqualification after the conviction and two-year sentence in the case pertaining to the [More on P6](#)



Kashmir Observer wishes its reader a happy and prosperous Eid-ul-Fitr. May Allah accept our fasting, forgive our sins, and guide us all to the Straight Path. (Ameen!)

Genetically Modified Houseplants Are Coming to Clean Your Air

Wired

At an old shoe factory on the outskirts of Paris, new life is taking shape. Behind a heavy door, a bank of PCR machines multiplies plant DNA molecules by hundreds of billions every few hours. Inside a gleaming white chamber, tiny emerald shoots are coaxed from single cells, unfurling in millimeters over a period of months.

"It's like a biologist's wet dream," says Patrick Torbey, chief technology officer of Neoplants, a Parisian startup taking a multimillion-dollar punt on the air we breathe. Torbey grabs one of the small, plastic receptacles from inside the chamber and squints at his verdant creation: Nestled in a jelly-like growing medium, it looks like a canapé—or, possibly, the future.

This is the Neo P1—a genetically modified houseplant that the company claims could help combat indoor air pollution. P1 is a modified form of golden pothos—more commonly known as devil's ivy—one of the world's most ubiquitous and easy-going houseplants. Although its yellow-green hues appear familiar, P1's DNA has been tweaked to enhance its ability to extract volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from the air, including formaldehyde, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene, which are prevalent in indoor spaces.

These genetic adjustments also—crucially in the case of the P1—allow the plant to convert the VOCs it absorbs into substances like sugar and CO2 that it can use to carry on growing. Once it's outgrown the agar, P1 will be planted in soil enriched with biochar (a common gardening additive) in a pot designed to maximize airflow, and sold with a pack of three Power Drops (bacteria, to be added to the soil each month to help the plant metabolize the VOCs it absorbs). Due on shelves later this year, P1 will retail for \$179, or around £145—roughly 10 times the cost of an ordinary golden pothos plant, or comparable to that of a keenly priced Honeywell HEPA purifier.

So far, Torbey, who has a PhD in genome editing, and his cofounder Lionel Mora, an ex-Google product marketer, have collected \$20 million in venture funding from firms including True Ventures and Collaborative Fund.

Much of the money has gone toward fitting out Neoplants' new space on the north side of the French capital. Over the past two years, it's been stripped and gutted, whitewashed, and then refitted to spec with every gadget Torbey could tick off his wishlist. There are mass spectrometers, fume cupboards, and growth chambers. Magnetic stirrers fidget next to cabinets stocked with glass flasks and petri dishes.

There are two rooms whose insides are coated in a greenish non-adsorbent material (meaning organic compounds won't stick to it). In the months to come, they'll be used to mimic bedrooms, for a more accurate measurement



of how well Neo P1 strips toxins from the air.

Neoplants' proposition is an attractive one: neatly pairing something that looks nice in people's homes and brings them joy (houseplants) with one of the biggest existential challenges facing humanity at large (slowly choking to death from pollutants). But proving that it actually works is where things get thorny.

Browse most plant shops and you'll be met with the promise of purified air: peace lilies and snake plants and ivy with little tags—pale blue or white, or some other color suggestive of purity—declaring that "this plant cleans air." Patch, a popular online retailer, reserves an entire section of its website for "air-purifying indoor plants." Another vendor, Planter, offers an Air So Pure package of spider plants, palms, and ferns.

Much of the support for these marketing efforts stems from 1989, when NASA worked with the Associated Landscape Contractors of America to assess the ability of houseplants to remove toxins from the air. The resulting Clean Air Study suggested that, yes, houseplants could absorb certain pollutants—including VOCs like benzene, formaldehyde, and trichloroethylene. Less touted was the fact that these results mostly could not be applied to the houses these plants are

often placed in. Putting a plant in a sealed chamber, blowing pollutants over it for multiple hours (or days), and then recording the results, the researchers admitted, was not an accurate replication of normal houseplant conditions. This has not stopped many researchers since from conducting almost exactly the same experiment.

In 2019, however, researchers at Drexel University concluded that, in order for the effects measured in these chamber experiments to be reproduced at any livable scale, and to even match the rate of toxin removal already achieved by just opening a window, you'd need anywhere between 10 and 1,000 plants per square meter.

Richard Corsi, dean of the College of Engineering at UC Davis, also takes umbrage with what he calls these "little glass chamber studies." The issue, he says, is that to get their results, researchers exaggerate the amount of air that would ever flow over a plant in normal conditions. The industry's standard metric for the effectiveness of air filters is clean air delivery rate, or CADR, which combines separate measures for airflow and how efficiently particles are removed. The idea is that, by combining these measurements into a single metric, consumers are less likely to be misled by, for instance, an air filter that is incredibly efficient at removing

toxins, but only for a small amount of air.

Using data from past plant studies and calculations based on the best case scenario for CADR, Corsi says that a bedroom of approximately 200 square feet would need as many as 315 individual plants to bring formaldehyde (and other VOC) levels down by 50 percent. To get a 90 percent reduction would require more like 2,800 plants. Scale that up to a whole flat or house, and you're nurturing a dense jungle.

So is Neoplants' genetically modified houseplant any better? The company's sales materials reference the 1989 study, and claim the P1 is "30 times better than top NASA plants" when it comes to removing VOCs. But this was a lab-based study: Neoplants pumped formaldehyde, benzene, toluene, and xylene over a P1 sample contained inside a 35-liter glass chamber, and then compared the outputs. Field tests are yet to yield reliable results, but the hope is that the new lab, with its specially designed non-adsorbent rooms, will allow more true-to-life testing in the future.

There's no CADR measurement to compare the P1 with mechanical air purifiers either. Instead, Neoplants offers a "CADR by weight" to reflect the varying sizes of different plants. Even if the P1 is 30 times better than a traditional houseplant, you would still need a lot of them to clean the dirtiest air.

A new metric might be required for this product category, Mora argues, because plants—unlike traditional air purifiers—don't get switched on and off (although they do have extended dormant periods in most years). Neoplants has hired two people to devise a measurement that better suits its purposes.

Right now, P1 amounts to trays of tiny shoots stored in growth chambers. It takes six months to take each plant from a single cell to a shoot of a few inches in height. More than 30,000 people have signed up for a waiting list via the Neoplants website; interested parties include hoteliers and real estate developers. Mora is cutting deals with growers in Florida who'll be able to reproduce their plants at scale. (The US, where the regulatory process for clearing genetically modified products is more straightforward, will be Neoplants' launch market).

The lab move-in isn't quite complete—a workman's brush props open the front door, fresh tarmac is being flattened into potholes in the courtyard—but the new facilities will enable Mora and Torbey to run more rigorous, realistic tests. P2 is already in the works, and the business is already exploring how its gene-editing technology could be deployed in carbon capture or phytoremediation, through which plants are used to absorb toxins from contaminated environments.

The company is banking on a bit of patience and a dose of belief—green shoots need time to grow. "It will be the first time in history that such a product exists," says Mora. "The first computers, they weren't so great. But they were revolutionary."

As Earth Warms More 'Flash Droughts' Suck Soil Plants Dry

Associated Press

Climate change is making droughts faster and more furious, especially a specific fast-developing heat-driven kind that catch farmers by surprise, a new study found.

The study in Thursday's journal Science found droughts in general are being triggered faster. But it also showed that a special and particularly nasty sudden kind called flash droughts by experts is casting an ever bigger crop-killing footprint.

It comes only in the growing season mostly summer, but also spring and fall and is insidious because it's caused not just by the lack of rain or snow that's behind a typical slow-onset drought, hydrologists and meteorologists said.

What happens is the air gets so hot and so dry that it sucks water right out of plants and soil.

It's the increasing thirstiness of the atmosphere, said UCLA and National Center for Atmospheric Research climate scientist Daniel Swain, who wasn't part of the study. Swain called the issue very relevant in a warming climate.

The term flash drought was coined around 2000 but it really took off in 2012, when a \$30 billion sudden drought struck the central United States, one of the worst droughts since the in-

famous Dust Bowl devastated the Plains in the 1930s, according to the study.

Because it occurs very, very fast people started to focus on this new phenomenon, said study lead author Xing Yuan, dean of the School of Hydrology and Water Resources at Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology in China. For the 2012 drought, actually the drought just developed in a very severe condition just within a month.

Most of China's Yangtze River basin last summer was struck by a flash drought that developed within only a month due to high temperatures, which also triggered wildfires, Yuan said. Parts of the river dried up and there was an energy shortage in southern China because hydropower wouldn't work, he said.

It developed very fast so you don't have enough time to prepare for this drought, Yuan said.

Another sudden drought happened in the U.S. Southeast in 2016 and was a factor in devastating wildfires in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, said Jason Otkin, a study co-author and an atmospheric scientist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

The current drought in the Oklahoma-Texas panhandle and Kansas started two years ago as a rapid onset drought, said Joel Lisonbee, a

climatologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Integrated Drought Information System in Colorado. He wasn't part of the study but praised it, saying essentially a warmer world allows for faster onset of drought.

Yuan, Otkin and their research team looked back at droughts, how fast they occurred and what kind they were, across the globe since 1951 and found flash droughts are happening more often in nearly three-quarters of the climate regions of the world. They also found droughts of all kinds happening faster.

Although they couldn't quantify how much faster because of the variability in places and times, Yuan said it would be fair to say droughts are happening weeks earlier than they once did.

Yuan said some of the bigger increases in sudden droughts have been in Europe and Australia. Outside experts pointed to the Amazon as prone to them.

We have to pay attention to this phenomenon because it's increasing, Yuan said.

Yuan's team also used computer simulations both with worst-case warming and more moderate warming and projected that the proportion of flash droughts will increase in a warmer world and droughts will continue to keep happening faster.

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Canine Horror: Demand For Dog Sterilization, Segregation Of Waste Grows

Observer News Service

Srinagar: With dog bite cases on rise in Kashmir, the demand for sterilization and proper disposal of waste to prevent such incidents is growing in Kashmir with each passing day.

Doctors said that sterilizing and vaccinating the dogs would effectively control their population, prevent rabies and reduce canine attacks.

They said that sterilization is the only scientific birth control measure for bringing the stray dog population under control.

"Everyday a large number of people are falling prey to dog bites. The canines are storming streets, chasing cars, pulling down bicycle riders and often attacking pedestrians and school children," they said.

A few days ago, a minor boy was mauled by dogs in Beighpora Awantipora in Pulwama.

Doctors treating him said that the wounds were so deep that even his lungs were injured and the incident is enough to show the gravity of dog bites menace in Kashmir.

They said that the minor boy was brought to SMHS Hospital in critical condition with multiple injuries including scalp, chest, shoulder, thigh and

other parts.

There were deep wounds on his body and his vitals were deranged when he was brought to the hospital, they said.

"The Patient is stable now and his multiple injuries have been switched and repaired with the help of plastic and ENT surgeons and we are hopeful that he will recover soon," they said.

Parents of the minor said he was attacked by the dogs in farmland when no one was there but the main reason behind it is the improper disposal of the waste that is luring dogs.

They said that for improper disposal of the waste both public and government is responsible but action needs to be taken immediately as today it has happened with us and tomorrow the same can happen with others.

Despite going through such a difficult phase, nobody from administration has even called us, they said, adding that the government must take steps immediately to eradicate the growing dog bite menace.

An official from anti rabies clinic SMHS said that from 1st April 2022 till 31st March 2023 as many as 6,875 bite cases were reported to ARC SMHS and most of them were from Srinagar.



Imam Hai, Syed Ahmad Naqshbandi delivering sermon on Jummat-ul-Vida at central Jamia Masjid in Srinagar on the last Friday of holy Ramadan, KO Photo Abid Bhat

J&K Bank Digital Channels Records 60L Transactions Worth 2,510 Crore On Eid

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Bank on Friday said that its digital channels recorded nearly 60 lakh transactions worth Rs 2,510.05 crore in the last three days.

On Friday alone, officials said, J&K Bank's digital channels recorded over 16 lakh transactions worth Rs 565.57 crore.

They said that on April 18, 19 and 20, J&K Bank recorded 59,72,257 transactions worth Rs 2,510.05 Crore of which ATM transactions were recorded at 13,44,650 worth Rs 548.18 crore, UPI recorded 21,41,158 transactions worth Rs



355.99 crore and mPAY recorded 24,86,449 transactions worth Rs 1605.88 crore.

On Friday, J&K Bank's digital channels recorded 16,72,644 transactions worth Rs 565.47 crore of which ATM and debit cards recorded 3,04,581 transactions worth

Rs 118.5 Crore, UPI recorded 6,76,501 transactions worth 115.08 Crore and mPAY recorded 691,562 transactions worth Rs 331.89 Crore

Div Com Inaugurates 4-Month Long Exhibition At Kashmir Haat

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Baidhuri today inaugurated a four month long Exhibition at Kashmir Haat Srinagar.

The Exhibition will bring a diverse range of activities including Magic Shows, amusement activities, handicraft and Handloom products and food courts and much more.

The Event has been purposely started on the eve of Eid so as to attract a maximum footfall especially the Gaming zones that have

been set for children.

The bid for the current season has been won by the SHARMA BROTHERS for a record amount, and it is for the first time that revenue of such an extent has been generated from the Haat area.

The Div Com emphasized that such types of activities should be replicated at other spots in the Srinagar city.

Director Handicrafts & Handloom Kashmir Mahmood Ahmad Shah gave a detailed brief about the activities the Department is planning to organize in the coming months at the Kashmir Haat area.

Special Teams Constituted To Crack Whip On Stunt Biking On Eid

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Foreseeing the possibility of stunt biking during the Eid-ul-Fitr festival, Traffic Police Srinagar on Friday said they have formed special teams to monitor and prevent any such activity.

Senior Superintendent of Police Traffic for Srinagar, Muzaffar Ahmad Shah they have apprehensions that stunt biking may occur during the Eid festival and that

pre-arrangements have been put in place to curb any such occurrence.

"In view of the Eid festivities from tomorrow, there are apprehensions that stunts using four-wheelers and bikes involving young boys may occur and to curb that we have constituted special teams," he said.

SSP City Traffic said they have identified some of the areas where pre-arrangements have been made in collaboration with

the district police.

In an appeal to parents, Shah said they should ensure that no vehicle is given to minors. "The parents should keep an eye on their young children so that they do not engage in stunt acts," he said, adding, "Parents should not give an easy hand to their children on bikes or cars unless they are sure that their kids ride or drive sensibly and more importantly are eligible"

ADGP, SSP Srinagar Greet People On Eid-ul-Fitr

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Vijay Kumar Friday extended greetings to people on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

"ADGP Kashmir Shri Vijay Kumar greets people on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr. #EidMubarak," Kashmir Zone Police tweeted.

In a tweet, he hoped that this auspicious occasion would be a harbinger of peace and prosperity for all.

Senior superintendent of police Srinagar Rakesh Balwal also extended greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir especially to people of Srinagar on Eid-ul-Fitr.

Rakesh hoped and prayed that the auspicious occasion would strengthen bonds of communal harmony and brotherhood.

He also hoped that this Eid will be a harbinger of peace, progress and prosperity for the people.

"The festival reminds us to share our joys with the destitute and deserving. The occasion teaches us to rededicate ourselves for the service of the people, reaffirm our commitment towards brotherhood and selfless service to humanity," he said.

SSP also thanked people of Srinagar for always extending their cooperation to Jammu and Kashmir police for better policing.

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

HIJRI CALENDAR 01 Shawwal 1444	PRAYERS	
	FAJR	4 :23
ZUHR	12:32	
ASR	5: 13	
Magrib	7:10	
ISHA	8: 37	

This Day In History

- 536 St. Agapetus I ends his reign as Catholic Pope
- 1056 - Supernova Crab nebula last seen by the naked eye
- 1073 - Pope Alexander II buried and Ildebrando chosen as Pope Gregory VII
- 1145 - 19th recorded perihelion passage of Halley's Comet
- 1164 - Raynald of Dassel names Guido di Crema as anti-pope Paschalis III
- 1370 - Building begins on the Bastille fortress in Paris
- 1500 - Pedro Álvares Cabral is the first european to discover Brazil, landing near Monte Pascoal, claims it for Portugal
- 1521 - French King Francois I declares war on Spain
- 1529 - Treaty of Saragosa: Spain & Portugal divide eastern hemisphere
- 1648 - English army claims King Charles I responsible for bloodshed
- 1659 - Lord Protector Richard Cromwell disbands English parliament
- 1671 - King Charles II sits in on English parliament
- 1674 - Netherlands & Munster sign peace treaty
- 1676 - Battle of Etna - Neth/Spain vs France, M de Ruyter fatally wounded
- 1677 - Battle at Catania: between French & Dutch fleet
- 1692 Edward Bishop is jailed for proposing flogging as a cure for witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts
- 1809 - Battle at Eckmuhl - Napoleon beats Austria Archduke Karl
- 1817 - Curacao prohibits use of white paint due to fierce sunlight

From KO Archives

Udhampur Toll Massacre Reaches 26

Observer News Service

Jammu - At least 22 people were gunned down at Prankot village in Udhampur district on Friday night, Jammu and Kashmir - chief minister Farooq Abdullah said today.

Abdullah, who visited the village along with state DGP Gurbachan Jagat, told the state assembly they found 22 bodies, four of them under the debris of a gutted house.

Police yesterday said 13 people, including two women and three children, of two families were killed in indiscriminate firing by militants. In a suo moto statement, Abdullah sought cooperation of the members in fighting militancy in the state. He regretted the BSF did not respond to state request to launch a joint operation following intelligence reports about the presence of foreign militants in the area.

The chief minister said the IGP (Jammu) wrote twice to BSF officials regarding the presence of militants and migration of people but the BSF did not initiate any action.

"If our forces cannot contain them, the situation can become grim for us", he said. Abdullah said vigil at borders should be intensified to check infiltration of militants from across the border. Earlier, Speaker Ali Mohammad Naik turned down the opposition plea to suspend the question hour and allow a discussion on Udhampur prompting a walkout by Congress MLAs and Panthers Party members.

Meanwhile the number of people killed by suspected militants in two villages of Udhampur district on Friday was feared to cross 26 mark though the toll was yesterday given as only 13, officials said here today. So far 25 bodies, including of eight women and nine children, had been recovered while efforts were on to trace the body of minor, official sources said. Among the survivors was one girl, who was burnt below her waist, they said. Meanwhile, reports available from the locals indicated that two militants each had camped in the houses of affected families a day earlier without, causing any harm.

However, during the night they, along with their accomplices, poured kerosene on the houses and set them afire, the sources said adding the militants also indulged in clubbing and butchering the inmates of the houses without using firearms.

The Coordination Committee on Kashmir (CCK), an organisation comprising eminent human rights activists and intellectuals, today condemned Friday's massacre of 13 Hindus in Jammu and said the act was apparently aimed at communalising the Kashmir situation. "It appears to us that the attack on entire innocent Hindus was deliberate attempt to communalise the Kashmir struggle... so long as militancy continues in Kashmir. (Kashmir Observer, 22 April, 1998)

Ramazan Ends But Its Spirit Endures

Dr Tauseef Ahmad Parray

It teaches us the effective lessons in applied moderation and will-power; and the principle of sincere love. It equips us with a creative sense of hope and an optimistic outlook on life. It imparts self-discipline, self-restraint and generosity. It reminds us of the suffering of the poor, who may rarely get to eat well

The blessed Ramadan is now over; but its impact, importance and implications should remain as 'guiding principles' for the months to come

Ramazan, the 9th month of Islamic calendar, is over now. Indeed, Ramazan is a month of countless blessings, and some of them are: it is the month of Sawm/ fasting so that Muslims may be mindful of God, or achieve Taqwa; it is the month in which the Quran—the Last Divine Revelation, and Guidance, for the humankind—was revealed (Q. 2: 183, 185); and it the month in which Laylatul Qadr (Night of Glory/ Power) falls, which has been described by the Quran as a Night "better than a thousand months" (Q. 97: 03).

In addition to this, in his "Ramazan Sermon" the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "Allah has decreed this month the best of all months. The days of this month are the best among the days, the nights are the best among the nights and the hours during Ramazan are the best among the hours" (Baihaqi on the authority of Salman al-Farsi [RA]).

Moreover, this month is 'Shahr al-Muwasaat' (the month of sympathy/ compassion); that is, "it is a month for human beings to show kindness and concern for each other to help each other, and share their problems".

A blessed month, it teaches us patience, persistence, humility and spirituality. Muslims ask forgiveness for their past sins, pray for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils and vices, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds in this month.

Therefore, this blessed month brings a change in Muslims' in their usual way of living and behavior. It acts as a period of training and self-assessment.

Moreover, the month of Ramazan, which is full of blessings, acts as a period of training, learning, preparation, etc., for the believers; and the purpose of any kind of training/ learning is to apply it in one's life after the training is over.

Same is the purpose of the 'training period' through which believers pass through in this blessed month, so that the same is applied in months to come. Therefore, Muslims should strive utmost to learn the lessons from the month of Ramazan, get the proper training that



it provides, and apply it in their lives as well.

This month, as a period of training and self-assessment, teaches us a lot. It teaches us about spiritual reflection, prayer, charity, and doing good deeds. It teaches us the effective lessons in applied moderation and will-power; and the principle of sincere love. It equips us with a creative sense of hope and an optimistic outlook on life. It imparts self-discipline, self-restraint and generosity. It reminds us of the suffering of the poor, who may rarely get to eat well. It grounds us in discipline and healthy survival. It originates in the real spirit of social belonging, unity and brotherhood, of equality before God as well as before the law. It reminds us of being preoccupied with materialistic and superficial pursuits and how much deprived we are of the moral and spiritual needs of the human soul. It imbues in us the genuine virtue of effective devotion, honest dedication and closeness to God. It cultivates a vigilant and sound conscience in us. Last, but

not the least, it is "a Godly prescription for self-reassurance and self-control".

Performing righteous deeds, giving charity, reciting and contemplating on the Qur'an, performing Qiyam al-Layl/ Taraweeh (night prayers) or offering nafl (additional) and tahaajjud prayers, etc.—the acts Muslims do abundantly in this blessed month—should not be restricted to Ramadhan only but should be continued in other months as well. That is what the true message of Ramazan is; that is how one can achieve real 'Taqwa; and that is the true import and imprint of the spirit of this blessed month.

So, let's try to refresh ourselves with the message of Ramazan and get the proper lessons from it, for it is part of our Faith.

The author is Assistant Professor, Islamic Studies, at GDC Sogam (Kupwara). Feedback at tauseef.parray21@gmail.com

Reflections On Love and Suffering

Chaudhury Nafee Ibne Sajed

The term d n is not understood in our Tradition as the term "religion" is throughout Western religious history, but rather carries four primary significations: (1) indebtedness; (2) submissiveness; (3) judicious power; (4) natural inclination or tendency.¹

The verb d na, which derives from the term d n, conveys the meaning of being indebted. A d in, that is to say, one in debt, finds himself subjected to the ordinances governing debts and to the creditor himself. Such, naturally, involves judgments — ones that are carried out in organized societies and cities, denoted by mudun or mad in. The existence of a set of laws must presuppose a manner of acting consistently with what is reflected therein, thus embracing a mode of acting that is considered natural with regard thereto. Such signifies the final implication derived from the term d n: one's natural tendency, or fi rah.²

While the fi rah yearns to submit to its Creator and is harmoniously in a state of submission, it is not just a matter of man's natural tendency to submit to God as it is of loving Him. It is an element of the fi rah that it loves God; it wishes to see its beloved content with it, and despises discontentment on His part. Should we resort to contemporary poetry that captures the essence of the matter, we may cite Ma m d Darw sh, who writes:

Some say that love is the essence of life,
And others, that it is a lie.
Both are truthful—
For the first has met his soul,
While the other, of it, is deprived.

It is the very essence of man's nature to be in love with His Creator and submit to His Commandments, be delighted in committing that which contents Him, and be displeased by what displeases Him. It is the highest virtue for the attainment of happiness in this worldly life.¹ To be just is to act with wisdom, wherein wisdom entails knowledge of the proper place of a cer-

tain thing, and man is just to himself when he realizes his own status before God and submits his soul to Him through devotion and immersion. It is in such a state that the meaning of love is clarified.

It ought not to be forgotten that it is a woman who completes and fulfills a man, as it is she who completes the paired order, in the case of a man, through which God created everything. ("And of everything, We have created pairs.") As such, it is natural that fulfillment of the heart be attained through the completion of this pair, and such a notion is portrayed in language as well. The Arabs are known to have called their women innah, referring to what — or who — the heart craves, thus indicating a degree of emptiness that takes hold when it is away from its beloved.³ It is reflected as well in the very names of Layl and Majn n, their stories being an allusion and an elaboration of the concepts that are deeply embedded into their very names. Wine, for example, was known to the Arabs by the name of Umm Layl⁴ (lit. "the mother of Layl"), for its induction of a state of ecstasy, and it is not a matter of coincidence that "wine" (khamr) itself is one of the names that love carries. Ibn al-Qayyim lists a plethora of others for the state — haw, abwah, sadam, uzn, kamad, istik nah, uraq, and suhd, among others — all of which fundamentally revolve around yearning, suffering, and burning, portraying that the term, lexically, is inseparable from the emotions experienced by lovers upon separation.

It is not only in the Arabic language that the concept of love appears in such a ripe manner, but its reflection in the Qur n itself is evident. The Book of God describes spouses — who are going to be construed as lovers, in this case, due to the clear allusion to love between them — as "garments" for one another. The term has been interpreted by some to refer to the residence of the heart, in that the object of love resides in the heart of the lover, as al-abar writes.⁵ On a similar note, it is suggested that the term lib san (gar-



ments) has been employed to refer to embracement, through which the lovers become one, both physically and what transcends the physical realm.⁶ Al-Qushayr dedicates a section in his Ris la to a discussion on love as it pertains to God, although its implications similarly apply in the case of a man's mortal beloved:

God then adds to the description of the lovers, saying they are "humble before the believers," since they sacrifice their hearts for the Beloved without animosity, and sacrifice their spirits

to protect the Beloved, without holding back even a tiny sliver for their own comfort. He then says of them, "They strive in the path of God, and they do not fear the blamer's blame," since they strive within themselves to carry out all religious injunctions, strive in their hearts to curb wishes and desires, strive in their spirits to eliminate attachments, and strive in their inner hearts to stand straight and firm in contemplation at all times. He then says, "They do not fear the blamer's blame," since they pay no attention to

the company of friends, nor seek personal fortune, nor feel the burden of fate or fortune, while never swerving from the path of fidelity.⁷

The strife that man will be willing to undergo for any particular thing will be contingent upon his love for it. The Prophet said, "Actions are by intentions, and every man shall have that which he intended [to attain]. Should one emigrate for the sake of God and His Messenger, his emigration will be for God and His Messenger, and whoever emigrates for the sake of the dunya or to marry a woman will likewise have emigrated for what he sought." Emigration itself is an initiative that requires strife. (It is indeed under cruel circumstances that God's Emissary was forced to undertake it.) And if we are to use the terms interchangeably and synonymously — "emigration" and "strife" — the ad th itself would seem to portray the love we may have for a certain thing over another, for one may indeed ascribe greater importance to his beloved than God, or to some material gain over his beloved, thus, in both cases, thwarting the attainment of the purest and the highest form of love, and being led astray by an unrefined form thereof.

Regardless, for those who have attained the state of love, regardless of its purity and depth, while it may appear to be elementary for observers to make effortless assertions regarding how the victim of love may escape the pangs of his love-stricken heart, this approach of his would prove faulty, and fundamentally arise from a state of ignorance. Even if we should entertain the notion that the speakers have in fact been in the position of the audience, we cannot forget that our experiences and stances are not only based on the nature of an event itself, but are tied in with our resilience, sensitivity, knowledge, wisdom, and prior experiences that have shaped our perceptions.

It is particularly love that defies external comprehension.

Traversing Tradition

Echoes of Eid

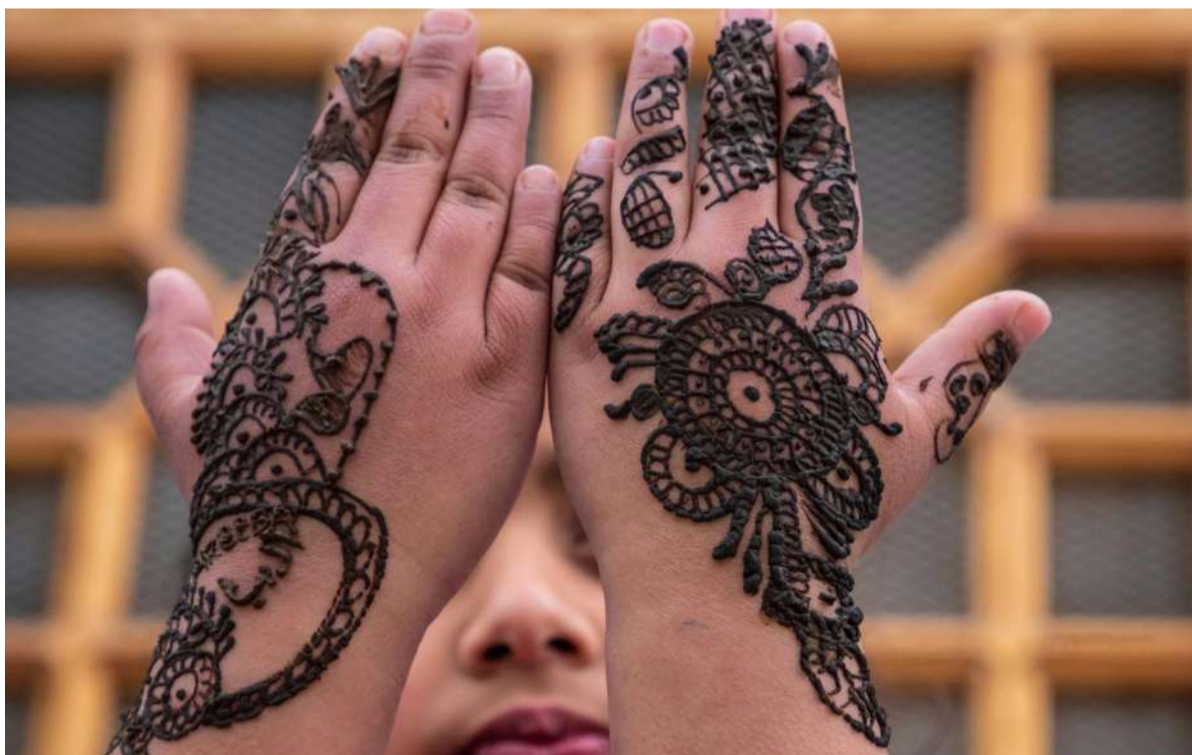
Nostalgic Reflections On The Festive Celebrations Of Yesteryear



AS I WEAVE THE TAPESTRY OF MY RECOLLECTIONS, A VIVID MEMORY SPRINGS FORTH FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY MIND – A MEMORY STEEPED IN TRADITION AND FESTIVITY. It is the memory of elders engaging in a rousing game of toss ring during the joyous occasion of Eid, vying for coveted prizes with every skilful toss. And yet, amidst the excitement and merriment, there existed a playful subterfuge – the children's crafty fibs about receiving the highest eidi, adding a delightful touch of whimsy to the festive air



Photos by Faisal Bashir



As I strolled homeward bound, the iridescent hues of dusk slowly melting into the melancholy of evening, a sudden cry from behind broke the serenity. My little cousin, with his impish grin and sparkling eyes, beckoned me towards him. His words burst forth like a delightful symphony, "Look what I've got for Eid, new clothes to adorn my personage! And pray tell, dear cousin, have you also graced your wardrobe with the finest attire, or do the years deem you exempt from such revelry?" In an instant, my heart was aflutter, caught off guard by his innocent query. With a gentle smile, I replied in earnest, confessing that I had not indulged in the customary pursuit of acquiring new garments for Eid. Yet, his inquiry lingered in my mind, igniting a poignant reflection on my past adolescent years. In that moment, I was transported to a bygone era, reminiscing on how ardently we craved the arrival of Eid, eagerly anticipating the new clothes that would adorn our youthful frames. Once upon a time, the Eid of yore was a glorious celebration of pure delight. How vividly I recall those endless nights of wakefulness when the dawn finally broke! And yet, as my mother's gentle voice roused us from our slumber, our weary eyes were stirred by the sweetest scent and aroma of joy. Truly, those were the moments that made life worth living, and we reveled in their glory as if they were the very essence of our existence. Oh, how our souls were lifted by the bountiful array of bakery and confectionery that graced our lips with each delectable bite. We knew that the delights of

the day were only just beginning. For there was a world of wonder waiting to be explored, and we would savor every moment of it with the same joy and delight that had fueled us through the night. People would traverse across the town, bearing gifts of warm embraces and jovial laughter, spreading love and joy as they went. The air was rich with the sweet aroma of fresh fruit, exchanged as a gesture of love between relatives. And oh, the children! They were bestowed with the coveted eidi, a cherished token of appreciation and love on this blessed occasion. Alas, those days are gone, but the memories of that joyous time remain etched in our hearts forever. In this age of technological marvels and superficial connections, the once cherished sentiments of love and compassion have been callously replaced by the treacherous vices of jealousy, covetousness and envy. The advent of mobile phones has only exacerbated this malady, as we now barely make the effort to visit our loved ones, preferring instead to send a cursory text as a mere formality. The pure and noble emotion of love has been relegated to the annals of history, replaced by the cold and sterile world of virtual communication. Oh, how the heart aches for those simpler times when love was the cornerstone of our existence! In the bygone era, I fondly recollect the joyous occasion of Eid, where the pious and devout would gather to offer their prayers with fervor and devotion. The air would be thick with the sweet fragrance of love and blessings, as friends and family would embrace

Peer Mohammad Amir Qureshi

each other with genuine and candid hearts, their faces aglow with the radiance of love. Ah, those were the days when children would flock to the nearby parks, their laughter and playful screams echoing through the surroundings as they indulged in

time when the world was innocent and pure.

The Girls would gather to adorn their hands with the intricate patterns of mehndi, a cherished art that only a few masters could command. The sheer beauty of the designs was



IN THIS AGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL MARVELS AND SUPERFICIAL CONNECTIONS, the once cherished sentiments of love and compassion have been callously replaced by the treacherous vices of jealousy, covetousness and envy. The advent of mobile phones has only exacerbated this malady, as we now barely make the effort to visit our loved ones, preferring instead to send a cursory text as a mere formality

various recreational activities. But alas, those treasured memories now lie forgotten in the pages of time, a distant and fading echo of a simpler

such that young girls and children alike would flock to these artists, patiently waiting in long and winding queues for their turn to have their

hands embellished with the rich and radiant colors of mehndi. Oh, how those memories were treasured, etched in the hearts and minds of those fortunate enough to have experienced such simple yet profound joys. During my tender years, the festivities of Eid were often marred by the presence of firecrackers, a bane that I abhorred with every fiber of my being. The ignoble deeds of the mischievous young scamps who hurled these incendiary fireworks towards their innocent peers, particularly the gentle maidens who pleaded for mercy, were a source of great distress. Alas, their supplications fell upon deaf ears, and they were left to writhe in agony as the explosive blasts rent the air, while the perpetrators cackled with glee at their tormented cries.

As I weave the tapestry of my recollections, a vivid memory springs forth from the depths of my mind – a memory steeped in tradition and festivity. It is the memory of elders engaging in a rousing game of toss ring during the joyous occasion of Eid, vying for coveted prizes with every skilful toss. And yet, amidst the excitement and merriment, there existed a playful subterfuge – the children's crafty fibs about receiving the highest eidi, adding a delightful touch of whimsy to the festive air. In my youthful days, I indulged in the purchase of trinkets and eyewear priced at a humble sum of rupees ten. I vividly recall basking in the glory of my imagination, envisioning myself as a Bollywood protagonist, wielding a toy gun in one hand and donning a pair of spectacles in the other. It wasn't long ago when I was chided for my ineptitude in meal-

time etiquette, with a perplexed inquiry as to why I adorned glasses if I couldn't even dine correctly. Albeit in our nascent years, we may have been oblivious to certain concepts, but somehow, we retain them in our memory, and eventually, the veil is lifted, and we gain a deeper understanding of the message being conveyed to us. Oh, how the past beckons with its cherished tales, begging to be revisited and relived! As the day draws to a close, and the sun surrenders to the embrace of the night, we trudge back to our humble abodes, laden with the weariness of the day. Our minds racing with anticipation, we implore our parents, "Is tomorrow Eid as well?" The affirmative response from them evokes a sensation of unparalleled elation and euphoria within us. Our countenances illuminated with joy, our parents proceed to inquire about the manner in which we've expended our Eidi. They advise us to invest in something useful, instead of squandering it on firecrackers. They also urge us to opt for healthier alternatives like fruits instead of junk food. Nostalgia consumes me as I reminisce about the Eid festivities of yesteryear, now a distant memory.

The weight of our current responsibilities has rendered us unable to relive those cherished moments. Now I comprehend why some individuals professed that Eid was solely for us as indeed, really we were the undisputed monarchs of that era.

The author is a columnist and Poet pursuing msc in zoology. He tweets @peermohdamir and can be mailed at ehsaanamiy133@gmail.com

Bachchan to Rahul Gandhi: Twitter removes verified blue ticks for those not paying subscription fee

New Delhi: Indian celebrities and top politicians ranging from Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi lost verified blue ticks on their Twitter accounts after Elon Musk's microblogging site started removing check mark icons from accounts that did not pay a subscription fee.

Twitter has begun removing the check mark, which had for years meant that Twitter had verified the identity of the user behind an account, from the profiles of thousands of celebrities, politicians and journalists on Thursday.

This led some of the biggest names in Bollywood -- from Bachchan to Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan, several chief ministers including Yogi Adityanath, and top cricketers such as Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli losing the blue tick mark on their Twitter handles.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi as well as cricketers Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma too lost their verified blue ticks from their Twitter accounts.

Theirs and that of several other prominent personalities, which had the blue tick, did not show the verified icon on Friday.

Bachchan tweeted that he has paid the money and sought the blue tick back.

The blue tick was considered something of a status symbol but under Musk, who bought Twitter for USD 44 billion in October, the social media



service is now charging individuals a monthly fee of Rs 650 on the web and Rs 900 on mobile devices to maintain their verification status.

The microblogging platform also offers a discounted annual plan of Rs 6,800 per year.

Musk had previously stated that those who did not pay will lose their check marks.

Among those whose accounts no longer had blue tick was the Twitter handle of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has 27 million followers on the microblogging website. Rahul Gandhi with 23.3 million followers too lost his blue tick.

Ironically, a parody account that went by the profile name of 'Rofl Gandhi 2.0' and sporting Rahul Gandhi's picture continued to host the blue tick.

The account '@RoflGandhi' tweeted pics of its account, with 801,000 followers, with a blue tick and Rahul Gandhi's without the tick. "Ye kaisi duniya bana raha hai bhai tu @elonmusk (what kind of world are you creating Elon Musk)," it tweeted.

Several other chief ministers, including Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal, Yogi Adityanath of Uttar Pradesh, Eknath Shinde of Maharashtra, M K Stalin of Tamil Nadu, and Nitish Kumar of Bihar, too lost their verified icons.

Legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, who has 38.6 million followers on Twitter, also lost the blue tick.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his ministers as well as Twitter handles of

political parties including BJP and Congress continued to display verified marks.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as well as BJP chief Jagat Prakash Nadda sported a grey checkmark, which indicates that an account represents a government/multilateral organisation or a government/multilateral official.

Other celebrities whose blue ticks were removed included Ajay Devgn, Aia Bhatt, Akshay Kumar, Kajol, Madhuri Dixit, Anushka Sharma and Anil Kapoor, among others.

Some celebrities said they would abandon Twitter altogether, while others shrugged off the change but refused to pay.

Twitter introduced the blue check mark system in 2009 to help users identify that celebrities, politicians, companies and brands, news organisations and other accounts "of public interest" were genuine and not impostors or parody accounts. The company didn't previously charge for verification.

Musk had initially proposed charging USD 20 monthly for verification, but later lowered it to USD 8 after blowback. He had previously stated that verified accounts would lose their badges in early April, but pruning has begun only now.

"Tomorrow, 4/20, we are removing legacy verified checkmarks," the company said in a statement on Twitter. "To remain verified on Twitter, individuals can sign up for Twitter Blue."

It also gave link for organisations to sign up for verified organisations.

Ever since acquiring Twitter, Musk has been grappling to revive the dwindling revenues of the platform. His push for subscription fee is seen as a step in this direction.

He had been critical of the previous management at Twitter that doled out free verification to journalists and other elites. He had pledged to eliminate what he called a "lords & peasants system" and to offer the blue badge to anyone willing to pay a fee.

Former US President Donald Trump, Microsoft Co-Founder Bill Gates and reality TV star Kim Kardashian were among those who lost their badges.

With several celebrities refusing to pay, Musk is "personally paying" for the Twitter Blue subscription of basketball star LeBron James, author Stephen King and Star Trek star William Shatner.

"I'm paying for a few personally," he tweeted. "Just Shatner, LeBron and King."

Separately, Twitter ditched its "state-affiliated" and "government-funded" labels for media outlets. While China's Xinhua and the Global Times, and Russia's RT were as of Friday no longer identified as state-affiliated media, publicly funded Western outlets including National Public Radio (NPR) in the United States, the BBC in the UK, and Canada's CBC no longer had a "government-funded" label.

Scattered rainfall expected in eastern India; temperature likely to remain high in north

New Delhi: Scattered rainfall in eastern India through the weekend is likely to offer some relief to people from severe heatwave conditions, the weather office has predicted, but the temperature is expected to hover around 40 degrees Celsius in the northern and central plains.

The meteorological department predicted widespread rainfall in the Northeast and isolated rainfall in West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha over the next three days. It said the maximum temperature is likely to fall by up to 5 degrees Celsius due to the formation of a cyclonic circulation over central Uttar Pradesh and moisture incursion from the Bay of Bengal.

For Delhi, the weather office forecast partly cloudy skies for Saturday with a maximum temperature of around 37 degrees Celsius. Despite its forecast for light rain on Friday, no rain was recorded in the city.

In Western India, the Maharashtra government has ordered all schools affiliated with the state board to remain closed in view of the prevailing heatwave conditions. Schools of other boards can take a decision about closure after considering their curriculum and activities, the School Education Department said in an order.

Except for Vidarbha, schools in the state will reopen on June 15. Those in Vidarbha will resume on June 30.

Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai and a few other parts of Maharashtra have been experiencing heatwave conditions for the past few days. Earlier this week, Mumbai's temperature had peaked at 38.5 degrees Celsius while Navi Mumbai sizzled at 42 degrees Celsius, according to the India

Meteorological Department.

Heatwave conditions have been prevailing in Gangetic West Bengal for the last 10 days. In districts like Bankura, where the mercury soared 44.3 degrees Celsius this week, the water level in rivers has gone down.

Bankura was followed by Panagarh air force station with a maximum of 43.9 degrees Celsius on Thursday.

A partly cloudy sky, however, lowered temperatures in parts of the state on Friday.

In Kolkata, the mercury settled at 38 degrees Celsius, and 39.7 degrees Celsius in neighbouring Salt Lake.

The tea planters of Darjeeling are already staring at a crop shortage in the ongoing first flush season due to a prolonged dry spell along with relatively high temperatures in the hills. Due to adverse weather conditions, wilting of tea leaves and pest attacks on bushes are also noticed, the planters said.

"The adverse weather conditions are resulting in depleting soil moisture. We have seen that the mercury level was hovering around 25 degrees Celsius this season, which is unprecedented. The first flush production is down by 20-25 per cent this season so far," Darjeeling Tea Association principal adviser Sandip Mukherjee said.

Indian Tea Exporters' Association chairman Anshuman Kanoria, who also owns Goomtee Tea Estate in Darjeeling, said the rains in late March brought some respite but this has been followed by a very hot and dry spell in April.

Thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds are likely at one or two places in West Bengal between April 22 and April 25, the weather office said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Millions Bid

Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir. The authorities should change their dictatorial attitude and release him before Eid," he said.

The managing body of the mosque said the Eid prayers would be offered there on Saturday after three years.

The spokesperson said the Eid prayer will be offered at 9 am on Saturday, and urged people to reach the mosque before time and show Islamic unity and discipline on the occasion.

Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramzan, will be celebrated across Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, after the Shawal Moon was not sighted on Thursday.

The Islamic calendar month is of 29 or 30 days depending on the sighting of the crescent.

Incassant rainfall over the past few days across the Valley dampened the festive spirit of shoppers ahead of Eid.

Sun Shines After

recorded a low of 4.4°C against 7.2°C on the previous night while the tourist resort of Pahalgam in South Kashmir recorded a low of 3.5°C against 2.6°C on the previous night.

Kokernag recorded a low of 3.7°C against 6.2°C on the previous night and it was 3.9°C below normal for the place, the officials said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 1.0°C against minus 0.6°C on the previous night and it was 4.3°C below normal for the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, he said.

In Kupwara town, he said, the mercury settled at 4.4°C against 6.7°C on the previous night and it was 3.2°C below normal for the north Kashmir area.

Jammu recorded a low of 15.0°C against 18.5°C on the previous night. It was 6.0°C below normal for J&K's winter capital, he said.

Banihal, he said, recorded a low of 5.1°C (below normal by 4.3°C), Batote 6.7°C (below normal by 5.3°C), Katra 13.1°C (5.0°C below normal) and Bhandarwah 6.1°C (2.3°C below normal). Ladakh's Leh and Kargil recorded a low of minus 2.6°C and 2.2°C respectively, the officials added.

Eid Prayers Being

that brotherhood and harmony that has existed in the country for 75 years continues to prosper."

Maulana Khalid Rasheed Firangi Mahali of Lucknow said the moon was also sighted at several places in Uttar Pradesh and Eid-ul-Fitr will be celebrated on Saturday.

Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated across the world on different days and it is determined by the sighting of the crescent moon which is supposed to denote the start of the Shawwal month in the lunar Islamic calendar.

It marks the end of the fasting month of Ramzan.

Poonch, Rajouri

Rajouri district to oversee the investigation. The two officers also visited the site.

A National Investigation Agency (NIA) team headed by a Deputy Inspector General rank officer was also present as the agency is likely to take over the case.

Initial reports suggest the presence of around five terrorists and the army truck is believed to

have been attacked from three different sides. After the ambush, the militants possibly used grenades as well as sticky bombs that set the vehicle ablaze.

Vehicular traffic was suspended on the national highway between Bimber Gali and Jarran Wali Gali for the second consecutive day.

The officials said those who executed the attack are believed to have been present in Rajouri and Poonch for more than one year and had adequate knowledge of the terrain which is quite tough, they said.

The area is a hot bed of Jammu and Kashmir Gaznavi Force (JKGF) as its 'commander' Rafiq Ahmed alias Rafiq Nayi, who is a resident of the area, they added.

At present, three to four militant groups are active in the region of Rajouri and Poonch, the sources said.

Banned group People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), a proxy wing of Jaish-e-Mohammed, has claimed responsibility for the attack. There are reports suggesting that it was a handiwork of banned Lashker-e-Taiba group also.

The entire area of Tota-Gali-Bata Doriya, which has dense forests, has been cordoned off.

Officials said drones and sniffer dogs are being used to trace the militants

The five Army personnel were killed and another was seriously injured on Thursday after their vehicle caught fire following the attack. The soldiers were from a Rashtriya Rifles unit deployed for counter-terror operations.

Top army and police officials on Friday laid wreaths and paid homage to the soldiers -- Havildar Mandeep Singh of Chankoiyan village of Ludhiana (Punjab), Lance Naik Kulwant Singh of Charik village of Moga district (Punjab), Sepoy Harkrishan Singh of village Talwandi of Gurdaspur district (Punjab) and Sepoy Sewak Singh of Bagha village of Bathinda district (Punjab).

The mortal remains were sent to their native places, they said.

Officials said a high alert has been sounded in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch amid heightened vigil along the Line of Control.

Meanwhile, Jammu witnessed several protests by BJP, VHP, Rastriya Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena, Dogra Front and Jammu Statehood organisation among others.

In a tweet, the Army said, "Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pandey and all ranks of Indian Army salute the supreme sacrifice of five Indian Army bravehearts, Hav Mandeep Singh, L/Nk Debashish Baswal, L/Nk Kulwant Singh, Sep Harkrishan Singh and Sep Sewak Singh who laid down their lives in the line of duty at Poonch Sector yesterday."

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said he was anguished at the loss of lives of the brave soldiers.

"Their rich service to the nation will never be forgotten. My thoughts are with the bereaved families," he said in a tweet.

BSF DG Reviews

The Border Security Force's chief arrived at the frontier headquarters in Jammu to take stock of the security situation, they said.

He was welcomed by Additional Director General (ADG), Western Command, P V Rama Sastry and IG BSF D K Boora and other officers.

Boora gave a detailed presentation to the DG, covering all the critical aspects of border

security and domination on the Jammu IB & Line of Control in the wake of the terror attack on Thursday, they said.

The IG briefed the Director General about the general security scenario in the area of operation, covering the deployment pattern of BSF battalions and their robust domination on the IB on the Jammu frontier, they said.

The BSF DG also talked to the field commanders about recent threats being faced by the BSF on the LoC and the IB.

A special emphasis was given to the domination on the LoC and the IB in the wake of recent incidents in Jammu and Rajouri area, they said.

Security Lapses

"Poonch is close to the Line of Control. Security lapses are expected, which needs to be looked into," Abdullah said.

He was speaking to media persons the Hazratbal shrine after offering last Friday prayer of Ramazan.

"This might be a security breach which indicates that a mistake has occurred somewhere that has to be investigated and then fixed," the Lok Sabha member from Srinagar said.

He also expressed sympathies with the families of the five soldiers killed in the audacious broad daylight attack.

Replying to a separate query that barring Poonch incident, Kashmir valley remained peaceful for the month of Ramazan with no law and order situation or encounter reported from anywhere, Abdullah said such incidents do not take place in Ramazan as people remain devoted in prayers and seek forgiveness from Allah.

Irked by a reporter's repeated question that not a single encounter was witnessed in the valley this year compared to 19 last Ramazan, Abdullah said "Do you want more encounter's, is that you are suggesting. What do I say, if government claims its peaceful in J&K then hold elections, what are they waiting for,"

"Assemble elections should be held as soon as possible if the center is correct in asserting that the situation in J&K has improved," he added.

CBI Summons

governor between August 23, 2018 and October 30, 2019.

The agency has booked Reliance General Insurance and Trinity Re-Insurance Brokers Limited as accused in its FIR related to a controversial health insurance scheme for Jammu and Kashmir government employees reportedly cleared by Malik at a state administrative council meeting held on August 31, 2018. The scheme was scrapped subsequently.

"... unknown officials of the finance department of the government of Jammu and Kashmir, by abusing their official positions in a conspiracy and connivance with Trinity Reinsurance Brokers Limited, Reliance General Insurance Company Limited and other unknown public servants and private persons, have committed the offences of criminal conspiracy and criminal misconduct," one of the FIRs alleged.

They caused "pecuniary advantage to themselves and wrongful loss to the state exchequer during the period 2017 and 2018 and thereby, in this manner, cheated the government of Jammu and Kashmir", it further alleges.

In the second FIR pertaining to alleged

malpractices in the awarding of contracts for the civil work package of the Kiru hydroelectric power project, the CBI has alleged that the guidelines related to e-tendering were not followed.

"The case was registered on allegations of malpractices in the award of the contract worth Rs 2,200 crore (approximately) of civil works of the Kiru Hydro Electric Power Project (HEP) to a private company in the year 2019," it has said.

The agency has booked senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Navin Kumar Chaudhary, former chairman of Chenab Valley Power Projects (Private) Limited, M S Babu, former managing director, M K Mittal and Arun Kumar Mishra, former directors, and Patel Engineering Limited.

"Though a decision was taken in the 47th board meeting of CVPL (Chenab Valley Power Projects Limited) for re-tender through e-tendering with the reverse auction after the cancellation of the ongoing tendering process, the same was not implemented (as per the decision taken in the 48th board meeting) and the tender was finally awarded to Patel Engineering Limited," the FIR alleges.

Deep Drug Nexus

and prosperous society," he said.

In the fast-changing world, scouts and guides will have to turn their voice into action, they must engage in social welfare works to complement the government's efforts and to develop new youth networks to promote peaceful, equal and just communities," Sinha said.

KPDCL Collects

concerned, it has the highest AT&C losses in the country.

The J&K government purchases electricity worth Rs 7,500 crore every year and recovers only Rs 3,500 crore, reports quoting the Chief Engineer said.

LG, Advisor Greet

in peace, prosperity and happiness for all, he said.

LG's Advisor also extended his warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In his message, Advisor Bhatnagar said that this festival gives the message of spirit of generosity and charity and helps usher a humane and compassionate society.

The Advisor also said that the festival evokes feelings of brotherhood, compassion and sharing and also strengthens the pluralistic bonds of our country's composite society.

The Advisor also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of entire Jammu and Kashmir.

Record Number

visited the tulip garden so far, of whom more than three lakh were domestic tourists. The response of foreign tourists has also been very good as more than 3,000 of them visited the garden," Rehman said on Friday.

He said the tulip show was successful as the footfall this season was the highest ever. Last year, 3.6 lakh tourists visited the garden.

"Our mission was to create a global appeal and we succeeded in it. Tourists from Thailand, the United States, European countries and Argentina visited the garden," Rehman added.

He said the tulip garden has played a

significant role in advancing the tourism season in Kashmir. With the tulips in the last stage of their bloom, a significant number of tourists are still visiting the garden.

"We do not have this type of a garden in Thailand. It is very nice. There are a lot of tulips of different colours here. My friend and I love these," Nogenyoni from Thailand said.

Mahesh Soni from Delhi said the garden is like a meadow of flowers.

"It is really beautiful. Our trip to Kashmir was mesmerising and it is worth it," he added.

"It (Kashmir) is the heaven of India. Wherever you look, there are mountains and in between, there are tulips of different colours," Deepali Saha, a tourist from West Bengal, said.

Saha said this was not her first visit to Kashmir but this time, she arrived early to see the tulip garden.

"My earlier visits to Kashmir were in May and June but this time, I came in April only to see tulips," she said.

J&K Adds 57

Kathua 0, Samba 0, Poonch 0, Ramban 0, Reasi 0, Srinagar 2, Baramulla 4, Budgam 3, Pulwama 2, Kupwara 0, Anantnag 11, Bandipora 2, Ganderbal 0, Kulgam 0 and Shopian 0.

There was no death either from Jammu division or Kashmir Valley during the time. So far 4789 people have succumbed to the virus and among them include 2356 from Jammu division and 2433 from the Valley.

Besides, they said, 77 Covid-19 patients recovered during the last 24 hours--9 from Jammu division and 68 from Kashmir Valley. There are now 554 active cases-- 297 in Jammu and 257 in Kashmir. (GNS)

Avalanche Alert

Avalanche with 'medium' danger level is likely to occur above 2800 metres over the Ganderbal district.

The advisory urged people in these districts to take precautions and avoid venturing to avalanche-prone areas till further orders

Rahul To Vacate

"Modi surname" remark.

The former Congress chief had on April 14 shifted his office and some personal belongings from the bungalow.

Sources said Gandhi moved out his remaining articles on Friday evening from the bungalow which was allotted to him as an MP. A truck was seen moving out the building with his belongings.

He has been living in the bungalow for nearly two decades.

After shifting his office, he has already started living with his mother and Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi at her 10, Janpath residence, the sources said.

Rahul Gandhi was asked to vacate his official premises by April 22 following his disqualification. A Surat court on March 23 had convicted Gandhi of defamation and given him two-year sentence, leading to his disqualification.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat had sent Gandhi a notice asking him to vacate the premises by April 22. A few years ago, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was also asked to vacate her Lodhi Estate bungalow after her SPG security cover was removed.

Rahul Gandhi first got elected as an MP from Amethi in Uttar Pradesh in 2004 and shifted his constituency to Wayanad in 2019.

Shopian Residents Elated Over Mughal Road Tunnel Announcement

Press Trust Of India

SHOPIAN: Union minister Nitin Gadkari's announcement that a tunnel would be built at Peer Ki Gali on Mughal Road has brought cheer to the residents of Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian. Talking to reporters earlier this month, Gadkari had shared the details of the Rs 5,000-crore project to make Mughal Road and an all-weather road connecting Poonch and Rajouri districts in the Jammu region to

withstood the test of time. People of the two regions are also connected through marriages and business.

"We hope the Mughal Road tunnel construction starts soon. It will provide a huge relief to the people here," Bashir Ahmad Parwana, another Shopian resident, said.

Meanwhile, demands have grown louder for opening Mughal Road around the Eid-ul-Fitr festival. The road was closed for the winter months in January



Shopian in the Kashmir valley. Shopian's residents feel the project will open up employment avenues for youngsters. "We are elated about the upcoming Mughal Road tunnel. Its construction opens up job opportunities for the educated yet unemployed youngsters of Shopian, Poonch and Rajouri districts," Aijaz Ahmad, a resident of Heerpora in Shopian, said. Despite Shopian being located at a distance of only around 85 km from Bafliaz in Poonch, commuters have to travel more than 450 km when the stretch of road connecting the two places is closed for almost six months during heavy snowfall at Peer Ki Gali. Shopian and the twin border districts of Poonch-Rajouri have historical ties that have

owing to heavy snowfall in the upper reaches of the mountains, including at Pir Ki Gali. The residents have appealed to the local administration for an early snow clearance. "We request the administration that this road be opened before Eid so that people can visit their homes for the celebrations," Parwana said. Liaqat Ahmad said locals are facing a lot of difficulties. "It takes us four hours to cross the two ridges. We appeal for an early restoration of traffic," he added. Abdul Rashid Dar, an official, said, "We have cleared the snow from a 40-km stretch from Heerpora to Peer Ki Gali. All our equipment like snowcutters etc. have been pressed into operation."

Various Delegations Call On LG

Observer News Service

JAMMU: A delegation of National Awardee Teachers from Jammu and Kashmir called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhawan here on Friday. The delegation led by Sunil Kumar apprised the Lt Governor on various welfare issues of National Awardee Teachers of Jammu Kashmir. The members of J&K Rehbar-e-Khel Teachers Association headed by its Chairman and International Gold medalist Narinder Chib apprised the Lt Governor on the concerning issues of Rehbar-e-Khel Physical

Education teachers. Later, a delegation of Kathua Vikas Manch led by its Patron Prof. Ram Murti Sharma, and Sahil Bhagat, Sarpanch Kashirah, Udhampur projected various developmental issues of their respective areas. The representatives of Bhartiya Yog Sansthan also called on the Lt Governor and apprised him on the promotion of Yoga in government schools of Jammu Kashmir. The Lt Governor assured the members of the delegations of appropriate redressal of their issues and demands based on merit.

30 Traders Booked For Overcharging In Bandipora

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: The District Administration Bandipora on Friday booked at least 30 traders for violating different legal metrology rules including overcharging and realized a fine of Rs 20,000 from the erring. The action was taken by the Legal Metrology Department (LMD) after complaints were received against the unscrupulous traders who during the market inspection drive on Friday across the district were found operating in violation of the Legal Metrology laws. Officials further stated that on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Dr Owais Ahmed, Legal Metrology

Department (LMD) intensified its market checking operations in order to ensure that businesses in the area comply with legal requirements for accurate rates of commodities and weighing and measuring instruments. The fine was collected from different traders which include Bakery, Vegetable and Mutton sellers. The shopkeepers were warned to refrain from any unfair trade practices during the auspicious occasion of Eid. Moreover, the consumers were advised to check the various mandatory declarations on the products before purchasing them including MRP and expiry date.

Div Com Jammu Reviews Progress On SSR In Districts

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Divisional Commissioner, Ramesh Kumar, chaired a meeting with District Electoral Officers to review the progress on the Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls. Pertinently, the date for filing claims and objections regarding the Special Summary Revision of Photo Electoral Rolls has been extended to May 6, 2023. The Divisional Commissioner reviewed the progress achieved in the districts and inquired about the number of applications received, as well as the



number of claims and objections. He instructed District Electoral Officers to conduct revisions according to guidelines and schedule, and to expedite the process for achieving tar-



JAMIA MASJID IN THE OLD CITY OF SRINAGAR witnessed the largest congregation on Jumma-tul-Vida, the last Friday of the holy month of Ramzan. KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

POONCH ATTACK

Families Of Soldiers From Punjab Inconsolable

Press Trust Of India

CHANDIGARH: Grief and anger echoed through the villages of four soldiers from Punjab who were among the five killed in a militant attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch, with their family members demanding that the Army give a befitting reply to the "cowardly act". The soldiers' families were inconsolable as they waited for them to come home one last time.

Havildar Mandeep Singh, Lance Naik Kulwant Singh, Sepoy Harkrishan Singh and Sepoy Sewak Singh, all from Punjab, were killed after their vehicle came under fire from unidentified militants and caught fire because of likely use of grenades.

The fifth soldier killed in the attack hailed from Odisha. In Moga district's Charik village, Kulwant's brother told reporters that the government and the Army should give a befitting reply to the attack.

Holding Kulwant's four-month-old son in his arms, he said his brother loved his family and had asked him to ensure timely vaccination of his son. Kulwant, who had recently visited his family, also leaves behind a one-and-a-half-year-old daughter and his wife. Villagers said Kulwant's fa-



ther was also in the armed forces and was killed in the Kargil war when he was about two years old. "His father was martyred in the Kargil war. The entire village is in a state of shock," a villager said. Bakshish Singh, a former village head of Charik, said the entire village is pained by the loss of their brave son but at the same time, is proud of the supreme sacrifice he has made for the country. In Bagha village in Bathinda, Sepoy Sewak Singh's elder sister's tears won't stop.

A villager, who was among the mourners, demanded that the Army give a befitting reply to the "cowardly act" of militants. At Sepoy Harkrishan Singh's house in Talwandi Barth village in Batala, villagers hailed his supreme sacrifice for his motherland. Harkrishan had recently vis-

ited his family. Hours before he was killed, he spoke to his wife and two-year-old daughter on a video call, villagers said.

Havildar Mandeep Singh belonged to Ludhiana district. According to the family members of the soldiers, their bodies are expected to arrive once necessary formalities have been completed by the authorities.

Speaking to reporters in Moga district, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced an ex gratia of Rs 1 crore each to the kin of the four soldiers.

"We received the very sad news of five soldiers being martyred in the incident (terrorist attack), out of which four were from Punjab," he said.

During the country's freedom struggle, Punjabis contributed 90 per cent, he said. "To keep this freedom intact, our brave jawans are guarding the borders," he added.

J&K's Mission Youth, Baramulla District Receive Awards From PM

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir's Mission Youth programme and Baramulla under 'Aspirational Districts' were conferred Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration for inter-sectoral initiatives, including ramping up of services in health, education and employment.

The awards were presented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday on the occasion of Civil Services Day.

The citation for the Mission Youth complimented the team headed by Chief Executive Officer Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, a 2009 IAS officer from Jammu and Kashmir. The award was received by Jammu and Kashmir chief secretary Arun Kumar Mehta who was accompanied by the CEO of Mission Youth.

Mission Youth clinched the top position among over 600 nominations from across all states and Union territories in the Innovation (state) category. The second position was bagged by the Gujarat govern-

ment's State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation.

Mission Youth was selected for innovations leading to the empowerment of youth in Jammu and Kashmir. It included schemes in education, skilling, coaching, volunteerism and effective use of technology for very transparent and effective service delivery.

More than 61,000 people have benefitted from the schemes and close to 5 lakh youth were engaged with Mission Youth over the last two years.

The CEO of Mission Youth had earlier made a presentation before the Empowered Committee headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, leading to selection of the mission in a multi-staged evaluation and selection process over the last six months.

The award carried Rs 20 lakh cash for Mission Youth, a citation, a scroll and a certificate of Appreciation in favour of its CEO.

Choudhary expressed great satisfaction over the positive response to the initiatives, and proactive measures by the

departments and especially the deputy commissioners in making the scheme a grand success at the ground level.

Pertinently, Mission Youth has been picked up as a unique case study by the Capacity Building Commission of India in collaboration with Harvard Business School for inclusion in courses of top management and public policy schools.

The other recipient was Syed Sehrish Asgar, Deputy Commissioner of Baramulla district in North Kashmir, for having established birth waiting wards in primary health centres and community health centres apart from upgrading diagnostic services at all delivery points.

Smart kindergarten complexes were established for pre-primary education and Atal tinkering laboratories were established for practical and innovative learning. The administration also established five industrial training institutes and Tata Technologies created a 'Centre of Invention Innovation Incubation and Training' for skill development.

Jummat-Ul-Vida Observed As Al-Quds Day In Kargil

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As per the tradition of Islamic Calendar, Jummat-Ul-Vida was celebrated in Kargil as Youm-e-Quds during which after the Friday prayers on the last Friday of the Holy Month of Ramadhan, a protest rally was organized under the leadership of Markazi Imma Jumma Wal Jamat Kargil from Isna Ashriya Complex Kargil, passing through the main bazaar, Lal Chowk and later concluded at Isna Ashriya Chowk.

The protest was to condemn the illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel and the Qibla-e-Awal of Muslim Masjid-e-Aqsa and atrocities and terrorism in other parts of the world. The Protest was organized

told that if the entire Muslim community of the world had supported the call as given by Imam Khomeini, and if showed unity then Israel will not exist which otherwise, has become a threat to the whole humanity.

Meanwhile talking to media Sheikh Nazir Mehdi Mohammedi, president Jamiat ul Ulama isna Asharia said that following the instructions of late Imam Khomeini we are today and every year stage protest against Israeli occupation on Palestine and also express our solidarity with the oppressed people of the world.

During the protest speaking to the gathering political activist Sajjad Kargil has said that Israel has been isolated in the world.



by Jamiat Ullama Isna Ashriya Kargil (JUIAK) Ladakh in which religious scholars, speakers and thousands of people from all over Kargil participated.

The protesters chanted "Free Palestine" and carried slogans that read "Boycott Israel", "Stop atrocities against minorities in the world", "Freedom for Palestine" etc.

The demonstrators also carried banners that condemned Israel's "criminal siege and occupation" of Palestinian lands.

On this occasion, various speakers threw light on the importance of the day and

"The world community is realizing that Israel is a threat to humanity and that is the reason Israel is losing its footprints in occupied Palestine". He said

Talking about UT Ladakh administration he said that the LG Ladakh has visited Kargil twice in two months which is a good sign but the other officials in UT Ladakh are ignoring the people of Kargil which is very unfortunate.

Another social activist Murtaza Khalil has said that Muslims of the world need unity for strengthen the cause of Alquds. He also emphasized the unity among people of Kargil.

Muslims Help Perform Last Rites Of KP In Ganderbal

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Muslim neighbourhood in Wussan locality of central Kashmir's Ganderbal helped perform the last rites of an elderly Kashmiri Pandit on Friday.

Avtar Krishan Koul, 75, son of Madhav Krishan Koul, breathed his last in her home at Wussan in the wee hours on Friday, plunging the whole locality into mourning, eyewitnesses said.

Soon after the news of her death spread, local Muslims made special arrangements to perform his last rites. They also ferried firewood for help the family to cremate the deceased.

"It is in our Islam to take care of neighbours irrespective of their religion," Ghulam Hassan, a local resident, said.

Another local said, "Avtar was a remarkable person who always went above and beyond to help those in need. His kindness and generosity knew no bounds, and he was always willing to lend a helping hand,

no matter what time of day or night it was."

"As a health worker, Avtar was truly dedicated to his profession. He saw it as his duty to care for the well-being of others, and he took this responsibility very seriously. He spent countless hours working tirelessly to help people in his community, never once seeking recognition or praise for his efforts," said a native from his village.

In the Wussan locality, around a dozen Pandit families are residing who did not migrate from the Kashmir Valley during the early 1990s and infiered firewood for help the family to cremate the deceased. In the Wussan locality, around a dozen Pandit families are residing who did not migrate from the Kashmir Valley during the early 1990s and infiered firewood for help the family to cremate the deceased.

After militancy erupted in the valley in the early '90s, the Pandit community was forced to migrate from Kashmir. A very small percentage of them, however, stayed back and are living in many parts of Kashmir—(KNO)

KPDCL Commissions Nihalpora Receiving Station In Baramulla

MD Yasin Choudhary Takes Stock Of Upgradation Works Of Different Receiving Stations Under Progress At Shopian

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Manging Director (MD), Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Ltd (KPDCL), M Yasin Choudhary test charged 33/11 KV, 1x 6.3 MVA Nihalpora Receiving Station thereby addressing the long pending demands of the people of Patan and Tangmarg.

The Nihalpora Receiving station outgoing feeder will feed power to the people of Patan which will decrease the overall demand on the already existing Patan Receiving Station thud bringing respite to the people of the Patan and Tangmarg by providing better and reliable power to both the sections of the society through load division.

It is worth mentioning here that before commissioning of Nihalpora Receiving Station, part of Tangmarg and Patan was being fed from the existing Patan Receiving station due to which the outgoing 11KV feeder was heavily overloaded specially during winters with a peak demand of 12 MWs leading to forced curtailments. With addition of Nihal-

pora Receiving Station to the system, the total load stands equally segregated between the two parts of the society by way of creation of two separate 11KV outgoing feeders instead of one, which in turn will provide better and reliable power supply to the people of Patan and Tangmarg specially during winters.

Meanwhile, Managing Director, KPDCL also visited Shopian on 19th April and took review of progress of various electrical works being executed by Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL).

These include Augmentations/ Upgradations of already existing 33/11 KV Receiving stations at Landora, Batpora and Reshipora of District Shopian under PMDP Scheme.

The MD KPDCL on spot directed the officials of PGCIL and KPDCL to complete the augmentations within shortest period of time, so that the people of district Shopian will be provided with a better quality of power supply round the clock and meet their long pending demands.

PCB Proposes To Host India's Asia Cup Matches At Neutral Venue

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: The PCB has proposed that India can play their Asia Cup matches at a neutral venue while Pakistan and other competing teams play in the host country, its chief Naji Sethi revealed on Friday. Sethi said they have sent a proposal to the Asian Cricket Council (ACC). The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had refused to travel to Pakistan due to political tension between the two nations and demanded the shifting of the continental tournament to a neutral venue.

"We have decided on this hybrid model that Pakistan plays its Asia Cup matches at home and India their matches at a neutral



venue and that is our proposal to the Asian Cricket Council," said Sethi, who took over as the PCB chairman from former cricketer Ramiz Raja, during a press conference.

The Asia Cup, involving six teams, will be played from September 2 to 17, though the exact schedule of matches is yet to be announced due to uncertain-

ty over the venue.

Besides Pakistan and India, the other competing countries are Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and one team which will emerge from the ACC qualifiers.

The qualifying tournament is underway in Nepal.

Sethi hoped that the visit of his country's foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari next month to the

Indian coastal city of Goa for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) Council meeting will help thaw relations between the two nations.

"We have been told that, maybe, the ice will keep on melting. If this happens when the Champions Trophy is held in Pakistan in 2025, India would consider playing in Pakistan. We have been advised to play the Asia Cup at a neutral venue and also go to India for the World Cup," said Sethi but did not say exactly who has advised them.

Sethi indicated the public mood in his country is that Pakistan should play cricket with India on level terms.

"Our government has imposed no restrictions about playing against India.

But I can say right now that public mood is, we are not needy and we can stand on our own feet financially and we want to play cricket with India honourably. We are also negotiating with the ACC," Sethi said.

The PCB chairman, however, did not specify who in the government was advising the PCB on the issue.

Sethi said that if Pakistan decides to shift all India matches in the Asia Cup to a neutral venue, the neighbours should also apply the same hybrid experiment during the 50-over World Cup in October-November this year.

India are hosting the World Cup and there is talk across the border that Pakistan's matches be moved to neutral venues.

IPL Final To Be Held In Ahmedabad On May 28

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the Qualifier 2 and the final of the ongoing Indian Premier League on May 26 and 28 respectively, the BCCI said on Friday.

Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium will stage the Qualifier 1 and the Eliminator on May 23 and 24 respectively, the IPL said in its advisory after the sport's apex body in the country finalised the schedule for the league's four biggest matches.

The BCCI's scheduling team has strategically allotted one of the qualifiers and eliminator to

Chepauk, the home ground of the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led Chennai Super Kings.



There is a widespread belief that Dhoni is appearing in his last IPL. Depending on CSK's position in the points table, Dhoni could be playing his final match in the league in front of the team's home crowd on May 23 or 24.

At 41, the World Cup-winning former India skipper continues to attract massive following across the length and breadth of the country, and recently came close to lifting CSK to a win over Rajasthan Royals, with batting that reminded everyone of his best years.

MI To Maintain Momentum Against Visiting PBKS

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: Perennial slow starters Mumbai Indians have found their mojo and will be favourites against a faltering Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League clash here on Saturday.

Having made a poor start with defeats in first two matches, Mumbai Indians, who are placed sixth in the points table, have been able to bounce back impressively with wins against Delhi Capitals, Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad.

On the other hand, Punjab Kings, ranked seventh in the points table, have stuttered in the absence of their regular captain and the highest run-scorer Shikhar Dhawan, who is unlikely to play against Mumbai Indians here at the Wankhede Stadium owing to a shoulder injury.

Punjab Kings have three wins to



show from overall six matches but all three losses have come in their last four matches.

Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan at the top have provided brisk starts to Mumbai Indians, getting their runs at an almost 10 runs per over which has set the platform for the others that follow. The overseas pair of Cameron Green and Tim David has done well in the last three games or so with the bat, but it remains to be seen how their middle-order mainstay Suryakumar Yadav goes about his job. Match starts at 7:30 PM (IST).



CANCER SOCIETY OF KASHMIR

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جس نے لوگوں کا شکر ادا نہ کیا اس نے اللہ کا شکر بھی ادا نہ کیا۔ (حدیث شریف)

اظہار تشکر و عید مبارک

کینسر سوسائٹی آف کشمیر اپنے کرم فرماؤں کو بالخصوص اور تمام اہل اسلام کو بالعموم دل کی عمیق گہرائیوں سے عید مبارک پیش کرتی ہے۔ عید کے اس متبرک قومی پرہم اسلامی اور اخلاقی ذمہ داری کو ملحوظ نظر رکھ کر عوام الناس کا تہہ دل سے شکر یہ ادا کرتے ہیں جنہوں نے سوسائٹی کو پھر پور مالی و معاونت بالخصوص اس ماہ مقدس میں کر کے ہماری ادنیٰ کوششوں کی حوصلہ افزائی کی ہے۔ اللہ تعالیٰ سے دست بڑھنا عاہل کے آپ کے عطیات اور صدقات کو اپنی بارگاہ میں قبول فرمائے اور اپنی بے پناہ رحمتوں اور بخششوں سے نوازیں (آمین)

ہم مستقبل میں بھی تعاون کے طلبگار ہیں تاکہ ہم سب ملکر ریاست جموں و کشمیر کو کینسر جیسی ہلک پیاری سے پاک کریں۔

شائع کردہ: کینسر سوسائٹی آف کشمیر

CANCER SOCIETY OF KASHMIR

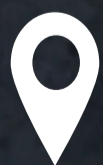
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