

Dynamic Security Grid In Place for Yatra: Army

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: A robust and dynamic security grid complete with the deployment of snipers, anti-drone systems, bomb disposal and dog squads has been put in place to ensure a safe and secure Amarnath Yatra, the army said here on Saturday.

The yatra began from the twin routes of Baltal and Pahalgam. Baltal is in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district and Pahalgam in Anantnag district in south.

"The Indian Army has traditionally been involved in ensuring safe and secure yatra for the pilgrims. This year too, the army has worked with all other stakeholders to put in place a robust and dynamic security grid for the Shri Amarnathji Yatra," the army's 3 Sector Rashtriya Rifles commander Brigadier Atul Rajput told reporters here.

He said the army has ensured multi-tier security **More on P6**

Amid Tight Security, 62-day Long Amarnath Yatra Begins

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The breeze blew gently, borrowing the cool from the drizzle and energy from the first rays of the dawn, as chants Bham Bham Bhole rent the base camps for Amarnath Yatris as they began their journey to the cave shrine nestled at 3,880 metres in the Himalayas.

Most pilgrims spent the night awake in excitement and anticipation -- and some because they were sold fake registration slips by agents.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished new enthusiasm and energy to devotees who knew the journey ahead was going to be hectic, but felt assured by the security arrangements.



The weather also played hide and seek, but nothing dampened their spirit as the echoes of 'Bam Bam Bhole' and 'Har Har Mahadev' lent warmth to the cold rain droplets. **More on P6**

A Divine Manifestation Of Our Heritage: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the annual Amarnath Yatra, which began on Saturday, as a divine and magnificent manifestation of our heritage. In a tweet, he wished new enthusiasm and energy to devotees from divine blessings and that the country move ahead quickly in 'amrit kaal' to realise its resolve. The first batch of pilgrims set out from the base camp at Baltal this morning for the cave shrine in the south Kashmir Himalayas.

Shah Conveys Greetings To Yatris

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Saturday conveyed his greetings to the pilgrims of Amarnath Yatra and said the administration has made all possible arrangements for the convenience of the devotees. "Shri Amarnath ji's pilgrimage is a symbol of unbreakable tradition and beliefs of 'Sanatan' culture. This pilgrimage is starting today. "The administration has made all possible arrangements for the convenience of all devotees going to visit Baba Barfani. Your pleasant **More on P6**

Bold Voice Of Kashmir Sampath Prakash No More



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Firebrand trade union leader and civil rights advocate Sampath Prakash died on Saturday after suffering a heart attack. He was 88.

According to reports, Prakash suffered a heart attack on Saturday afternoon following which he was rushed to SKIMS Soura for treatment. However, the doctors there declared him dead on arrival.

His death has been widely mourned in Jammu and Kashmir. Born and brought up in a Kashmiri Pandit family in Rainwari area of Srinagar city, **More on P6**

RAJNATH SINGH TO PAKISTAN 'India Has Changed, Now We Can Enter And Kill'

Press Trust Of India

Kanker (Chhattisgarh): Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday warned India's "neighbor" that if anyone tried to harm the country, a befitting reply will be given.

Speaking at a rally in Chhattisgarh's Maoists-affected Kanker district, he also claimed that the Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) would have been wiped out



from the country had the Congress government in Chhattisgarh "co-operated fully". He also alleged that forced **More on P6**

Switch To Prepaid Or Face Disconnection: KPDCL Asks Consumers Urges Consumers To Clear Outstanding Bills Without Delay

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: The Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Ltd (KPDCL) has asked the consumers in Valley to port their smart meter power connections from postpaid to prepaid mode or else their supply will be disconnected.

The UT owned power distribution utility; KPDCL has also urged



the consumers to clear their monthly outstanding bills after July 1 to avoid inconvenience

that may arise as a result of disconnection of their connections.

It is pertinent to mention that hydro power utilities including NHPC have curtailed power supply by 25 percent in J&K after the distribution utility failed to clear outstanding debts.

"In order to avoid inconvenience due to the disconnection of electricity supply, you are requested to clear **More on P6**

J&K Has Record Rs 588.68 Cr GST Revenue In June 2023

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has registered substantial growth of 58 percent in GST revenue collected in the month of June 2023 compared to June of previous financial year, Union Ministry of Finance said Saturday.

This growth percentage is more than three times the National Average and the best in the country among medium and large jurisdictions, an official spokesperson said. The gross GST revenue collected in June 2023 was 588.68 crore compared to 371.83 crore in June 2022.

Pertinently, India's gross GST revenue for the month of **More on P6**



J&K Bank

Serving To Empower

Your bank since 1938

Meri Kahani Meri Zubaani

"From counselling to providing finances to hand-holding, **J&K Bank** has supported me throughout my journey of becoming a New-Age Agripreneur. **Thank You J&K Bank** for being there with me at every step."

Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Thoker @ Agripreneur

Share your inspirational story at merikahani@jkbmail.com

Watch my story on J&K Bank's Official Youtube Channel

@JKBankofficial

OR
SCAN HERE





To place an advertisement
CALL +91-194 2502327

Monday - Saturday (9am - 6pm)
No 5- Dal Lake Boulevard Srinagar, 190001, Kashmir

In Workaholic Japan, 'Job Leaving Agents' Help People Escape The Awkwardness Of Quitting

Press Trust Of India

In Japan, a nation reputed for loyalty to companies and lifetime employment, people who job-hop are often viewed as quitters. And that's considered shameful.

Enter taishoku daiko, or job-leaving agents. Dozens of such services have sprung up in the last several years to help people who simply want out.

Imagine a messy divorce, says Yoshihito Hasegawa, who heads Tokyo-based TRK, whose Guardian service last year advised 13,000 people on how to resign from their jobs with minimal hassles.

People often stick with jobs even when they're unhappy, feeling as if they are kamikaze sacrificing their lives for the greater good, he said, comparing his clients to pilots sent on suicide missions in the closing days of World War II.

It's the way things are done, the same way younger people are taught to honor older people, he said. Quitting would be a betrayal.

Founded in 2020, Guardian, a taishoku daiko service, has helped various people, mostly in their 20s and 30s, escape less painfully from jobs they want to quit. That includes people who worked in a Shinto shrine, a dentist's office and law firm to convenience store and restaurant staff.

Nearly half of Guardian's clients are women. Some work for a day or two and then discover promises of pay or work hours were false.

Guardian charges 29,800 yen (\$208) for its service, which includes a three-month membership in a union that will represent an employee in what can quickly turn into a delicate and awkward negotiation process in Japan.

Generally, Guardian's clients have worked for the small and medium-sized businesses that employ most Japanese. Sometimes people working for major companies seek help. In many cases, bosses have a huge say over how things are run and sometimes simply refuse to let a worker leave, especially since many places are short-handed to begin with, given the Japan's chronic labor shortage.

Japanese law basically guarantees people the right to quit, but some employers



“Founded in 2020, Guardian, a taishoku daiko service, has helped various people, mostly in their 20s and 30s, escape less painfully from jobs they want to quit. That includes people who worked in a Shinto shrine, a dentist's office and law firm to convenience store and restaurant staff.

used to an old-style hierarchy just can't accept that someone they have trained would want to walk away. Those tackling the quitting battle who were interviewed for this story used terms like fanatics, bullies and mini-Hitlers to describe such bosses.

Conformist workaholic pressures in Japanese culture are painfully heavy. Workers don't want to be seen as troublemakers, are reluctant to question authority and may be afraid to speak up. They may fear harassment after they quit. Some worry about the opinions of their families or friends.

Although most of Guardian's clients prefer to be anonymous, a young man who goes by the online name of Twichan sought help after he was criticized for his sales performance and became so depressed he thought about killing himself. With Guardian's help he was able to quit in 45 minutes.

Taku Yamazaki, who went to a different taishoku daiko, said his former employer

was a subsidiary of a major IT vendor and he knew his departure would be complicated and time-consuming because he was doing well there.

I felt a certain amount of gratitude toward the place I was leaving, but I wanted to switch gears mentally and move forward as soon as possible, he said.

When people fill out taishoku daiko online forms, an automated reply comes within minutes, with a more personal reply promised within one working day.

Lawyer Akiko Ozawa, whose law firm advises job-leavers although usually it represents companies, acknowledged it may be hard to believe people can't just pick up and leave.

But switching jobs is a major challenge in Japan that requires tremendous courage, said Ozawa, who has written a book on taishoku daiko. Given the shortage of workers in Japan, finding and training replace-

ments is tough and bosses sometimes erupt in outrage when someone resigns.

As long as this Japanese mindset exists, the need for my job isn't going away, said Ozawa, who charges 65,000 yen (\$450) for her service. If you are so unhappy that you're starting to feel ill, then you should make that choice to take control over your own life.

Another quitting service, Albatross, offers a MoMuri, or "can't stand it anymore" service, charges a 22,000 yen (\$150) fee for full-time workers, and a bargain 12,000 yen (\$80) fee for part-time workers.

Workplace problems have existed all along, but people now realize they can get help online, said its founder, Shinji Tanimoto.

They tell us they couldn't sleep at all before, but they can finally sleep all they want, he said of MoMuri's customers. Users thank us all the time. Some cry tears of joy.

One person wanted to quit working at a pet salon where workers were secretly kicking the animals. Another wanted to quit job in a dental office where the staff weren't using new gloves for each patient.

Many are women working as nurses or caretakers who are asked to stay until a replacement is found, but end up still working in the jobs a year later, he said.

Toshiyuki Niino founded Exit Inc., a frontrunner in the taishoku daiko sector, in 2018, after encountering a boss who constantly yelled at him. Another threatened to kill him. He quit both jobs, and saw an opportunity.

I am proud I started this genre of work, he said.

Exit charges 20,000 yen (\$140). Now that employers understand what taishoku daiko is, it can be over in 15 minutes, once resignation papers are on their way.

Niino, who says he never once expressed an opinion in school, blames the Japanese educational system for turning out obedient workers who are unable to assert themselves.

He's thinking about branching out to include mental health counseling, job referrals and perhaps an overseas expansion.

Niino laughs, recounting how one of his own employees used a rival agency to resign and then went on to set up his own taishoku daiko company.

ASF ENTERPRISES

Sale and Services of Computers 2nd. Floor Munir
Manzil Regal Chowk Srinagar (J&K) ,
Ph.0194-24 77949, 9419001176, 9419776235

Sale and Sendee of Laptops, Desktops,
Printers, Photocopiers, Faxes, CCTV Cameras,
Security System and Refilling of all Types
of Cartridges, Toners

Registered
Government
order Suppliers.



PUBLIC NOTICE

My name in school records of my daughter Haya Athar has been wrongly written as Athar Masood Shah Qadri while my correct name is Athar Masood Qadri which needs to be corrected. If anybody having any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Principal Alnoor Model School Dhoivan Tehsil Kunzer within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Athar Masood Qadri
F/o Haya Athar
R/o Agrikalan Tehsil pattan Baramulla

bmg

ازنیابت پاپہان

عنوان:- درخواست منجانب معراج الدین کارو عادل احمد مومل کمار پیران عبدالاحد کمار ساکن موضع سلطان پورہ تحصیل پٹن براد اجرائی OBC سرٹیفکیٹ بزمہ کمار

اشتہار ہر خاص و عام

معاملہ درجہ عنوان الصد میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست بغرض OBC سرٹیفکیٹ بزمہ کمار پیش کی ہے جو کہ زیر کاروائی ہے اس بارے میں ہواداری حالت سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ ساکن واقعی کمار ذات سے تعلق رکھتا ہے اور ساکن سلطان پورہ تحصیل پٹن میں رہائش پذیر ہے اور کبھی بھی ترک سکونت نہیں کی ہے ساکن مذکور OBC سرٹیفکیٹ حاصل کرنے کا خواہ ہے اور کئی مہوارہ آمدنی 6800 روپے تک ہے۔ سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث اجراء کرنے میں اگر کدگر کسی شخص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ بعد مشورہ اخبار سادات دن کے اندر اندر اپنے عذر یا اعتراض و دلائل کو دفتر ہی اوقات کے دوران پیش کریں۔ بعد گزرے بعد کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

نائب تحصیلدار

FKO

Caffeine Only Makes You Alert, Coffee Makes You 'Ready To Go', Say Scientists

Press Trust Of India

If you want to feel not just alert but ready to go, caffeine alone won't do - you need to experience that cup of coffee, say scientists after studying the effects of coffee vs caffeine in coffee-drinkers.

The scientists wanted to understand if the wakefulness effect came from caffeine or from the experience of drinking coffee.

"There is a common expectation that coffee increases alertness and psychomotor functioning,"

said Nuno Sousa of the University of Minho, Portugal, and corresponding author of the study published in the journal Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience.

"When you get to understand better the mechanisms underlying a biological phenomenon, you open pathways for exploring the factors that may modulate it and even the potential benefits of that mechanism," said Sousa.

The scientists recruited people who drank a minimum of one cup of coffee per day and

asked them to refrain from eating or drinking caffeinated beverages for at least three hours before the study.

The participants' sociodemographic data was collected through interviews and their brains were scanned using functional MRI (fMRI), once before and once 30 minutes after taking caffeine or drinking a standardised cup of coffee.

While being scanned, the participants were asked to relax and let their minds wander.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ



SAD DEMISE

With profound grief & sorrow , we inform the Sad Demise of **Shahnaza Akhtar W/o Late Mohammad Yousuf Bhat** Mother Of **KHALID YOUSUF BHAT** R/o Sarai Safa Kadal Srinagar who passes away on 01 July 2023 (Saturday).

Condolences will be observed for 3 days only. May Allah grant her highest place in Jannah Ameen

Bereaved: Bhat Family

7780968683, 78894 86050


WHY TO USE CRITICAL CARE AMBULANCE

- Early Intervention**
 - Critical care ambulances are equipped with advanced medical equipment and trained medical professionals who can provide early intervention to patients during transit. This early intervention can help to stabilize patients and prevent their condition from deteriorating, thereby reducing the risk of mortality and morbidity.
- Timely Transportation**
 - Critical care ambulances can transport patients to hospitals more quickly and safely than private transport, reducing the time between the onset of the medical emergency and the start of treatment. This can be critical in cases of heart attacks, strokes, or traumatic injuries, where every minute counts.
- Reduced Complications**
 - Patients who receive critical care ambulance services are less likely to experience complications during transit or upon arrival at the hospital. This can result in shorter hospital stays, reduced healthcare costs, and improved patient outcomes.
- Better Coordination**
 - Critical care ambulance services often work closely with local hospitals and emergency medical services (EMS) to ensure that patients receive the appropriate care and treatment. This coordination can help to reduce the risk of medical errors and ensure that patients receive the best possible care.
- Improved Accessibility:**

Critical care ambulance services can help to improve the accessibility of healthcare services in remote or underserved areas. This can help to reduce health disparities and improve the overall health of the population.



9484100200/ 01942310018

Devotees Issued Fake Permits By Travel Agents Appeal To LG For Facilitating Amarnath Pilgrimage

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Around 300 devotees have been left stranded at the Jammu base camp after they were stopped from proceeding on the Amarnath Yatra due to fake permits issued by their travel agents.

Desperate to continue their pilgrimage to the holy cave shrine of Amarnath, these pilgrims have sought assistance from Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, urging him to consider their special circumstances and allow them to proceed with the yatra.

"We implore Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to intervene and spare us further hardship. We humbly request their facilitation of our pilgrimage to Amarnath," said Suresh Kumar, a resident of Uttar Pradesh stranded in Jammu due to a fake permit.

Over 430 Amarnath pilgrims were found in possession of fake registration permits in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts on Friday.

Ramesh Arora, a Delhi resident stuck at the Jammu base camp said, "We have been deceived by travel agents in Delhi who provided us with counterfeit permits for the yatra. While they have put us in this difficult situation, the administration is not permitting us to continue our pilgrimage due to the fake documents."

Over the past two days, these stranded pilgrims, including women and children, have been tirelessly seeking help from the authorities concerned.

The devotees said their appeal for assistance has largely gone unanswered, leading to mounting uncertainty and frustration among them.

Nevertheless, they have refused to leave without pay-

ing obeisance to Lord Shiva at Amarnath.

On the lookout for a temporary shelter until they hear from the authorities, hundreds of these pilgrims have taken refuge at the Asaram Babu ashram near the Jammu base camp.

"We appeal to the government to approach this issue with compassion. We are at a loss both due to fraudulent travel agents and the administration's refusal to allow us to complete the yatra," said Sush-eela, another stranded resident of Delhi awaiting help from the authorities.

Responding to the situation, a senior official said, "Such pilgrims are not at fault. We are committed to facilitating their pilgrimage and are providing them with assistance in terms of accommodation and meals."

Around 300 fake registration permits for the Amarnath Yatra were detected by the district administration in Jammu along with the police on Friday, the officials said.

Meanwhile, 65 people were found carrying fake registration documents at the Lakhan-pur entry point in Kathua district, while 68 were intercepted with such fake documents in Samba district.

Jammu Deputy Commissioner Avny Lavasa said an FIR has already been registered in the matter and police investigation is underway.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jammu-Samba-Kathua range, Shakti Pathak warned of legal action against those involved in duping Amarnath pilgrims by providing fake registration permits.

The 62-day-long annual pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Amarnath located at a height of 3,880 metres in the south Kashmir Himalayas began on July 1 and will continue till August 31.



THE ANNUAL AMARNATH YATRA began on Saturday with the first batch of pilgrims setting out from the Baltal base camp for the cave shrine in the south Kashmir Himalayas.

KO PHOTO

AMARNATH YATRA

CS Directs Officials To Streamline Tourists, Civilian Traffic As well

'Yatris Also Free To Visit Other Tourist Places By Adhering To RoP'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta on Saturday impressed upon the officials to streamline both tourists and civilian traffic along with the yatris for their movement on the National Highway.

He passed these directions while chairing a high-level meeting of both civil and police administration to review the traffic scenario on NH-44 including that of the roads leading to Pahalgam and Baltal.

On the occasion, Dr Mehta maintained that J&K has moved much ahead and our approach towards the management of affairs should be facilitative.

He asked for maintaining a reasonable gap between LMVs and HMVs so that none face any difficulty in reaching their destinations. He observed that the highway today is in much better shape with four lanes and tunnels except for a few difficult stretches. He reflected that all this should have the desired impact on ground. He asked the concerned authorities to

perform their roles efficiently.

The Chief Secretary even directed the senior officers from the Traffic Department to closely monitor and supervise the performance of their subordinates through field inspections themselves on the ground. He advised them to completely take the affairs in their hands and decide for themselves about the effective use of the resources at hand.

He enquired about the use of traffic management paraphernalia like installation of CCTVs on National Highway, Motor bikes, interceptors and their outcomes. He called for a detailed report to be submitted to him about the same within a couple of days. He also emphasised on taking full advantage of Integrated Command and Control Centres established in both the capital cities for better management of traffic.

Regarding the movement of yatra and other tourists, the Chief Secretary said that all of them should be facilitated and there should be no undue restrictions on anyone. He stated that adherence to time

discipline in terms of RoP is the part of SOP that is largely aimed at ensuring safety of one and all.

As far as the satisfaction level of general tourists is concerned, Dr Mehta instructed both the Divisional Commissioners to take RAS feedback from at least 100 of them daily on both the yatra axis about their travel experience. He asked for recording the hourly volume of traffic from Jammu at major diversions like that of Nagrota, Dornail, Udhampur, Nashri Tunnel, Ramban, Banihal, Navyug Tunnel, Qazigund, Mirbazar, Khanabal, Sangam, Pampore till reaching Srinagar to have insights into it for making strategies accordingly.

The other instructions passed on by the Chief Secretary during the meeting included providing opportunities to the locals to do trade as per the past practice, strictly complying with RFID based registrations, restriction on overcrowding of passenger vehicles besides taking all the measures of waste collection and cleanliness enroute, in

Mehbooba Requests CJJ For Early Hearing On Art-370 In SC

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday requested Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud for an early hearing of a batch of petitions challenging the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019.

CJI Chandrachud is currently on a tour of Jammu and Kashmir and delivered the inaugural address on the second day 19th All India Legal Services Authorities meeting in Srinagar on Friday, besides attending the foundation laying function of the new high court complex in Jammu a day earlier.

"We welcome CJI to Jammu and Kashmir and want to remind him of Article 370 and the commitment of the people of the country to maintain the special status (of J&K under the constitutional provision) when the Muslim majority



region joined hands with India without any compulsion," Mehbooba told reporters here.

The PDP leader requested the CJI to ensure an early hearing of the petitions on Article 370.

"We want to invite the attention of the CJI to the petitions which are pending in the Supreme Court for the last four years and also towards the plight of ... people, especially the youth who are in jails within and outside J-K without any trial," Mehbooba said.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP), National Conference (NC) and other parties in Jam-

mu and Kashmir have opposed the scrapping of Article 370 which gave special status to J-K.

"The BJP revoked Article 370 unconstitutionally and illegally despite several past rulings by the Supreme Court in the cases filed by Sampat Prakash (1968), Vijayalaxmi (2018) and Prem Nath Kaul (1959), reiterating that the Article will not be touched unless J&K constitutional assembly recommends for the same," Mehbooba claimed.

Earlier in a tweet, Mehbooba said Article 370 is a constitutional commitment of this nation to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"J&K acceded to India out of choice & not compulsion. Then why is it being deprived of basic fundamental rights & guarantees given by the Constitution itself? I earnestly hope your presence throws light upon these pressing issues," she said.

19th All India Legal Services Authorities Meet Concludes At SKICC

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The two days 19th All India Legal Services Authorities meet organized by Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority under the aegis of National Legal Services Authority concluded on Saturday at SKICC here.

On the second day of the meet, five sessions were held under the chairmanship of Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Executive Chairman NALSA and Judge Supreme Court of India.

The first session dealt with confirmation of the Minutes of the 18th All India Meet of State Legal Services Authority held at Jaipur, Rajasthan in July, 2022. The session also deliberated upon the subject area of technology in Legal Services with a discourse on strengthening National Legal Aid Helpline -15100 and NALSA's digital digital platform.

The second session focused on the subject area of Legal Aid to under trial prisoners (UTPs) with emphasis on strengthening legal services at pre-arrest, arrest and remand stage along with strengthening and monitoring of legal services in prisons and at police stations. The role of legal services authorities in rehabilitations of prisoners after release was also discussed in the session.

The third session extensively dealt with court based legal aid with subject area encompassing Legal Aid Defence Counsel System (LADCS), its existing status in States/UTs, selection criteria at various levels and office space and infrastructure relating to the system. A discussion was also held regarding resizing the panel of Legal Aid Counsels and the concept of Open Prisons and role of Legal Services institutions in context thereof.

In the fourth session, the subject area of legal empower-

ment and Eco-Justice was deliberated, discussions were focussed on need based and area specific legal services covering the subjects of "Reach-Out", awareness and community participation in dispute resolution. The role of Legal Services institution in eco-justice was also discussed in this session. The fifth session exclusively dealt with the utilisation and audit of NALSA grants.

Pertinently, the 19th All India Legal Services Authorities Meet was inaugurated by Justice Dr. D.Y. Chandrachud, Chief Justice of India in presence of Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Judge Supreme Court of India & Executive Chairman NALSA; Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Judge Supreme Court of India & Chairman Supreme Court Legal Services Committee, Judges of Supreme Court of India, Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State for Law and Justice; Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor UT of Jammu & Kashmir; Brig. Dr. BD Mishra, Lieutenant Governor UT of Ladakh; Justice N. Kotniswar Singh, Chief Justice High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh & Patron-in-Chief J&K Legal Services Authority; Justice Tashi Rabstan Judge High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh & Executive Chairman J&K Legal Services Authority and Ladakh Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh. D.C Raina Advocate General; Senior Advocates, Officers from the Civil Administration, Police department, Registry of Supreme Court and High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Judicial Officers, Prominent NGOs, Law students also attended the inaugural function. The Meet was also attended by Chief Justices of High Courts, Executive Chairpersons State Legal Services Authorities, Chairpersons High Court Legal Services Committees, Member Secretaries SLSAs and Member Secretaries of HCLSCs.

11 Unexploded Shells Defused In Kargil

Press Trust Of India

KARGIL: Eleven unexploded shells were defused by the army's bomb disposal squad in a forward village in Kargil district of Ladakh, officials said on Saturday.

The unit led by the Sappers of Forever in Operations division detected the ordnance during a sanitising drive in Kurbathang area, officials said.

The drive was conducted in close coordination with Tehsil-dar, Kargil, and Sarpanch, Pash-kum, and the unexploded ordnance was safely defused by the bomb disposal squad, they said.

Earlier in April, the Sappers of Forever in Operations divi-

sion had destroyed seven explosives found near the new astro turf ground following the death of a 13-year-old boy in a landmine explosion. Two more boys were injured in the same incident.

It governor, Ladakh, Brig (Retd) B D Mishra had then gave his assurance to the people that the littered shells, which pose a threat to their lives, would be cleared from Kargil villages gradually.

Mishra's remarks had come after the public decried the presence of a large number of unexploded shells from the army firing range and the 1999 Kargil war in Kurbathang and other areas.

DOCTORS DAY

DAK Urges Doctors To Rebuild Patient Trust

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: On doctors day, Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) on Saturday has urged doctors to rebuild patient trust which has been broken, shaken and misplaced.

"There has been erosion of patient trust over the years and once revered doctor-patient relationship is on the rocks," said DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan.

Dr Hassan said doctors are no longer held in high esteem as they were decades ago.

Once considered next to God, doctors now often have just transactional relation with patients.

Commercialization of medical profession has created mistrust among patients about health system and health care providers.

"There are many instances when surgeries are done unnecessarily for financial gains," he said adding even prescriptions are driven by pharma companies who provide doctors freebies for writing their products.

Village Haat In Reasi Becomes Tourist Attraction, Brings Financial Independence To SHG Women

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Duggardhani, a village haat initiative of the administration to turn the culinary skills of 1,500 women self-help group members into a career option, is fast emerging as a tourist attraction in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, officials have said.

Inaugurated by District Development Commissioner Babila Rakwal on May 16 in the Kheral panchayat of Pouni block, Duggardhani is more a women's empowerment movement than a business. It includes women from all age groups and even those

from "conservative" families, the officials said.

With its proximity to the road, huge tourist influx to Shri Shiv Khori, eye-catching look and the traditional way of cooking and eating, Duggardhani is ready to become a major tourism attraction in the coming months, they added.

With Duggardhani, Rakwal has attempted to bring a change in the lives of 1,500 self-help group (SHG) members of "Naari ki Pehchaan", a cluster-level federation.

It is being run in coordination with the Tourism department and the Rural Livelihood Mission as a

platform to harness the culinary skills of homemakers and enable them to earn a livelihood out of their kitchens, the officials said.

Women SHG members from cluster-level federations (UMEED) have turned Duggardhani into a career option and taken their talents beyond the four walls of their homes. This way, they have made good money without going out of their way, becoming big financial support to their families as well, according to the officials.

Duggardhani has also fulfilled the long-standing demands of SHG members for a marketplace for traditional

handicrafts chabhari binna (grass craft) and handlooms and the region's value-added agriculture and horticulture products such tikki masala, pickles, chutneys, jams and papads.

The SHG members have been given training in the basics of stocking up the pantry, quick recipes, packing techniques, social media skills and order management, an official said. They have also been made to understand promotional strategies for the modern market to prepare the women to run their kitchens single-handedly, he added.

"Some of the popular Dogra cuisines include makkhi ki roti, saag,

quer, khurmure, special Dogra dal and mixed rice with accompaniments such as lassi and kheer. This is what sets them apart from commercial restaurants because the Duggardhani menu includes home-cooked food prepared to the liking of the patrons," the official said.

The quality and affordable prices are their unique selling point. "Every food item is prepared fresh and hence, there is no wastage," he said. The official said each woman brings her area of specialisation to the table.

"They are clever, calculative, know their kitchen inside out and are

great with damage control.

"Duggardhani has lifted the spirits of the rural women and boosted their confidence enormously. It has been instrumental in empowering the SHG women who are now confident in their skills and eager to become financially independent," the official said.

He said the response to Duggardhani from state tourists has been overwhelming. The haat has delivered big orders to them.

It is not only catering to the rural population, the official said, adding that urban customers are also among the clientele.

Elusive Assembly Polls

There seems to be an apprehension that the existing calm might unravel, should the government pass into the hands of an elected government, no matter who gets to be the chief minister

With general elections exactly a year away, it looks unlikely that Jammu and Kashmir will have assembly elections this year. And if at all the central government wanted to hold the exercise later this year, it would have announced it by now. This means, it has no such plans until the national polls next year. It has even given up all pretense of working towards a democratically elected government in the union territory. This too when a political chorus is building up in J&K for an Assembly election to be held this year. Former chief minister Omar Abdullah has been vocal about his frustration at the centre's backtracking on the democratic process. And now recently, even the state BJP has made some noise. Its J&K president, Ravinder Raina urged Election Commission with "folded hands" to hold polls, apparently in a bid to deflect blame from Opposition parties that the saffron party was running away from the exercise.

There is also a silent demand for polls among a significant section of people, both in the Valley and in Jammu. One can sense a palpable desire to see local politicians return to government, if for no other reason than their approachability. But this is not what centre seems inclined to concede in the near future.

Around nine Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in the country before the general elections. Among them, the elections in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Telengana will be very crucial. But J&K is not one of them.

It is true, holding polls in J&K following the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019 is a tricky exercise. Much has happened since June 2018 when Governor's rule was imposed after the PDP-led coalition government lost its majority following the withdrawal of support by the BJP. J&K lost its semi-autonomous status leading to seven months of communications and security blockade. The last three and a half years have witnessed a drastic political makeover of the state-turned-union territory, so much so, that in many aspects, the current J&K bears little resemblance to what it was before the repeal of Article 370.

What is more, an uneasy calm has settled over Kashmir. The protests and the stone-pelting incidents have gradually tapered off. The militancy which held out stubbornly for some time is also abating. Over 500 militants, most of them local recruits, have been killed in recent years. The fresh estimates indicate a number of militants well below 100, perhaps the lowest since the militancy began in 1989. In fact, the number of active militants in the



Home Minister Amit Shah chairing security review meeting in Srinagar, October 5, 2022 | KO photo by Abid Bhat

Kashmir Valley has reached an all-time low of 28, according to the latest J&K Police figures. This is the first time in three decades that the number of militants has dropped to such a low number, and security agencies are optimistic that this number will continue to decrease in the coming weeks. This has, for once, created a distinct possibility that the militancy could very well end in the next few months or over the course of this year. That is, if there is no further replenishment of the ranks in the form of local recruitment or influx from across the border.

But with all this supposed march towards peace, Kashmir remains a deeply uncertain place, a possible factor in centre's calculations to delay polls. There seems to be an apprehension that the existing calm might unravel, should the government pass into the hands of an elected government, no matter who gets to be the chief minister. An elected government by its very nature will be accountable to people. The government's every move will be accounted for, making it sensitive to popular opinion and perception.

Over the last more than three years, the BJP government has brought one after another legislative and administrative measure to cast Kashmir in a premeditated image, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called Naya Kashmir. After going the whole hog with revoking the former state's autonomy and bifurcating it into federally administered

areas - J&K and Ladakh - there has been no looking back for New Delhi. Its goal will be to lead its Kashmir project to its logical conclusion in the remaining period of this term and possibly after 2024.

So, contrary to expectations among some sections of people in Kashmir, the elections in the union territory may not be held anytime soon, nor will statehood for J&K be restored. The reason is this gives the central government direct control over the region. But the question arises what if the BJP by any chance doesn't retain the government at the centre next summer? Would the next government allow polls in the UT preceded or followed by statehood? If so, it won't again be a decision that would be easy to make. A successor government might also be chary about the possibility of things unravelling in Kashmir which, in turn, could again lend support to the BJP's iron-fist policy in the region. The truth is that for the BJP, the Assembly election in J&K is fundamentally not about winning or losing it, and may not be also so for its successor in New Delhi. What matters is pacification of Kashmir, whether forced or otherwise.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The author is the Political Editor at Kashmir Observer

“

The last three and a half years have witnessed a drastic political makeover of the state-turned-union territory, so much so, that in many aspects, the current J&K bears little resemblance to what it was before

RIYAZ WANI

The Hajj Is Where Spirituality, Solidarity, And Science Intersect

Abdirahman Mahamud

As a child, when the time for the annual Hajj would approach, I would often hear the same story from my father. He would tell me about Syed Yussef, a relative of my great-grandfather who travelled to Mecca to perform the Hajj at the turn of the 20th century

At that time, the journey from our homeland in northern Kenya to Islam's holy places was an arduous one and many pilgrims did not make it back, falling victim to disease, exhaustion or attacks by bandits.

Knowing full well these dangers, Syed Yussef set out for Mecca overjoyed that he would be fulfilling his religious obligation, experiencing a journey of spiritual purification and feeling the cool marble flooring around the Holy Kaaba. It would take him four months - traveling on foot, by boat and camel - to reach the holy site.

More than a century after my distant relative crossed seas and deserts to get to Mecca, I also made the journey - which took me just a few hours by plane. It was 2019, a year before the COVID-19 pandemic. I was appointed to a World Health Organization team which was dispatched to Saudi Arabia to support the Ministry of Health in health crisis preparedness and disease outbreak prevention during the Hajj season.

I was impressed by the public health measures that the Saudi authorities already had in place to keep safe the millions of people who poured in. They had made sure that pilgrims had access to clean water and sanitation facilities, food, transportation and medical care. The elderly, the sick and people with disabilities were also accommodated so they could participate fully in the Hajj. The holy sites were kept clean and there was constant monitoring for disease outbreaks.

The Hajj I saw was not only a wondrous unforgettable spiritual journey for the pilgrims, but also a safe one where people did not have to risk their lives to undertake it - as my legendary relative and many others had to in the past. And that was not only because the Saudi health ministry was doing its job well, but also because Muslims had learned from past disasters. In fact, one could argue that the Hajj has shaped global public health practices used today around the world.

As a mass gathering of people, the Hajj has had a history of public health crises. For example, in 1865, during the Hajj season, a cholera epidemic broke out, killing 15,000 of the 90,000 pilgrims that undertook it. Once the pilgrimage was over, people went back to their homes, carrying with them the deadly disease and causing various outbreaks in Africa, Asia and Europe. The total death toll from the epidemic was estimated at 200,000 people.

As cholera spread to Europe, the French government was alarmed. Under its initiative, in 1866, the Ottoman authorities hosted in Istanbul the International Sanitary Conference held, which was exclusively devoted to the disease outbreak.

At the summit, which was dominated by European nations, the cholera epidemic in Europe was linked to the Hajj. The measures that were discussed focused on ways to prevent the spread

towards European countries, including by closing ports to arrivals from the Arabian Peninsula and imposing maritime quarantine. However, tackling the epicentre of the outbreak in the East was hardly discussed, which was a mistake.

Quarantine centres were set up in al-Tur in the Gulf of Suez, the Kamaran Island in the Red Sea, and in Izmir, Trabzon and on the Bosphorus in the Ottoman Empire. They targeted specifically Muslim pilgrims who were hoarded into camps and kept there for at least 15 days to ensure they were not carrying the disease.

Unsurprisingly, the quarantine stations were deeply unpopular and pilgrims resented being detained and overseen by people of another faith. The result was that many would travel longer distances so that they would not have to go through these ports and experience such humiliation.

Many Muslims avoided the quarantine despite them knowing the public health teaching of Prophet Muhammad: "If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not go out escaping from it."

There would have been more compliance had Muslim communities been properly consulted and included in developing the quarantine measures, instead of being coerced. These policies were clearly designed to serve the in-

terests of rich and powerful European nations and that provoked distrust and rejection. This is a recipe for disaster in any public health strategy.

Meanwhile, Muslims learned the lessons of the 1865 outbreak and put in place policies to prevent another one in their holy sites. In Mecca, various sanitation measures were implemented to reduce the risk of cholera, which proved successful. Outbreaks of cholera dwindled afterwards.

Fast-forward to today, the public health knowledge and traditions accumulated over centuries have been embedded in Saudi Arabia's modern policies, which ensure that the Hajj is carried out in a safe manner.

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in the 2020, the kingdom immediately took measures to prevent the Hajj from becoming a superspreader event. The number of pilgrims was dramatically reduced to just 1,000 and the rituals were carried out under strict social distancing and masking mandates.

The COVID-19 pandemic was tough on all of us, not only physically but psychologically and socially as well. This year, we will have the first Hajj without strict pandemic measures in place, enabling more than 2.5 million Muslims to embark on this spiritual journey. This is great news.

In 2019, I witnessed the impact the Hajj has on Muslims from all over the

world, of all races, of all walks of life. I observed what American psychologist Abraham Maslow calls transcendence and defines as: "the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos."

But with the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, we should not let our guard down. In an increasingly hotter and interconnected world, the next global public health emergency may be just around the corner; we know it is a question of when not if.

That is why, we should learn from past mistakes. The cholera outbreak of 1865 demonstrates how measures that lack a public buy-in and trust can undermine efforts to curb the spread of a disease. We need to keep in mind these lessons as world leaders discuss a new pandemic accord that can help improve how pandemics are detected and responded to.

In a time of heightened mis- and disinformation, amplified by social media, reflecting on the facts and working with communities on pandemic preparedness and response will determine our success and failure.

In all this, the Hajj can be a beacon of hope. It can offer not just a religious and spiritual path but also a public health one. It stands as an example where science supports transcendence, spirituality and human solidarity.

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

The Doctrine of Obedience

Mushtaq Hurra



THE GREAT BENCHMARKS AND STANDARDS SET BY OUR VENERABLE ANCESTORS ARE BEACONS OF LIGHT FOR THE ENTIRE HUMANITY. But We have neglected and forgotten the precious tenets of our forefathers. Humanity can salvage and liberate itself from the clutches of mayhem and bedlam if it will imitate and replicate the life of our ancestors



This morning, I woke up to a joie de vivre of extraordinary magnitude. The pleasantly sacred breeze of the morning sent jolly vibes through my nerves. I found the aroma of sacrifice, obedience, value of uterine relations and heavenly devotion spread abundantly across the length and breadth of the environs. I could vividly hear the chirping birds singing mellifluous hymns of Tawheed (Oneness of God). I could behold swaying branches and foliage of flora prostrating before the Owner of the universe. The dulcet repetition of Takbeeri Tashreeq reverberated in the skies to proclaim the splendor of Allah SWT. "Alahu Akbar Allahu Akbar..."

I saw the lofty mountain peaks silently chanting the Zikr of Allah SWT. The fragrance of sacrifice scented my brain and heart with the spirit of divine oblation. Exemplary obedience, submission and subordination of Syedna Isma-eel made my blood effervescent; and the love for my parents reached its pinnacle. The gaiety, fervor, celebrations, exuberance and joys of Eid Ul Azha filled my

heart with festive aura and excitement. Reminisces of the famous sacrifice of father-son duo of Syedna Ibraheem (AS) and Syedna Isma-eel (AS) gave me goosebumps.

Prophet Ibraheem AS set a glorious example of divine devotion and loyalty when he (AS) ran a sharp edged knife on the throat of his beloved son - Syedna Isma-eel (AS). It was not an ordinary gesture of mactation but an unparalleled and unprecedented act of allegiance to Allah SWT. Does this mean that Syedna Isma-eel (AS) was not dear to His father - Syedna Ibraheem (AS)?

No, that couldn't be! We can imagine the love of a father for his progeny whom Allah blessed him with a son at the age of 90. Here, divine pleasure and alacrity is more important than anything else to Moomineen. The entire human history fails to produce such a similitude of absolute subordination, submission and subjugation to the will of Allah.

It was undoubtedly the meticulous attention and royal upbringing of Syedna Isma-eel (AS) by his father which

incorporated and inculcated great virtues and traits in his son. Contemporary societies are craving for the virtuous and honest progeny, but hardly bother to give ample time to their children. We must take good care of our children and the different domains of their health viz physical, emotional, moral and spiritual. We should educate our children in the light of great teachings and doctrines. The great benchmarks and standards set by our venerable ancestors are beacons of light for the entire humanity. But, alas! We have neglected and forgotten the precious tenets of our forefathers. Humanity can salvage and liberate itself from the clutches of mayhem and bedlam if it will imitate and replicate the life of our ancestors.

Syedna Isma-eel (AS) is the most perfect model for the human posterity till the day of resurrection. He (AS) proved an embodiment of obedience and patience in the entire course of history. Considering his father's wish, the wish of His Lord, Syedna Isma-eel (AS) went two steps ahead of his

father. Let the world teach its children the glaring doctrines adopted by Syedna Isma-eel (AS) to fulfill his father's dream, when it is complaining about the disobedient and rebellious attitude of children. The outstanding gesticulation of parental deference and constancy touched the climax of set standards when Syedna Isma-eel (AS) asked his father to cover his eyes with a strip of cloth while running the dagger on his throat.

We must enable our children to go through the luminous and glorified characters of Syedna Isma-eel (AS). Ironically, we take pride in making our children read medicine, literature, technology, astronomy, aeronautics and economics which is not bad at all, but we can't afford to forget the life accounts of our heroes from the past who had taken humanity out of crisis. Prophets descended to eradicate the malice of vices from human societies. None of the theories and ideologies of contemporary times can emancipate humanity from the cataclysm and catastrophe of moral corruption except the model of

prophets like Ibraheem (AS) and Mohammadi Arabi (May peace be upon him).

Absolute surrender to the will of God exalted and elevated the already great stature of Syedna Ibraheem (AS). The philosophy behind his historic sacrifice, is one of the guiding principles for entire humanity in general and Muslims in particular. Chaos and anarchy in contemporary societies is sure to end if the cherished ideals of Islam are adopted by one and all. Construction of old-age homes has sent shivers down the spine of every soulful and sensitive person, because old-age is indeed an inevitably dreaded era of our lives. So, our children must be there to take care. But, the children of the present era have begun to abandon their parents, and it is a dangerous trend. The growing menace of disobedience to parents by their children is an ugly blot on our moral fabric.

The author is a Teacher and Regular Columnist. He can be reached at mushtaqhurra143@gmail.com

How the Qur'an Can Become Your Best Friend and Life Companion

FATIMA MAHMOUD

The nature of this life is that it is filled with ups and downs, and we humans are social beings who need friendships to help us navigate this journey. Though we interact with so many people - at work, at university and even at social gatherings - how many of the people around us do we regard as friends, and how many of these friendships do we find fulfilling?

Experts say that meaningful relationships are built upon three core characteristics, and it is the presence of all three that determines a healthy friendship: someone who brings us joy (positivity), someone to depend on (consistency) and someone to confide in (vulnerability) [1]. The reality is that most of our relationships lack at least one of these and we are left with very few, if any true close friends. And even with our closest friends there will inevitably come a parting - either life growing a distance between us, a fallout that leaves a bitter taste, or death leaving us to nurse that wound alone.

But what if you were to make a friend who vows to stick by you through thick and thin, a friend who understands your heart when your tongue fails you, a friend who responds to you even before you call out. A friend who awaits you when you return late from work, who stays up with you when your worries drive away sleep, who watches the day-break alongside you as the world stirs. A friend that is your clarity in doubt, your light in darkness, your solace in heartbreak and your company in loneliness. A friend on your shelf, that belongs in your heart - the Qur'an.

WHAT MAKES THE QUR'AN A FRIEND?

The world we live in teaches us to nurture our physical needs - so when we read the Qur'an, our tongues recite it and our ears hear it, and then we close the book and move on to the next task. Our naivety deters us from expecting to find pleasure in an act Allah recommends for us so we do not think to search for it in our ibadah (worship). But if we were to tune out the world and listen, we would hear Allah say:

Is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down to you the Book that

is being recited to them? Surely in it there is mercy and advice for a people who believe. (Qur'an 29:51)

Allah SWT created us, and He alone knows us best. He knows our happiest moments and our darkest secrets, and He knows that the simple beings He created long to be heard and to be loved - He knows and He tells us that in all our affairs, this Qur'an is sufficient for us.

What is to our eyes a book on the shelf, is to our hearts a home and is from Allah, a gift He has bestowed upon His creation - a soul to accompany our souls:

And so We have sent to you a "soul" of Our command (Qur'an 42:52)

The Qur'an was revealed to pierce our hearts, an exercise for the soul, an escape from the harshness of this world and a window into the bliss that lies ahead of us as believers. Allah informs us that this Qur'an is the sole reason to rejoice. In it is true pleasure and happiness, and if we were to gather all that brings us a smile in this world, the Qur'an is far better for us than all that we can collate. And if that were not enough, scan its pages and count the verses that give glad tidings, an abode of gardens, palaces, and rivers from beyond our imagination and an eternity of peace and content. In the Qur'an is our joy, and in it is the promise of true everlasting happiness.

O humanity! Indeed, there has come to you a warning from your Lord, a cure for what is in the hearts, a guide, and a mercy for the believers. Say, "In Allah's grace and mercy let them rejoice. That is far better than whatever they amass." (Qur'an 10:57-58)

We find in the Qur'an the definition of consistency. The Qur'an was revealed at a deliberate pace, consistently throughout Prophethood as a reflection of its breadth - whether you reach out to it at the darkest hour of the night or the brightest time of day it is always near, its hand outstretched awaiting yours. When we are purposeful with the Qur'an, and we listen and reflect upon it with our hearts present it becomes a part of us, a companion that quite literally lives within us. A heart that houses the Qur'an will find in it the most dependable of friends.

"We have sent it" as such 'in stages' so We may reassure your heart with it. And We have revealed it at a deliberate pace (Qur'an 25:32)



It is human to want to feel loved, but to be loved requires us to be known. It is not easy to find the trust to confide in someone, to share our secrets and rawest emotions - our proudest achievements, our deepest wounds, our shame and our guilt, our aspirations and our fears. Often when we are at our most vulnerable, our reflex is to withdraw and shut out the world. But the Qur'an promises us a refuge - it was made for our hearts, and so it recognises the hearts' most silent calls. The Qur'an advises us, warns us and shapes us to be the best version of ourselves. Its verses inspire and strengthen us, and it is those verses that can hold us up when the weight of this world beats us down.

Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort (Qur'an 13:28)

The Qur'an is indeed a comfort, and in its comfort we find a friend - someone to bring us joy, someone to depend on and someone to confide in; the three characteristics of a fulfilling friendship exhibited in their best forms.

HOW DO I BECOME A FRIEND OF THE QUR'AN?

As with any friendship, building a friendship with the Qur'an requires you to be intentional, and to invest time and effort in your relationship. This Qur'an promises to be the best of friends, but that gift is granted only to those who are sincere in seeking its companionship - those who prioritise it, those who keep their tongues moist with it, those who spend the nights searching for its secrets and the days reflecting on its verses.

It is truly a mighty Book (Qur'an 41:41)

Azeez is a characteristic of Allah, and it can be translated as Mighty. An 'Azeez' is one who has no dependence on anyone, but an 'Azeez' is also one who honours those who honour Him.

The Qur'an has no need for you, and so if you desire a friendship with it, you must show the Qur'an how much you want it.

Purposefully plan your time with it and be present in its presence. Isolate yourself from the physical and the virtual distractions and read it slowly and consciously.

Fill your ears with it on the com-

mute to work, in the car and at home.

Commit yourself to a wurd (a daily amount) that is the nourishment to your soul, and you will slowly but surely find yourself filling an emptiness you did not know existed within you.

Pause at every verse, allow your heart to absorb its wisdom and take heed from its warnings.

Embark on the journey of memorising it and studying its tafseer (interpretation).

Introduce it to your loved ones, reflect on its verses together and share your love for it.

Recite it aloud in the quiet hours of the night and beautify your recitation knowing that when you are seemingly alone with it - you are in fact hosting a gathering, and the angels of Allah are in your company.

Make an effort to befriend it, and you will no longer recognise a life without it

Ultimately to have this strong connection with the Qur'an is a gift Allah SWT grants only those whom He loves, so pray to Him SWT and ask Him for this blessing:

Allahumma ij'al al-Qur'an al-atheema rabe'e'a qalbee wa noora sadree wa jalaa'a hammee wa thahaaba huznee

O Allah, make the Qur'an the spring of my heart, and the light of my chest, the banisher of my sadness, and the reliever of my distress (Ahmad 1/391)

HOW DOES THE QUR'AN BEFRIEND YOU?

Persevere in your journey to befriend the Qur'an and know that this friendship is worth all that is in this world and much more beyond. For your friendship with the Qur'an, unlike any other friend, is not bound by the impermanence of this life. One who befriends the Qur'an has made for themselves a friend in this world, and a friend in the next.

Nothing in this world is guaranteed but death, and as Muslims we know that there will come a day when we stand before Allah SWT and be judged. On that day when even a mother flees from her children, no relationship will hold value.

And no close friend will ask 'about' their friends (Qur'an 70:10)

That is the first day of the next life, our forever life, and that is the day we will be in more desperate need of a friendship than we have ever been.

Amidst the panic and the fear, there will be a group of people who will be comforted by a familiar voice. The Qur'an will recognise its friends on that day, and it will reach out to them, and just as it guided them in this world it will hold even tighter onto them and guide them through the darkness of Day of Judgement.

Anas bin Malik said, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: 'Allah has His own people among mankind.' They said: 'O Messenger of Allah, who are they?' He said: 'The people of the Qur'an, the people of Allah and those who are closest to Him.'" (Sunan ibn Majah 215)

The friends of the Qur'an will stand out from amongst the crowd, levels above the rest of humanity, crowned with the title they earned for themselves in this world: The people of Allah. Those are the sincere friends of the Qur'an who honoured it in this world and so by virtue they will be honoured by Al-Azeez.

When you befriend the Qur'an, it becomes your best friend in this world, and when this world ends for you, your best friend will be all that remains by your side. The Qur'an will be your companion in the grave, your intercessor when there is no one else to intercede for you, your stability on As-siraat (the crossing) and your guide to Jannah (paradise). This friendship you built with the Qur'an does not just leave you at the gates of Jannah, for the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says:

"The friend of the Qur'an will be told on the Day of Resurrection: Recite and ascend (in ranks) as you used to recite when you were in the world. Your rank will be at the last Ayah you recite." (Abu Dawud)

When the Qur'an becomes your company in seclusion, your light in darkness, your calm amidst the chaos, when you find yourself longing for it - that is when you can call yourself a friend of the Qur'an.

The friendship you foster with the Qur'an is the only relationship that is not separated by death. You will part this world and your soul will part your body, but if your soul has befriended the soul that is the Qur'an, then the Qur'an will remain your source of joy, your confidant, and your most faithful companion - it will remain for eternity, your best friend.

- Amaliyah

The Dutch king apologises for his country's role in slavery on 150th anniversary of abolition

Amsterdam, Jul 1 (AP) Dutch King Willem-Alexander apologised on Saturday for his country's role in slavery and asked for forgiveness in a historic speech greeted by cheers and whoops at an event to commemorate the anniversary of the abolition of slavery.

The king's speech followed Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's apology late last year for the country's role in the slave trade and slavery. It is part of a wider reckoning with colonial histories in the West that have been spurred in recent years by the Black Lives Matter movement.

In an emotional speech, Willem-Alexander referred back to that apology as he told a crowd of invited guests and onlookers: "Today I stand before you. Today, as your King and as a member of the government, I make this apology myself. And I feel the weight of the words in my heart and my soul."

The king said he has commissioned a study into the exact role of the royal House of Orange-Nassau in slavery in the Netherlands.

"But today, on this day of remembrance, I ask forgiveness

for the clear failure to act in the face of this crime against humanity," he added.

Willem-Alexander's voice appeared to break with emotion as he completed his speech before laying a wreath at the country's national slavery monument in an Amsterdam park.

Slavery was abolished in Suriname and the Dutch colonies in the Caribbean on July 1, 1863, but most of the enslaved labourers were forced to continue working on plantations for a further 10 years. Saturday's commemoration and speech mark the start of a year of events to mark the 150th anniversary of July 1, 1873.

Research published last month showed that the king's ancestors earned the modern-day equivalent of 545 million euros (USD 595 million) from slavery, including profits from shares that were effectively given to them as gifts.

When Rutte apologised in December, he stopped short of offering compensation to descendants of enslaved people.

Instead, the government is establishing a 200 million-euro (USD 217 million) fund for initiatives that tackle the legacy of

slavery in the Netherlands and its former colonies and to improve education about the issue.

That isn't enough for some in the Netherlands. Two groups, Black Manifesto and The Black Archives, organized a protest march before the king's speech Saturday under the banner "No healing without reparations."

"A lot of people including myself, my group, The Black Archives, and the Black Manifesto say that (an) apology is not enough. An apology should be tied to a form of repair and reparatory justice or reparations," said Black Archives director Mitchell Esajas.

Marchers wore colourful traditional clothing in a Surinamese celebration of the abolition of slavery. Enslaved people were banned from wearing shoes and colourful clothes, organisers said.

"Just as we remember our forefathers on this day, we also feel free, we can wear what we want, and we can show the rest of the world that we are free," said 72-year-old Regina Benesica-van Windt.

The Netherlands' often brutal colonial history has come under renewed and critical scrutiny

in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, a Black man, in the US city of Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

A groundbreaking 2021 exhibition at the national museum of art and history took an unflinching look at slavery in Dutch colonies. In the same year, a report described the Dutch involvement in slavery as a crime against humanity and linked it to what the report described as ongoing institutional racism in the Netherlands.

The Dutch first became involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the late 1500s and became a major trader in the mid-1600s. Eventually, the Dutch West India Company became the largest trans-Atlantic slave trader, according to Karwan Fatah-Black, an expert in Dutch colonial history and an assistant professor at Leiden University.

Authorities in the Netherlands aren't alone in saying sorry for historic abuses.

In 2018, Denmark apologized to Ghana, which it colonized from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century. King Philippe of Belgium has

expressed "deepest regrets" for abuses in Congo. In 1992, Pope John Paul II apologized for the church's role in slavery. Americans have had emotionally charged disputes over taking down statues of slaveholders in the South.

In April, King Charles III for the first time signalled support for research into the UK monarchy's ties to slavery after a document showed an ancestor with shares in a slave-trading company, a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said.

Charles and his eldest son, Prince William, have expressed their sorrow over slavery, but haven't acknowledged the crown's connections to the trade.

During a ceremony that marked Barbados becoming a republic two years ago, Charles referred to "the darkest days of our past and the appalling atrocity of slavery, which forever stains our history." English settlers used African slaves to turn the island into a wealthy sugar colony.

Willem-Alexander acknowledged that not everybody in the Netherlands supports apologies, but called for unity.

France arrests more than 1,300 people after fourth night of rioting over teen's killing by police

Paris, Jul 1 (AP) Rioting and looting raged in cities around France for a fourth night despite a huge police deployment and 1,311 arrests, as family and friends prepared Saturday to bury the 17-year-old whose killing by police unleashed the unrest and forced the French president to cancel an important trip abroad.

France's Interior Ministry announced the new figure for arrests around the country, where 45,000 police officers fanned out in a so-far unsuccessful bid to quell days of violence that was triggered after the teen's death on Tuesday.

Despite an appeal to parents by President Emmanuel Macron to keep their children at home, street clashes between young protesters and police raged on. About 2,500 fires were set and stores were ransacked, according to authorities.

The violence in France was taking a toll on Macron's international commitments. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's office said that Macron phoned on Saturday to request a postponement of what would have been the first state visit by a French president to Germany in 23 years.

The trip, supposed to officially start on Monday, would have seen Macron travel to Berlin and two other German cities.

Macron's office said he spoke with Steinmeier and, "given the internal security situation, the president (Macron) said he wishes to stay in France over the coming days."

Given the importance of the French-German relationship on the European political scene, the scrapping of the official trip was a clear sign of the gravity of France's unrest. This is the second time in months that French unrest hurt Macron diplomatically. King Charles III canceled his first foreign visit as U.K. monarch, initially planned for France, because of protests over Macron's pension reform plans.

Rituals to bid farewell to the teen, identified only as Nahel, who was killed in the Paris suburb of Nanterre, began on Saturday with a viewing of the open coffin by family and friends.

Later, at the entrance to a cemetery on a quiet hill in Nanterre with central Paris in the distance, dozens of people from all walks of life stood along the road, waiting for the teen's body to arrive.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Dynamic Security

arrangements that include domination of the mountains, sanitisation of the yatra route and round-the-clock domination of the area using the latest night vision devices.

The army's Special Forces are keeping a watch over the yatra route from vantage locations, he said. "We have also deployed snipers, anti-drone systems, bomb disposal and dog squads to ensure safe and secure Yatra," the commander said.

The army has augmented a number of yatri camps with adequate tentage facilities to provide additional habitat during Brigadier Rajput said.

"We have also made available helipads at multiple locations for medical emergencies and to cater to other airlift requirements for the yatra," he added.

A whole-of-the-nation approach has been followed to synergise efforts, and the army has offered its expertise in mountain rescue to civil agencies and trained Mountain Rescue and Avalanche Rescue teams of various agencies, he said.

"In addition, we have conducted joint exercises and mock drills to ensure seamless and successful rescue operations, if and when required," the army officer said.

He said based on the experiences of the cloudburst during the yatra last year, rescue teams and earth-movers are being placed at the Holy Cave and multiple locations enroute for any emergencies.

Modern equipment are also available for effective response and meet any contingencies, he added.

"We assure you that till the time last yatri is back from his pious visit to Shri Amarnath, we, the Indian Army, is here to ensure your security, safety and well being always and every time, Brigadier Rajput said.

Amid Tight

"Even though it is raining," said a yatri from Mumbai, "Bhole Baba has gifted us with enthusiasm. There is tremendous enthusiasm all around, notwithstanding the bad weather."

"I came last year also," added a pilgrim from Amritsar. "The arrangements are very good, they are managing everything, including cards, properly. The weather should remain good."

The yatra began from the twin routes of Baltal and Pahalgam. Baltal is in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district and Pahalgam in Anantnag district in south.

At the Baltal base camp too, hundreds of pilgrims lined up at the access control gate since early morning where the first batch of around 6,000 pilgrims was flagged off by Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Shyambar and other senior officers.

Raman Worlikar, a pilgrim from Mumbai, said he has been performing the yatra for the past many years now. "We wait for Baba's glimpse for a year. We are enthusiastic for the yatra. We pray that the yatra remains incident-free."

The pilgrims — men, including sadhus, women, old, young and children — wore their faith on the sleeves as they began the walk to the naturally formed ice-lingam at the cave shrine.

Asked whether they would make any special prayers, the yatri said they will pray that there is prosperity and good health all around "In J-K and across the country."

"We will also pray there is no incident like the last year's flash floods and everyone performs the yatra smoothly," said another pilgrim from Mumbai.

A group of yatri from Punjab said they want to thank Baba for everything he has bestowed them with. "I have been coming here continuously since 2009, except for the coronavirus period. This yatra goes on smoothly. Everyone leaves happy from here. Baba listens to everyone. Those who come once, come again," said one of them.

Most of the pilgrims were happy with the arrangements made by the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) and the J&K administration.

However, some alleged the process to procure registration cards at the base camp were not up to the mark.

The yatra also presents a snapshot of the syncretic culture of Jammu and Kashmir with the local Muslims playing vital role at all points of the pilgrimage "like lifeline".

Deputy Commissioner Shyambar said the yatra would not be possible without the support of the local people. They provide most of the services including pony rides or 'palkies' rides.

The locals made it to the base camp early in the morning to provide gear like trekking poles made of wood, caps, raincoats etc, to the pilgrims. Many locals have also set up stalls inside the base camp, selling a wide variety of merchandise for the pilgrims.

The yatra this year is the longest-ever, stretching 62 days. It will culminate on August 31 on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, meanwhile, chaired a review meeting on control room operations set up at Raj Bhawan here for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra.

He reviewed the queue management, deployment of

security personnel, women constables, operation of ladders and security forces at lower Holy Cave, installation of railings and heli services with the officers of the control room and appreciated the exemplary work done by the team, an official spokesman said.

The Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board's (SASB) control room is working 24x7 and coordinating with various stakeholders on the ground to ensure hassle-free pilgrimage, he said.

"A big push has been made to improve the facilities for pilgrims and to provide best of comfort to make the spiritual journey a pleasurable experience," the Lt Governor said.

In Jammu, officials said security arrangements this year are more elaborate than the previous years. Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jammu-Samba-Kathua range, Shakti Pathak warned of legal action against those involved in duping Amarnath pilgrims by providing fake registration permits.

Over 430 Amarnath pilgrims were found in possession of fake registration permits in Jammu, Kathua and Samba district on Friday.

"Those involved in cheating the pilgrims (by selling fake registration slips) are putting them to unnecessary trouble and grave risk. All such pilgrims were facilitated but an investigation is on to identify the wrong-doers. They will face action," the officer told reporters during his visit to Lakhnupur corridor, the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir to review yatra arrangements.

"All the requirements of the pilgrims like boarding and lodging have been taken care of. The security is better than before," he said, adding that even the community kitchens were set up inside the four walls for the safety of the pilgrims.

The DIG said the security along the borders and the highway have been tightened and all the concerned security agencies are keeping a close watch.

Shah Conveys

journey is our priority. Best wishes to all the devotees on their journey. Jai Baba Barfani," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

On Friday morning, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha flagged off the first batch of pilgrims for the annual pilgrimage from the Bhagwati Nagar camp in Jammu. This batch set out from their base camp in Baltal in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Saturday morning for the cave shrine.

The home minister has monitored all arrangements for the annual pilgrimage.

Last month, he reviewed security arrangements with all stakeholders for the pilgrimage and directed necessary action for it. Following Shah's directive, Union Home Secretary Ajay Balla also undertook a detailed review of the security arrangements.

Over three lakh pilgrims have so far registered themselves for the yatra. The pilgrims have the choice of reaching the shrine either through the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in the Anantnag district or the 14-km shorter but steep Baltal route.

Bold Voice Of

Prakash did his schooling from Tyndale Biscoe School where his father Neelkandh Kandu was a headmaster.

In 1953, he enrolled in Srinagar's SP College. However, he soon came into limelight after becoming president of Kashmir Students Union that was formed shortly after the arrest of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

He was first arrested in 1968 and booked under Preventive and Detention act section (13A) of Indian Parliament for launching a mass agitation against the government for low wages. Since 1968, Prakash has spent over eight years in jail within and outside Jammu and Kashmir.

Prakash, who was a strong proponent of J&K's semi-autonomous status, revoked by the government in August 2019, challenged his detention in the Supreme Court. However, his petition was dismissed and he was later set free on humanitarian grounds.

An advocate of civil liberties, Prakash has conducted 1300 strikes during his trade unionist days. He has also been vocal on sensitive issues like migration of KPs in 1990 and abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Prakash had stayed behind in the Valley after breakout of insurgency in early 90's advocating civil liberties of the Kashmiri people.

A fire brand speaker Sampat Prakash was popular in Kashmir cutting across religious and political divisions.

His candid commentaries on various critical issues on Social Media were a major draw.

He was also known for making bold speeches about "Khuftan Fakirs" and other infamous personalities in the turbulent history of Kashmir.

Prakash will be cremated at Karannagar cremation ground on Sunday at 3 PM, his son Lenin Kandu, who was on his way to Srinagar from Jammu, said.

Meanwhile, people from all walks of life in Jammu and

Kashmir have mourned the death of Prakash.

Quoting party president, a PDP spokesperson wrote on twitter: "Very sorry to hear about the sudden demise of veteran trade leader & an advocate of civil liberties Sampat Prakash ji. As a child, I remember him being a frequent visitor at KD Sethi sahab's house in Jammu. Deepest condolences to his family."

National Conference (NC) president Dr Farooq and his son Omar also condoled the demise of Prakash.

"The JKNC President, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and VP, Omar Abdullah, are deeply saddened to learn about the death of Sampath Prakash. He was a great trade union leader, and his absence will be deeply felt. The thoughts and prayers of the leaders are with the family of the deceased," NC posted on its Twitter handle.

CPI (M) leader Mohamad Yousuf Tarigami has also expressed grief and shock over the sudden demise of the prominent trade union leader.

"Late Sampath Prakash alongwith Ab Majeed Khan and other employee leaders organized the 1967 employees general strike which paralyzed the administration. Response to this strike was massive. The then government resorted to crackdown on striking employee and arrested hundreds of them including Sampath Prakash. He fought valiantly for the downtrodden and working class and remained part of the working class till his breath," Tarigami said in a statement.

"The CPI(M) leader visited the deceased leader at his Harwan residence on 9th June to enquire about the health condition of the deceased's wife who was not feeling well and had a lot of interaction. The deceased leader remained concerned about the welfare of the people of Jammu & Kashmir," he added.

The CPI (M) leader expressed solidarity with the bereaved family.

Chairman Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) Ghulam Nabi Azad also expressed his heartfelt condolences on the demise of veteran Trade Union leader.

"I am deeply pained and shocked to learn about the demise of Sampat Prakash ji, whom I knew from my college days," Azad said.

He said that the great work of Sampat Prakash for the downtrodden will always remain a true inspiration for all. "Prakash Ji has always remained on the frontline to raise the issues of common concern. He was one man army and never uttered a single word which would sound communal in tone or would hurt any community," Azad said. "Prakash Ji was a noble soul who upheld the spirit and values of humanity, secularism, and brotherhood in J&K. His demise is an irreparable loss which has created a vacuum," Azad said.

Azad has expressed solidarity with the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul.

India Has Changed

religious conversions were on rise in the state.

The public meeting at the Narhardev High School ground was held to highlight the achievements of the Modi government at the Centre in the last nine years.

Referring to India's response after terrorist attacks in Uri (2016) and Pulwama (2019), Singh said India has emerged as a powerful country under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and it is not weak anymore.

"Some terrorists from Pakistan intruded into India and attacked our jawans leaving many of them martyred. I was home minister then. The Prime Minister held a meeting in Delhi and made a decision within 10 minutes. Our army jawans successfully neutralized terrorists on Pakistan's land," he said.

"I want to tell my neighbour that do not try to mess with India and do not try to provoke us. We will not only kill from this side, if required we can enter and kill on that side (across the border) too. Now India has changed," Singh added.

"Chhattisgarh has been struggling with the menace of Left-Wing Extremism for a long time. Due to effective action under the leadership of PM Modi in nine years, its influence declined. Left-Wing Extremism has now been restricted to only 10-12 districts. Some of these districts are in Chhattisgarh. I can claim the LWE would have been wiped out of the country had the Congress government fully cooperated," Singh said.

Further targeting the Bhupesh Baghel government, the Defence Minister alleged that incidents of religious conversion were on rise in Chhattisgarh, particularly in tribal-dominated Bastar region, and said it was not acceptable.

The Congress government should take measures to stop forced religious conversions, he said, adding that the Centre will extend support to the state in the matter if necessary.

Highlighting the Modi government's pro-tribals measures, he said it created a separate budget of 90,000 crore for the welfare of tribals and declared November 15 as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

Talking further about tribal welfare in a state where elections are due by year-end, the senior BJP leader said, "The tribal society had played an active role in driving out Britishers from the country. If we talk about the role of tribal communities in building the country, some people feel strange. It means the country was not told about the contribution of the tribal community and even if it was, very little was told about them. After independence, those who ruled the country for many years gave priority to themselves and their politics. Congress forgot the tribal community and neglected them."

Now, houses, toilets and roads are being constructed in tribal-dominated areas, electricity lines are being put up and free health facilities and schools are being provided, Singh added.

PM Modi has the same commitment to the welfare of Dalits, tribals and backward classes as former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he said.

Singh also slammed the Baghel government over corruption, claiming, "In five years of Congress rule, scams took place in multiple sectors." He mentioned the 'Gauthan' land scam, ration scam, liquor scam and coal scam in the state, adding that the last one was the Congress's favourite as there was a coal scam when the party was in power at the Centre too.

"Wherever they go, they commit coal scam," he said.

On the elevation of TS Singh Deo as Chhattisgarh deputy Chief Minister, Singh said, "They have appointed a deputy Chief Minister for three months. Baghel ji, you will not be able to save your government by distributing lollipops. The people have decided to vote out the Congress."

While the Congress-led UPA rule was ridden by scams, no one can level a single allegation of corruption against the Modi government, he said.

"We do not tolerate corruption. If a corruption charge is leveled against any of our ministers, his or her place will be in jail," the Union Minister added.

"We fulfilled our promises to scrap Article 370 operating in Jammu and Kashmir and build Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. No other place of worship in the world will be as magnificent as the Ram Mandir being constructed in Ayodhya. People can visit it after January 24 next year," he said.

Singh also hailed Padma Shri recipient Ajay Mandavi, known for teaching wood calligraphy to jail inmates including those arrested in Maoist-related cases in Kanker and encouraging them to return to the mainstream.

Before the rally, Singh visited Mandavi at his home in Kanker as a part of the BJP's Mahajansampark Abhiyan (public outreach campaign).

Switch To Prepaid

your previous bills and port your electricity connection from postpaid mode to prepaid service immediately by visiting <http://smrtps.jkppd.net>, KPDCCL said in a fresh notification.

A senior KPDCCL official told Kashmir Observer that the energy shortage has improved to some extent in J&K and the department is trying to provide adequate power supply to the consumers.

He said the power pilferage and non-payment of power bills by consumers has always been the major cause of power outages in the valley.

"The department is engaged to distribute power supply to all the districts but we cannot sit on electricity when dues are pending from our side and this happens when consumers do not pay monthly bills on time," he added.

He was however quick to add that power supply will be much better in the coming days provided the consumers use electricity in a judicious manner and desist from resorting to power thefts.

On being asked whether the department has set any deadline for consumers to switch from postpaid to prepaid mode, he said July 1 was the last date; however the consumers might face inconvenience in case they fail to adhere to the government order after July 1, 2023.

J&K Has Record

June 2023 stood at 1,61,497 crore, registering a 12 per cent year-on-year rise. It is for the fourth time since the inception of GST in 2017 that the monthly gross GST collection has crossed Rs. 1.60 lakh crore mark.

The spokesperson said that Commissioner State Taxes J&K, Dr. Rashmi Singh, applauded the performance of State Tax Officers for their unrelenting efforts in ensuring consistent growth in GST revenue month-on-month.

Rashmi said that this performance demonstrates the dedication and hard work of the State Taxes Officer in Jammu and Kashmir.

She added that this impressive growth coincides with the sixth anniversary of the implementation of GST in J&K.

The State Taxes Department is celebrating GST Week from 01 July to 07 July as part of its initiative to raise awareness of GST among all stakeholders concerned.

Meeting of Islamic Leaders Called After Qur'an Burning In Sweden

Agencies

JEDDAH: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has called an emergency meeting of its executive committee in Jeddah next week to discuss the consequences of the burning of a copy of the Qur'an in Sweden this week.

The meeting will "discuss the measures to be taken against this heinous act and adopt a collective position on the necessary course of action," a spokesman said.

There has been widespread outrage and condemnation in the Muslim and Arab world since Salwan Momika, 37, a refugee from Iraq, desecrated the Qur'an and set fire to its pages in front of the Stockholm's

The anger continued on Friday. Thousands of supporters of populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr held a protest in front of the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad to demand an end to diplomatic ties.

Protesters carried Iraqi flags and portraits of Al-Sadr and his father, also a prominent cleric, and chanted "Yes, yes to the Qur'an, Moqtada, Moqtada."

The cleric had called for "mass angry protests against the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad" to demand the expulsion of the Swedish ambassador and the cutting of ties with Sweden.

Meanwhile, the man behind the row has threatened to do it again. "Within 10 days I will burn the Iraqi flag and the



largest mosque on Wednesday.

Countries throughout the Middle East and beyond denounced the burning, some recalled their ambassadors, and foreign ministries summoned the Swedish ambassadors to their countries to hear official protests.

Qur'an in front of Iraq's Embassy in Stockholm," he said.

Momika said he knew his action would provoke reactions and that he had received "thousands of death threats."

He denied that his actions constituted a "hate crime" or "agitation toward any group."

308 Indian Prisoners In Pakistani Jails, 417 Pakistanis In Indian Jails

Press Trust Of India

Islamabad: Pakistan on Saturday handed over a list of 308 Indian prisoners, including 42 civil and 266 fishermen, lodged in its jails to the High Commission of India here as part of a bilateral agreement.

The step was taken in consistency with the provisions of the 2008 Agreement on Consular Access between the two countries, the Foreign Office (FO) said in a statement.

The FO said that "the Government of Pakistan today handed over a list of 308 Indian prisoners in Pakistan (42 civilian prisoners and 266 fishermen) to the High Commission of India in Islamabad." It further said that the Government of India handed over the list of Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails to the Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi.

According to the list, there are a total of 417 Pakistanis in Indian jails, 343 of whom are civilian prisoners and 74 fishermen.

Islamabad urged New Delhi to release and repatriate all those Pakistani civilian prisoners and fishermen who have



completed their respective sentences, and their national status stands confirmed.

Pakistan and India regularly arrest fishermen for violating the maritime boundary, which is poorly marked at some points. India also requested Pakistan to ensure the safety, security and welfare of all Indians and those believed to be Indian civilian prisoners and fishermen, pending their release and repatriation, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement in New Delhi.

It said India remains committed to addressing, on priority, all humanitarian matters, including those pertaining to prisoners and fishermen in each other's country.



Rioters scamper away during clashes with police in the center of Lyon, central France, on June 30, 2023. (AP)

France's Macron Halts Trip Over Riots, As Family Buries Teenager

Agencies

PARIS: French police arrested more than 1,300 people during a fourth night of rioting ahead of the funeral of teenager Nahel M, whose shooting by police sparked the unrest that on Saturday prompted President Emmanuel Macron to postpone a trip to Germany.

Macron's government deployed 45,000 police officers as well as armored vehicles overnight to tackle the worst crisis to face his leadership since the "Yellow Vest" protests which brought much of France to a standstill in late 2018.

The French president postponed a state visit to Germany that was due to begin on Sunday due to the ongoing unrest.

France's interior ministry said on Twitter that 1,311 people had been arrested overnight, compared with 875 the previous night, although it added the violence was "lower in intensity."

Nahel, a 17-year-old of Algerian and Moroccan descent, was shot by a police officer during a traffic stop on Tues-

day in the Paris suburb of Nanterre, where buses were halted and the area quiet on a damp Saturday morning after more overnight rioting.

Several hundred people lined up to enter Nanterre's grand mosque, which was guarded by volunteers in yellow vests, while a few dozen

1,311 people had been arrested overnight, compared with 875 the previous night, although it added the violence was "lower in intensity"

bystanders watched from across the street.

Some of the mourners, their arms crossed, said "God is Greatest" in Arabic, as they spanned the boulevard in prayer.

Salsabil, a young woman of Arab descent, told Reuters that she had come to express support for Nahel's family.

"I think it's important we all stand together," she said.

Marie, 60, said she had lived in Nanterre for 50 years and there had always been problems with the police.

"This absolutely needs to stop. The government is com-

pletely disconnected from our reality," she said.

The shooting of the teenager, caught on video, has reignited longstanding complaints by poor and racially mixed urban communities of police violence and racism. Macron had denied there is systemic racism in French

law enforcement agencies.

"If you have the wrong skin color, the police are much more dangerous to you," said a young man, who declined to be named, adding that he was a friend of Nahel's. Looters have ransacked dozens of shops and torched 2,000 vehicles since the start of the riots, which have spread to cities such as Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Strasbourg and Lille.

More than 200 police officers have been injured, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said, adding that the average age of those arrested was 17.

25 Dead In Sleep As Bus Catches Fire On Maharashtra Expressway

'Came Out By Breaking Windows: Bus Crash Survivors'

Agencies

Nagpur: Some of the survivors of the ill-fated bus that caught fire and led to the death of 25 passengers in Maharashtra's Buldhana district on Saturday, said they managed to come out of the burning vehicle by breaking its window.

The private sleeper coach bus, which was travelling from Nagpur to Pune, met with an accident at Pimpalkhuta village near Sinkhedraja on the Samruddhi Expressway as it rumbled into a road divider around 1.30 am on Saturday. Of the 33 passengers travelling on the bus, 25 were charred to death, police said.

After hitting the divider, the bus overturned and fell on its right side with the entry/exit

door facing the sky, they said.

"A tyre of the bus burst and the vehicle caught fire immediately. The blaze spread in no time," one of the survivors said.

"The passenger sitting next to me and I managed to escape by breaking the rear window," he said.

The survivor said that after the accident, teams of police and fire brigade reached the site quickly. Another survivor, Ayush Ghatge, said it was a miracle that he survived the horrific accident.

He said he boarded the bus at Butibori, an industrial suburb of Nagpur.

"I was on the last seat and sleeping when the accident took place. I woke up when a few people fell on me following the accident. I immediately stood up and started looking

for a window to come out. I started breaking a window and three of us came out with each other's help," Ghatge said.

Relatives of Avani Pohnekar, who died in the accident, told a TV channel that she was an IT engineer on way to Pune to explore job opportunities.

"She was going to Pune from Wardha. We later found out that Avani was among the 14 passengers who had boarded this bus from Wardha," they said.

A local resident said four to five passengers managed to escape by breaking one window of the bus.

"But not everyone could do it," he said.

The people who could come out of the bus later told us that they sought help from other vehicles on the highway, but nobody stopped, he added.

'Israel Concerned By Hezbollah's Growing Air Defense Power'

Agencies

Jerusalem: The Israeli military has expressed concerns about the growing air defense capabilities of Lebanon's resistance movement Hezbollah in countering the regime's aerial aggression on Lebanese soil.

The Hebrew-language Maariv daily newspaper reported on Friday that the Israeli military was following with concern "a major change in the concept of air defense by Hezbollah in Lebanon."

The paper said what worried the regime was Hezbollah's move to have doubled the amount of air defense systems in its possession over the past five years "in an attempt to restrict the freedom of action of the Israeli air force in Lebanon."

"The improvement of these capabilities of Hezbollah continues persistently, and this is manifested, according to Israeli estimates, in the availability of these systems for rapid use and pursuant to Nasrallah's decision," the Hebrew-language daily said, referring to Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

The Israeli military is "following the alarming trend, which is reflected both in the quantities and in the improvement of the capacity and in the change of the strategy."

The newspaper also said the Israeli security service believes an Israeli drone attack in August 2019 on a facility at the heart of the southern sub-

urbs of Beirut, the stronghold of Hezbollah, was a turning point in Hezbollah's strategy of starting to shoot down Israeli drones, as promised by Nasrallah at the time.

"In recent years, Israel has damaged these capabilities many times and caused heavy damage, but the trend of improvement in the scope and quality of the weapons systems shows the stubbornness and persistence of ... Hezbollah in building its military capabilities."

Last Monday, fighters from the Lebanese resistance movement intercepted and shot down an Israeli drone that was hovering over the southern part of Lebanon in violation of the Arab country's sovereignty.

In September 2021, Hezbollah said it had separately intercepted and struck an Israeli unmanned aerial vehicle as it crossed into Lebanon's airspace over Maryamin Valley on the outskirts of the southern town of Yater.

Lebanon's government, Hezbollah, and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) have repeatedly condemned Israel's overflights, saying they are in clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and the Arab country's sovereignty.

Marking the 40th anniversary of the foundation of Hezbollah last year, Nasrallah warned that the resistance movement's precision missiles can hit any Israeli target at sea or on land.

PhonePe Caught In The Middle Amid Congress vs BJP In Madhya Pradesh

Agencies

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra on Friday slammed the Congress party for raising questions to PhonePe and said that the app was not made for the Congress.

"It is like 'ek to chori upar se seenajori' (did wrong, still blaming others for it). Anyway, PhonePe is not made for Congress, Congressmen use black money," Mishra told reporters here.

Madhya Pradesh Congress raised a series of questions against PhonePe over its Twitter handle and wrote, "Dear Phone Pe Team, which poster or banner are you talking about, please mention / clarify and make it public. Is PhonePe also responsible for the use of money transferred under it? Will you monitor the use/misuse of PhonePe in the future and ensure that money transferred through your app is never used for bribery or corruption?"

The state congress also wrote, "Will you certify that there is no corruption in Madhya Pradesh, and if so, what is its rate? Bribe is not accepted in Madhya Pradesh through your app. Has any of your office



bearers not had any dialogue with any BJP leader / government in the last seven days?"

"Please come with clarity and transparency otherwise this tweet of yours will be counted as politically motivated and aimed at benefiting a particular party and legal action will be taken against you," the party further wrote on twitter.

Notably, the tweet of MP Congress came in response to the PhonePe's earlier tweet in which they (PhonePe) had objected to the "unauthorised usage" of its brand logo by MP Congress and noted that it may take legal actions against them (Congress).

Phonepe wrote on its Twitter handle, "PhonePe objects to the unauthorised usage of its brand logo, by any third party, be it political or non-political. We are not associated with any political campaign or party."

NEWS MAKERS

Twitter Now Needs Users To Sign In To View Tweets

San Francisco: Twitter will now require users to have an account on the social media platform to view tweets, a move that owner Elon Musk on Friday called a "temporary emergency measure".

Users who try to view content on the platform will be asked to sign up for an account or log into an existing account to see their favorite tweets.

"We were getting data pillaged so much that it was degrading service for normal users!" Musk said in a tweet.

Musk has previously expressed displeasure at artificial intelligence firms like OpenAI and others using Twit-

ter's data to train their large language models.

The company has initiated a range of measures to bring back advertisers who left the platform under Musk's ownership and to increase subscription revenue by making verification check marks a part of the Twitter Blue program.

Earlier in the month, Twitter had announced plans to focus on video, creator and commerce partnerships to revitalize the social media company's business beyond digital advertising.

Twitter has also begun charging users to access its application programming interface (API), used by third-party apps and researchers.

SC protects Teesta Setalvad from arrest, stays Gujarat HC order for a week

The Supreme Court late Saturday night protected social activist Teesta Setalvad from arrest and stayed for a week the Gujarat High Court order rejecting her plea for regular bail and asking her to surrender immediately in a case of alleged fabrication of evidence to frame innocent people in 2002 post-Godhra riot cases.

In a special late-night hearing, a bench of Justices B.R. Gavai, A.S. Bopanna and Dipankar Datta questioned the denial of time to Setalvad to appeal against the HC order, saying even an ordinary criminal is entitled to some form of interim relief.



The three-judge bench heard the matter in a special sitting after a two-judge vacation bench differed on granting interim protection from arrest to Setalvad.

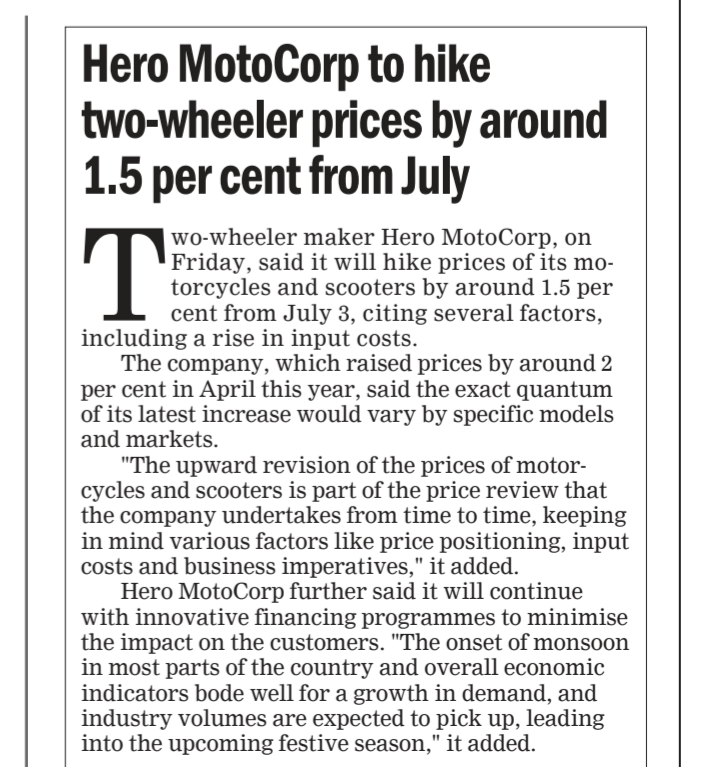
"After having heard this Special Leave Petition for some time, we are unable to agree while deciding the prayer for interim relief. Therefore, it will be appro-

priate if, under the orders of the Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India, this petition is placed before the appropriate larger Bench.

"The Registrar (Judicial) is directed to place this order immediately before the Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India," the two-judge bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and Prashant Kumar Mishra said earlier in the evening.

Setalvad approached the apex court for relief soon after the Gujarat High Court rejected her regular bail plea.

Justice Nizraj Desai directed her to surrender immediately as she is out of jail after having secured interim bail from the apex court in September last year.



Pakistan To Send Security Delegation To India For Inspecting WC Venues

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: Pakistan is set to send a security delegation to India for inspecting the venues before giving clearance for the national team's travel to the neighbouring country for this year's ICC ODI World Cup. An official source in the Inter-Provincial Coordination (Sports) Ministry said that the government, including the foreign and interior ministry would decide when to send the security delegation to India once the new chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board was elected after the Eid holidays.

"The security delegation will go with representation from

He said if the delegation feels it would be better for Pakistan to play at some other venue instead of a designated one, it will mention that in its report.

"The PCB will share the report with the ICC and BCCI if the delegation has any concerns," he added.

A source in the PCB confirmed that when last time Pakistan went to India for the T20 World Cup, the government had sent a joint delegation to inspect venues.

"It was on the recommendation of the delegation that Pakistan's match at Dharamsala against India was moved to Kolkata." The source maintained that Pakistan's final confirmation of participation in the



the PCB to inspect the venues where Pakistan will play and also the security and other arrangements made for them in the World Cup," he said.

He said the delegation would visit Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Ahmedabad, the venue for the marquee India-Pakistan match on October 15. "Before any tour to India it is standard practice for the cricket board to seek permission from the government which normally sends a delegation to India," the official said.

"The delegation will interact with the officials there and discuss and inspect with them the security and other arrangements for our players, officials, fans and media, who will go for the tournament," he said.

World Cup would only be announced when the government gives clearance to the PCB.

"This is not unusual and it is standard procedure for all tours to India. Even in other sports the respective national federations have to get clearance from the government to send their teams to India for any competition."

Pakistan Hockey Federation is awaiting clearance to send its team for the Asian Champions Trophy in Chennai in August, while recently the national football team played in the SAFF Championship in Bengaluru only after getting last minute NOC from the government bodies. The ODI World Cup will be played across 10 Indian cities from October 5 to November 19.

Ashes: England Chase 371



Agencies

LONDON: Australia were all out for 279 as England fought back on an attritional fourth day of relentless short-pitched bowling in the second test at Lord's on Saturday.

England took eight wickets for 149 to leave themselves a victory target of 371 to square the series. If achieved, it would be the highest successful fourth innings run chase ever in a Lord's test, beating the 342 West Indies hunted down to beat England in 1984.

Australia began the day in command on 130-2 having bowled England out on Friday for 325 for a lead of nearly 100. Usman Khawaja and

Steve Smith looked set as they moved the lead towards 300 in the morning session but they were out for 77 and 34 respectively, both playing rash shots.

Travis Head was out for seven fending off a well-directed short ball by Broad to leave Australia on 222-5 at lunch. Australia's scoring rate dried up to a trickle in the afternoon as England's 'Bazball' tactics turned into snooze ball as they fired down bouncer after bouncer to a leg side field.

One by one, Australia's batsmen lost patience with wickets falling regularly, Broad ending with four and Ollie Robinson taking two for seven runs from a nine-over spell. Australia's innings ended in farcical fashion with injured

spinner Nathan Lyon coming out to bat despite being unable to run after injuring his calf on Thursday.

A courageous Lyon managed to hop one single after Mitchell Stark's attempted six was miraculously flicked back from the boundary rope by substitute fielder Rehan Ahmed. With every England fielder on the boundary, knowing Australia's only hope of adding runs was fours or sixes, Stark smashed one six off Josh Tongue and a one-legged Lyon got a huge cheer from the Australian fans as he swatted a boundary.

Lyon was eventually out as he top-edged Broad to Ben Stokes at square leg to end a short but remarkable cameo.

BCCI Announces Dream11 As New Lead Sponsor For Indian Team

Agencies

NEW DELHI: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday announced signing a deal with Dream11 as the lead sponsor for Team India. Dream11 replaces Byju's whose contract

ended in March this year, and has signed the deal with BCCI for a period of 3 years.

Dream11 will be seen on Indian Team jerseys starting from the Test series against the West Indies, the team's first assignment in the ICC World Test Championship

2023-25 cycle. A total of eight matches will be played in the series over a month. India will kick off the series with a two-match Test series, the first of which will be played from July 12 to 16 at the Windsor Park Sports Stadium, Dominica. (ANI)

ODI WC To Be Held Without West Indies For First Time

Press Trust of India

HARARE: The West Indies will not be part of the upcoming ODI World Cup for the first time in the history of the tournament after being eliminated from the Qualifiers - a result that plunged country's cricket to an unimaginable low, on Saturday. Coming into the do-or-die Super Six contest, West Indies, packed with some bona-fide T20 superstars, suffered an embarrassing seven-wicket defeat against Scotland after managing a modest 181 in 43.5 overs.

It was an impressive show by the Scots, especially by all-rounder Brandon McMullen, who first took three wickets, and then scored a patient 69

and that certainly wasn't the West Indies.

With two more matches left, even if West Indies win, they can reach up to four points while Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe already have six points in their three games. Scotland with this win are on four points and would reckon that an upset can help them sneak into the tournament-proper.

It appears to be the final nail in the coffin for a cricket team that has been on a terminal decline for the past two decades.

While they won two T20 World Cup titles in 2012 and 2016, the performance in two traditional formats -- Tests and ODIs have spiralled southwards.

Ironically, West Indies were forced to play the qualifier be-



off 106 balls to steer his side to a famous victory. Such was the West Indies' plight that the top score was a painstaking 45 off 79 balls by Jason Holder.

Scotland chased down the target in just 43.3 overs, ensuring that West Indies won't compete in the ODI World Cup for the first time since the inception of the tournament in 1975. The World Cup is set begin in India on October 5 across 10 venues. This was also Scotland's first victory over the West Indies.

Clive Lloyd's team had won the first two editions in 1975 and 1979 and played the 1983 final, where it was beaten by India.

Matthew Cross (74 not out off 107 balls) anchored the chase perfectly and it always seemed one team would win

for the 2019 World Cup also but eventually managed to finish in top two along with Afghanistan to save themselves from embarrassment.

But a team that had Nicholas Pooran, a Rs 16 crore IPL recruit, Jason Holder, Kyle Mayers, Alzarri Joseph, Romario Shepherd, Akeal Hossain, all who were part of this edition's IPL, in its ranks, this is certainly the lowest ebb.

Perhaps the performance is symptomatic of times which is very different from the 1970s when some of the world class cricketers from Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Antigua, Trinidad & Tobago came together and were the flag-bearers of 'Black Caribbean Community' which had been under oppression for the longest time.

Quick eats for busy people



Bun Maska
& Chai

Chicken Crispy

Burger



JK BANK LAWNS, NEAR GHAT 6, BOULEVARD-SRINAGAR