

## Jobseekers Beware: Work-from-Home Job Scams On Rise In Kashmir

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: In the dimly lit room of her modest home, Sana (name changed) sat hunched over her laptop, desperately seeking a source of income. The glow of the screen illuminated the fatigue in her eyes, a reflection of months spent fruitlessly job hunting. Amid the sea of rejection emails, an enticing Facebook post promising a lucrative work-from-home opportunity caught her



attention. Excitement and hope filled her as she read about a seemingly straightforward data

entry job. The promise of payment based on hours worked felt like a lifeline. The email instructed her to provide personal details—bank information, Aadhar, and PAN for registration.

Apprehension gnawed at Sana's gut, but the allure of financial stability prevailed. Hesitantly, she keyed in her details and moments later, a link arrived in her inbox, urging her to complete the registration process. A quick tap,

and she was prompted to enter an OTP sent to her phone.

As Sana entered the code, a sinking feeling enveloped her. An invisible transaction had occurred in the digital realm, one that would soon unravel her sense of security. She checked her bank account, and the shock hit her like a punch to the gut—nearly 30,000 vanished without a trace. A sense of betrayal overwhelmed Sana as she frantically scanned the transaction history. The

cruel reality dawned on her—the promising job was nothing but a sophisticated scam. The perpetrators, faceless and cunning, had preyed on her desperation, leaving her not only jobless but also financially devastated.

Sana isn't alone in falling victim to remote work scams, many others share similar experiences.

In June this year, Kashmir Observer reported on how work-from-home | More on P6

## Kashmir Highlands Likely To Receive Snow

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The minimum temperature across Kashmir rose slightly to provide some respite from the intense cold conditions even as the weather office predicted the possibility of light snowfall in some higher reaches, officials said here on Friday.

However, the night temperature, which settled several degrees below the freezing point, was still below normal for this time of the season at most places.

The continued sub-zero temperature has led to the freezing of several waterbodies, including the Dal Lake, here as a thin layer of ice formed over their surface.

Srinagar city recorded a minimum temperature of minus 3 degrees Celsius on Wednesday night, compared to minus 3.8 degrees Celsius on the previous night, the officials said.

Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district | More on P6

## Shah Hails Improved J&K Situation At Police Chiefs Conference

Stresses On Linking Databases, Adopting AI-Driven Analytics To Tackle Security Challenges

Press Trust Of India

Jaipur: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday stressed the need for linking databases and adopting an AI-driven analytical approach for tackling emerging security challenges, besides bringing uniformity in the structures, size and skills of counter-terror mechanisms across the country.

Inaugurating the 58th conference of DGPs and IGP's here, Shah also pointed out that there has been an overall improvement in the security scenario in the country since 2014, especially the reduction of violence in the three critical hotspots -- Jammu and Kashmir, the northeast and Left Wing Extremism-affected areas.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with the country's top police officers before addressing them at a formal session, while Shah is going to be present throughout the conference spanning several sessions. Modi will attend the conference from January 6-7, his office said.

Shah highlighted two important decisions taken by the Modi government -- the National



Education Policy and the enactment of three criminal justice laws to replace the British-era statutes -- and said the country has entered the "Amrit Kaal".

Shah said the new laws were focused on the delivery of justice instead of punishment and their implementation would transform the country's criminal justice system into the most modern and scientific one.

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and adopting an AI-driven analytical approach to tackling emerging security challenges.

He also emphasised on uniformity of structures, size and skills of counter-terror mechanisms across the country.

Shah stressed the need for training of police officers from Station House Officer (SHO) or officer-in-charge of police stations to DGP levels and upgrading of technology from police stations to police headquarters

for the successful implementation of the three new laws.

He also highlighted the role of internal security in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of India becoming a developed nation by 2047.

The home minister observed that the conference has over the years emerged as a 'think tank', facilitating decision-making and formulation of new security strategies.

The conference will deliberate on a range of | More on P6

## Terrorist Involved In Attacking KPs, Army Killed: Police

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: A Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist, who was involved in the killing of an Army personnel and non-local labourers, was on Friday killed in an encounter with security forces in Shopian district, police said.

Acting on specific information about the presence of a terrorist in Chotigam village of the south Kashmir district, a cordon and search operation was launched in the early hours by security forces, a police

spokesman said.

As the security forces approached the suspected spot, the hiding terrorist fired indiscriminately upon them, which was retaliated effectively, leading to an encounter, the spokesman said.

In the ensuing encounter, a terrorist was killed and his body was retrieved from the site of the encounter, he said. The spokesman identified the slain ultra as Bilal Ahmed Bhat, a resident of Chek Cholan, affiliated with the proscribed terror outfit LeT. Bhat was | More on P6

## Village Guard Found Dead With Bullet Injury

The body of a village defence guard (VDG) with a bullet injury was found in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district on Friday, officials said. The deceased has been identified as Balwant Singh of Kharangal village in Gandoh tehsil, they added. Singh was found dead | More on P6

## Search Ops Underway In Poonch

Security forces launched cordon and search operations (CASO) in several villages in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Friday | More on P6

## Mirza Waheed's 'The Collaborator' Set For Cinematic Debut

Farzana Nisar

Srinagar- The international bestseller 'The Collaborator' by London-based Kashmiri writer Mirza Waheed is set to captivate audiences in a cinematic adaptation. The poignant story that moved readers worldwide will now unfold visually, with its production having recently wrapped up.

Mulberry Films, a production house from the US, has joined hands with Metro Productions from Georgia to bring the acclaimed author's narrative set against Kashmir's tumultuous political backdrop in the 1990s, to life on the silver screen.

"The first | More on P6



SET ALONG THE LINE OF CONTROL, THE NOVEL REVOLVES AROUND AN UNNAMED KASHMIRI boy in his late teens, who serves as the protagonist. As the son of the village Sarpanch, he witnesses the gradual disappearance of his friends, who join the militancy one by one, leaving the once-thriving community devastated.

## HC Upholds Dismissal Of Soldier, Over 2 Decades After Filing Petition

M Ahmad

Jammu: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has upheld dismissal of a BSF soldier, more than two decades after he filed the petition challenging his dismissal from the services.

The petitioner-- P. K. Sunil-- while working as a Constable, was sanctioned fifteen days leave with effect from 14 August 2000 to 6 September 2000 but he "overstayed" the leave.

By virtue of order dated 18 June 2002 Sunil was dismissed from service. He had filed plea against the order before



concerned--BSF authority--but the same was rejected vide order issued by the Chief Law Officer 2 December 2002. It was this order which was assailed by him in the petition in 2003.

"This Court does not find that recording of reasons for returning a finding of guilty, was at

all the requirement of law," a bench of Justice Rajnesh Oswal said, adding, "Though it was vehemently argued by the learned Senior Counsel for the petitioner that the petitioner (Sunil) had informed the respondents (BSF authorities) through telegram as also through the reply that his mother was ill, but equally true is that in the reply, it was stated by the petitioner that his mother was suffering from cancer disease whereas in the medical certificate annexed with the reply to the show cause notice, it was mentioned that she was suffering | More on P6

## 2 HC Judges Recommended To Be Permanent

Press Trust Of India

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the names of Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi and Justice Rahul Bharti, Additional Judges of J&K and Ladakh High Court for appointment as Permanent Judges. "In terms of the Memorandum of Procedure, we have consulted Judges of the Supreme Court who are conversant with the affairs of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh | More on P6

## Delhi Court Sends Terror Accused To 7-Day Police Custody



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: A local court on Friday sent a suspected Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist accused in 11 terror attack cases in Jammu and Kashmir to seven-day police custody.

The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Thursday arrested Javid Ahmad Matoo (32) from the national capital.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Nabeela Wali sent Matoo to custody for a week

on an application moved by the Delhi Police after he was produced before the court.

The accused, a highly indoctrinated terrorist carrying a reward of Rs 10 lakh, was arrested from Delhi's Nizamuddin area. He was driving a stolen car when he was apprehended, the police said.

Matoo is named in "11 known terror attack cases", including five grenade attacks and the killings of at least five police personnel | More on P6

## Aes Kaeshir

Kashmir Observer in collaboration with King's College London Radio brings you a series of Podcasts on Life and Times of Kashmiri Disapora in the West.

KASHMIR OBSERVER



# KO PODCAST







Urs Hazrat Abu Bakr Sidiq (RA) Observed With Fervor

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Devotees from various parts of the Kashmir thronged Dargah Hazratbal shrine in large numbers to participate in the special prayers on the annual Urs of Ameer-ul-Moomineen Hazrat Abu Bakr Sidiq (RA) on Friday.

tled on the banks of Dal Lake, resonated with prayers and chants as devotees paid homage to Abu Bakr Sidiq (RA), the first Caliph of Islam after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The devotees express their joy and happiness. "The annual Urs of Ameer-ul-Moomineen Abu Bakr Sidiq (RA) holds immense spiritual importance for us. It's a moment of unity and faith for the entire community," said Zahoor, a devotee from Habba Kadal, Srinagar.

"Being here at Dargah Hazratbal during the Urs fills my heart with peace and spiritual warmth. It's a moment where my prayers and devotion resonate with the collective faith of our community, a bond that transcends differences and spreads love," said Zahida Begum from Khanyar Srinagar.

5 Lakh Passengers Travelled In Smart Electric Buses Since Nov

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Srinagar Smart City Electric Bus Service, inaugurated by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, has garnered a positive response from locals, witnessing a remarkable milestone of 5 lakh passengers within the first 60 days of its launch.

News Observer (KNO), expressed relief and appreciated the service's operational hours, which extend into late-night periods, and various amenities provided.

Mohammad Nadeem, a Lal Bazar resident, said these buses have technological features that ease winter travel. Its battery-powered operation also contributes to environmental conservation, he said.

After Major Metropolitan Cities, Srinagar Becomes First To Have NMS

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: Following four metropolitan cities of India, Lal Chowk, the major commercial hub of Srinagar, saw the installation of Noise Monitoring System (NMS), a first-of-its-kind initiative to reduce the noise levels and its detrimental impacts in the overcrowded area.

Officials said that traffic noise has a detrimental influence on urban settlements and the installation of a Noise Monitoring System is expected to mitigate this impact by transmitting data to relevant authorities on a day to day basis.

Noise pollution control and abatement measures, they said, are essential for lowering ambient noise levels in urban settlements, where passenger buses, light motor vehicles (LMVs), taxis, and two-wheelers are major contributors to both air and noise pollution.

"The process of monitoring noise levels is measuring and quantifying the amount of sound in a specific area using specialized equipment, such as Noise Monitoring System," Ramesh Kumar, Member Secretary of J&K Pollution Control Board told Kashmir Observer.

"The mitigation strategies are used to protect the immediate surroundings from the negative impacts of noise pollution," he said, adding that the objective of NMS is to assess the effects of noise pollution and ensure that rules are followed.

He said that Jammu does not currently have any such facility in place as of now, and the Lal Chowk



The process of monitoring noise levels is measuring and quantifying the amount of sound in a specific area using specialized equipment, such as Noise Monitoring System

Chowk under Srinagar Smart City Ltd. This is a really positive move, since it helps lower the noise levels brought on by traffic. Every day, NSM gathers data on the amount of noise produced during the day and the night. After the data is sent to the headquarters, it is measured, and a plan is then implemented in response," said Kumar.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic City Muzaffar Ahmad Shah welcomed the initiative and said that the NMS would help reduce noise pollution caused by the heavy traffic at Lal Chowk.

When asked if the system would assist the traffic department in any way, he responded that it would be premature to comment because the NMS had just been installed at Lal Chowk to measure noise levels.

of Srinagar became first to have a Noise Monitoring System after four Indian metropolises. "NMS was introduced at Lal

State Taxes Department Conducts Inspection Drives In Srinagar, Ganderbal

Observer News Service

Srinagar: State Taxes Department today continued the inspection

drives across district Srinagar and Ganderbal districts to ensure compliance by business establishment to the provisions of J&K Goods

and Services Tax Act, 2017, prevent tax evasion and to create awareness among the consumers about their rights under the tax.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Office of the Executive Engineer Mechanical & Hospitals Division Baramulla. CORRIGENDUM. Subject: - Extension of Critical Dates of e-NITS No. 25/1 of 2023-24 Dated:- 04-12-2023.

Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities (Divyangjan) Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment) 4, Vishnu Digamber Marg, New Delhi-110002

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TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686. AIRPORTS: SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311. RAILWAYS: SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259. HIGHWAY STATUS: Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)

PRAYERS. FAJR 6:08. ZUHR 12:35. ASR 3:57. Magrib 5:37. ISHA 7:03. HIJRI CALENDAR 23 Jumada al-Sani 1445

This Day In History. 1661 - The Fifth Monarchists unsuccessfully attempt to seize control of London. 1781 - Battle of Jersey: Major Francis Peirson and his men defeat invading French troops.

# Bridging Educational Divides

## The Need for a Common Curriculum in Jammu and Kashmir

Ummar Jamal

**T**he call for a uniform curriculum across all schools in Jammu and Kashmir has resonated for years, aiming to bring standardization and equity to the education system. Despite the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) issuing a fresh circular in December 2023, this marks the fifth attempt in as many years, underscoring the persistent challenges in implementing a common curriculum.

In its latest order, the Board warned of a disciplinary action and imposition of a penalty up to 50,000 or both against those schools recommending books besides the one prescribed by the Board.

The recurrent circulars from 2016 to 2023 signify the board took initiative to establish a common curriculum. However, challenges persist, with the crux of the issue lying in the ongoing tug-of-war between government initiatives and the resistance posed by private schools. This perennial struggle has impeded the smooth implementation of a standardized educational structure.

### Non-cooperation by private schools

Despite the board's directive to adopt the prescribed curriculum, private school owners have chosen to resist for years, opting to maintain their existing educational frameworks. This persistent violation raises concerns about the effectiveness of the board's regulations and the willingness of private institutions to comply with standardized educational guidelines.

The opposition from private school owners stems from various factors, such as a desire to retain autonomy over their curriculum, desire to set private schools apart by prescribing different curriculum from that of government schools and concerns about potential financial implications. The continuous violation of the circular not only challenges the authority of the JKBOSE but also raises questions about the overall compliance culture within the private education sector. This continuous defiance highlights a contentious relationship between the private education sector and regulatory authorities, as these owners resist the implementation of the board's guidelines.

### Bookseller's concerns

In response to the recent circular, the association of booksellers also has voiced its grievanc-



**“The continuous violation of the circular not only challenges the authority of the JKBOSE but also raises questions about the overall compliance culture within the private education sector**

es, expressing concern over the potential impact on their businesses. The booksellers are urging the government to reconsider its decision in order to safeguard their livelihoods.

The move towards a common curriculum comes in the wake of allegations against private schools, accusing them of exploiting parents by prescribing textbooks from private publishers at exorbitant rates. These textbooks, not readily available in the open market, are exclusively supplied to specific bookshops. The JKBOSE's decision seeks to address this issue by standardizing the curriculum across all schools.

The association of booksellers argues that a common curriculum might lead to a reduction in the demand for a variety of textbooks, affecting their sales. They emphasize the importance of considering the economic implications on small businesses in the educational supply chain.

### Need and advantages of uniform curriculum

The advantages of a shared educational

framework are multifaceted. A common curriculum promotes consistency, ensuring that students receive a comparable quality of education regardless of the institution they attend. It minimizes disparities in learning outcomes, fostering a more equitable educational landscape.

A common curriculum ensures that all students, regardless of their school's affiliation, have access to the same quality of education. It eliminates disparities in learning outcomes and levels the playing field for diverse learners. Standardizing the curriculum helps establish a baseline for educational expectations. It ensures that essential knowledge and skills are uniformly taught, enhancing the overall academic standards across institutions.

A shared curriculum fosters consistency in what students are taught. This consistency aids in creating a more seamless educational experience for students who may transition between schools. A common curriculum encourages collaboration among educators. Teachers can share best practices, resources, and insights, leading to a more robust educational community.

Standardizing the curriculum enables educational authorities to focus on refining and enhancing the quality of the content. This, in turn, contributes to a more comprehensive and effective learning experience for students. By ensuring that all schools follow the same curriculum, the socio-economic and geographical factors that often contribute to educational disparities are mitigated. This supports a more inclusive and equitable educational system.

A common curriculum facilitates uniform assessments, making it easier to gauge student progress and educational effectiveness. This streamlined approach aids in the identification of areas that may need improvement.

The implementation of a common curriculum emerges as a fundamental requirement for the advancement of education. It addresses the needs for equity, standardization, and consistency, ultimately leading to improved quality and accessibility. Recognizing the importance of a unified educational approach is essential for fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment across diverse schools

### Conclusion

While the intent behind the recent directive to prescribe BOSE-published textbooks is commendable, the real challenge lies in effective enforcement. The intention behind the circular is to alleviate the financial burden on parents and ensure accessibility to affordable educational materials, the implementation of such policies has faced hurdles. Ability of BOSE authorities to implement these directives on the ground will determine the success of the initiative. The past track record, marred by unsuccessful attempts, raises questions about the efforts taken for its proper implementation.

The government's failure to effectively enforce its own circulars, contributing to the complexity of the situation. The government's initiative to curb the alleged exploitation by private schools is commendable; however, the effectiveness of the policy lies in its seamless implementation. It remains highly imperative to take decisive action to enforce its circular and ensure compliance among private schools.

*Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer  
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**I**n the vast world of medical conditions, online gaming addiction is considered a given reality. Yet it remains under-recognised by the Indian government and its policymakers. The World Health Organization (WHO) has given due acknowledgment to the addictive nature of online gaming. However, not only has it been left unchecked in India, a large part of online gaming has mutated and morphed into online gambling, adversely impacting the nation's younger generation.

The convergence of gaming and gambling not only jeopardises the mental and physical health of our future generation, it also steals their most productive asset-their attention. Meanwhile, lobbyists for online gaming and gambling have been making misleading claims, labelling their activities as a sport and pledging to self-regulate. To check against their potential harm to future generations, however, this exponentially growing ecosystem requires tighter regulation and control involving inputs from multiple stakeholders including clinical psychologists, behavioral economists, and think tanks.

In India, the distinction between online gaming and gambling has blurred. The two platforms, once distinct, have now converged. Gaming-gambling convergence takes shape in terms of social casino gaming, loot boxes, skin betting, esports betting, play-to-earn video gaming, and plain vanilla stakes for games. Recognised as a disease, addiction to online gaming or gambling has surged, sparking numerous issues stemming from excessive participation. The 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases, published in 2019, defined 'gaming disorder' for the first time, acknowledging both online and offline forms. Scientific studies have further confirmed that the addiction related to online gambling mirrors substance abuse.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders fifth edition (DSM-5) even introduced a new category for non-substance behav-

ioral addiction within the substance addictions category, accommodating online gaming and gambling addictions. Substance Abuse Disorders are addiction to cannabis, cocaine, and heroin-like substances. Numbers for India are not available as none of these platforms shares data of users with the government.

South Korea is often cited as an example of a nation whose youth fell victim to online addiction. The socio-economic loss due to excessive internet use in the Republic of Korea was estimated at between \$1.5 and 4.5 billion in 2009 (Lee, Kim, & Lee, 2011). Online gaming has been identified as the largest health problem experienced by young people by Korea's Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning and the National Information Society Agency (2015).

A substantial part of India's online gaming predominantly involves gambling. Lobbyists often attempt to depict it as a sport, obscuring the reality with disinformation campaigns about these as involving skill and distanced from gambling as game of chance. Surprisingly, both retired and serving policymakers appear to be going along with this narrative, with many of them considering self-regulation for these companies rather than recognising the inherent risks and challenges associated.

This imitative panorama of the online gaming industry, alarmingly, is not being recognised in India as online gambling, despite every game being

**“The convergence of gaming and gambling not only jeopardises the mental and physical health of our future generation, it also steals their most productive asset-their attention. Meanwhile, lobbyists for online gaming and gambling have been making misleading claims, labelling their activities as a sport and pledging to self-regulate**

played for stakes. Advocates within the sector sermonise about 'responsible gaming', an echo of the 'responsible gambling' mantra. Even online platforms have jumped onto this bandwagon, touting their 'responsible acts'. Figures of trust have been co-opted into this advocacy and argue that online gaming platforms can, indeed, behave responsibly.

Taking the Colombian cartel analogy, it's as if they have pledged to dis-

tribute cocaine responsibly, ensuring that no one receives enough to become an addict. Further leaving us agape, they guarantee to cap prices to prevent the harmful effects of resulting addictions, despite the demonstrated plausibility of money laundering on these platforms.

It is surprising how gullible the regulator can be, except for the fact that there is no regulator. One may wonder what came of the talks about appointing a self-regulatory organisation for the sector. Many self-defined organisations applied, but none was finally selected. The government is now thinking about regulating these companies directly. The crucial question therefore is what will be regulated and how will it be regulated.

Will online gaming be regulated as gambling companies, sporting companies, entertainment companies, or just internet intermediaries? The policymakers ought to have learned by now that tech platforms are masters on how to avoid any form of regulation. Examples besides online gaming include social media, e-commerce, communication apps, and several super apps that now manipulate the market in several sectors.

The most straightforward path to regulation is initially licensing these companies, as is customary for gaming or casino businesses-since they ultimately share similarities. The lingering dilemma among policymakers is identifying who will "bell this cat" and call out the problem in its true nature.

The crux of this quandary lies in the abundance of money involved.

Unregulated purse or pool collections occur daily for these companies. Noticing this, the finance ministry smartly brought these collections under the GST net. Despite this, the companies remain unregulated by any government department, as no licences for operating online casinos or gaming currently exist. In contrast, worldwide licensing is commonplace for online gaming platforms.

Just recently, in December, China released draft norms to curb addiction on gaming platforms. Their ability to accomplish this feat hinges on their established licensing process for all online gaming platforms. Under China's online gaming approval system, companies must obtain an "Online Publishing Service License" to operate legally. Why not consider and learn from such established systems?

No doubt, China's control over the internet is excessive by any benchmark; it has, nonetheless, managed to create an effective regulatory framework for online gaming that keeps addiction in check. Multiple scientific studies have confirmed the severity of addiction arising from these platforms. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directly addressed this issue on several occasions in his radio dialogues.

Moreover, the ED, CBI, and RBI have highlighted the ways in which these platforms can be exploited. Chinese firms, in particular, are allegedly using online gaming as a means of laundering money from India. Yet, credit should be given where it's due: China's success in regulating online gaming could serve as a crucial lesson for India in addressing its related challenges.

*Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Financial Express*

# AN OBITUARY- *unrecited, yet*



S.Sarwar.Malik

Death is inevitable, so is the appearance of press releases or speeches, by way of tribute or obituary; more true by politicians or those resembling their ilk-ever ready with the stereotyped stuff; doling-out such statements as "vacuum created"... "I was shocked"... "He was an embodiment of virtues & qualities" etc. Readers, as well as the writers, know how honest the statements are yet nobody feels uncomfortable. Probably there exists logic in uttering even blatant lies at such formal occasions. It is after all a mere formality with most of them; 'where the heart needs not speak'.

Probably that is the reason, till my retirement from Govt. service and before donning my present day white-haired-look, I usually extended excuses and apology when called to speak at formal functions held on retirement of office mates or demise of acquaintances. Not that I always escaped such ordeals when my friends & acquaintances expected materials similar to "26 Jan. mushaira" or welcome addresses "eulogizing chief guests (who other than Hon'ble VIPs?) - I hardly knew or liked (even for that matter; during my active Government service, superior officers/bureaucrats)". Thanks to the shadow-writing pastime, of yore, it is less painful to re-read the pieces carried under the name of someone else, or hear the words thrust into the address system by somebody else-while I stole a nap or silently consoled myself by words "untrue...false...fake...lies and nothing more".

For reasons like these I was not at all particular to hear what people had written or said by way of obituary or tribute when famous persons died. But...but...but...

One big exception & one somewhat not so big one. First one, today, I mention very



**READERS, AS WELL AS THE WRITERS, KNOW HOW HONEST THE STATEMENTS ARE YET NOBODY FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE.** Probably there exists logic in uttering even blatant lies at such formal occasions. It is after all a mere formality with most of them; 'where the heart needs not speak'. Thus these statements are expectedly drab

briefly, but in bold font, because it concerns my soul, viz:

"One day, that year, I **One day, that year, I was sitting with some conversing friends-who had dropped in for teemardari & haal chaa! deryaft kernay kay liye; (somewhat disinterested in the topic of conversation; but more so because of my back ache...)** When one of them informed me thus : **Mustafa saebbin anniversary manavan Hussaini halluss manz.**

It so happened that my head & heart corroborated during late hours that day and an urdu poem was born. I contacted one of the sons of *Moulana Mustafa Ansari Saeb*. Who agreed to my request about its recitation on the said date and

also published it in this Newspaper, which you are holding in your hands dear reader. [Some time, readers might see what this humble- penman wrote some days back, (and mailed it too; that might see the light of day, later), when the revered mother of Sajjad, & S and H Ansari's; passed away. ]]

Now back to the other Person, who was part and also subject of my recently published write ups *part IV...* about Sahir Ludhyanvi's anti war poem, **parch-haiyaan**; rechristened by me as **PSALMS OF PEACE**, in my Rendition. (I had to request the Opinion Editor of *K.O* to hold back this part of my already- mailed article and to wait for incorporation of

*appropriate lines, here & there*). You remembered it rightly but guess who?... yes *Amrita Preetam*; the well known Punjabi poetess.

During the month, when **Amrita Pritam (1919-2005)**, left the literary scene, I regretted not hearing promptly what her close associates had said. So one evening, I was consoling myself: imagining Sahir Ludhianvi repeating in heaven what earlier Amrita Pritam had said on Sahir's demise.

[Caution :I have never verified the veracity of the report and even today I do not consider it necessary to do so because deep inside I see that such genuine sentiments and expressions of uncensored feelings can come from a person like Sahir

or Amrita, alone.]  
It is said that the news of his death first left her speechless -the most profound response. Later in the day she narrated an incident of bye-gone days when both of them, along with some other men of repute were invited to a function, organized to honour them with robes. Engrossed in the tete they had to be goaded to hurry and don the robes as the time of function was approaching fast. As they were the last to enter the green room Sahir and Amrita hurriedly put on the robes only to discover on the dais that the one carrying the name of Amrita was donned by Sahir and vice versa-triggering mischievous smiles from spectators. Relating this, Amrita said on the day of Sahir's demise:

".....probably the Angel of death read the name ,Sahir Ludhianvi, on the robe; not knowing the wearer was actually Amrita, whose death has come, today".

So O' Amrita, on this day of 2024, from this valley of Kashmir, one unknown penman is writing: ...I know not of "lakhaan teeyain" of Punjab but I hear a voice of welcome

*"Tu dhaktay hovay aariz ki shoayein layker... gulshudah shammein jalanay ko challi aayee hai"*

...isn't it the same old Sahir?

Dear reader, hear with me and recite with me, the words of Warris Shah before I bid you farewell, today, including English rendition of a poem of Amrita, as tailpiece :

"When you leave for the next world,  
Do a favour unto me,  
Do not steal a glance  
Of my face, please."/

Now the translation:  
Inscribed on my palm, a pledge resides./  
Agony's script, where love abides./  
Faith's line soars above the rest./  
Love speaks in silence, unexpressed./

"How long will love endure?"/ You seek to know,  
Love thrives wordlessly, its essence aglow./  
No need for speech in love's grandeur./  
Its wealth beyond words, a silent grandeur./

Breath fleeting, bound to life's decree./  
Yet our love etched in eternity./  
No rehashed tales from the past's design./  
Love's story is fresh, in each unique line./

Anguish's arrows sting and stab./  
Hope flickers where edges grab./  
Amidst pain's grasp, amid the strife./  
Hope awakens, breathing life./

# The History of Going for a Walk

Lauren Colley

Going for a walk is always a good idea. Perhaps, if you are lucky enough, this might be a hike along ragged cliffs or trudge along a chilly beach with family. Many of us however, have to take to the pavements of Britain's towns and cities for our post-lunch walks.

As a researcher of pedestrianism, I am fascinated by the changing culture of how, where and why we walk. This includes the tacit pavement etiquette that has both endured through the centuries and changed to reflect the cultural concerns of the age.

You might be surprised to hear that "going for a walk" wasn't really a thing until the late 1700s.

The term "pedestrianism" may have Latin roots, but in the 1800s its first association would have been a sporting one. "Professional pedestrianism" or "race-walking" was fiercely competitive by the 1850s.

Tournaments in America took place over six days, with entrants walking the equivalent of 450 miles, taking naps in tents by the track and sipping champagne en route. The stringent "heel-to-toe rule" still in place states that "the advancing leg must be straightened from the moment of first contact with the ground."

Walking as a leisure activity came about around the 1780s. Until this point walking had been an act of necessity, associated with poverty, vagrancy and even criminal intent. Many individuals would live and die never having seen beyond a few square miles of bleak cityscape and only slightly further for those in the country.

Along with the rural appreciation of the Lake poets - including Wil-



liam Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge - at the turn of the century, famous walkers such as Charles Dickens brought the pastime of walking into vogue.

## DIRTY ROTTEN STREETS

Much has been written of the religious zeal with which Dickens took to his daily "walking work". He averaged 12 miles a day and at a remarkable pace of over four miles an hour - sufficient for others to "draw aside

as the great writer - who seemed always to be walking a match against thought - strode on."

Walking was an essential cog in Dickens's creative process: a time to absorb, almost by osmosis, the idiosyncrasies of the streets. From forays into the London slums to insomnia-driven marches through the night, his encounters furnished the eccentric brilliance of his characters - the street snapshots retained "in regular order on different shelves of my

brain, ready ticketed and labelled to be brought out when I want them".

In the 1800s, when pavements were in their infancy, taking a walk was a whole different experience. An estimated 300,000 horses traversed the London streets, depositing over 1,000 tonnes of manure every day. Worse matter was also regularly tipped into the rat-ridden gutters of the slums - the word "loo" itself is suggested to be derived from the pre-warning "gardylloo", or French

"regardez l'eau" (watch out for the water) heralding the emptying of a chamber pot from an upper storey.

The sorry state of city streets created a demand for all sorts of workers, including "pure finders" who would have scooped up dog poo and sold it in bulk to local tanneries (places where leather skins were processed). This was just one of the unappealing occupations that social historian Henry Mayhew referred to as "street cleansers" - a motley crew

of crossing sweepers, night soil men and mudlarks (people who sifted anything that they could sell from the banks of the Thames) who made their living from street waste.

Thankfully, social reform and urban planning has moved on dramatically, and going on an urban walk is a much more pleasant experience now.

## PROFESSIONAL PEDESTRIANISM

While the pavements have changed, many of the codes of conduct governing Victorian pedestrian etiquette remain relevant today.

In 1780, an article tucked discretely among the news and advertisements of the popular London Magazine outlined "Rules of behaviour, of general use, though much disregarded in this populous city." Among its 12 points, pedestrians were advised "to be cautious of staring in the faces of those that pass by [...] for an overbearing look has the air of a bully, and a prying one that of a bailiff."

So as you take your walks, do as Dickens did, and avoid committing these pedestrian faux pas:

- Inconsiderate whistling or humming
- Walking arm in arm
- Loitering in conversation
- Hindering all behind with a "sauntering gait"

While the bugbears and implicit rules may alter with the ages (distracted phone-users, I'm looking at you), there is much about the pavements that retain their Victorian decorum. They are a place of multiplicity and variety, culture and commerce - a strip of land to be celebrated all year round.

*By arrangements with The Conversation*







## J&K Bowled Out For 100 Runs In Ranji Opener

**Observer News Service**  
**SRINAGAR:** The J&K senior men's cricket team was bowled out for a paltry 100 runs against Himachal Pradesh in the 2024 Ranji Trophy opener on Friday at JKCA Hostel Ground in Jammu.

All-rounder Abid Mushatq top-scored for the team, with 28 (28). For Himachal Pradesh, Vaibav Arora took 4 wickets, as the J&K batters failed to get going at home turf, before being bundled out in 35.3 overs.

## J&K Softball Teams Leave For Senior Nationals



**Observer News Service**  
**GANDERBAL:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal Shyam-bir on Friday flagged-off both boys and girls softball teams, marking their journey to participate in the 14th Senior National Softball Cricket Championship 2023-2024.

The championship is scheduled to take place in Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, from January 9 to January 13. In an interaction with the students, the DC extended his best wishes for the success of the teams in the championship. The contingent is being led by the General Secretary of J&K Softball Cricket Association and the Joint Secretary of Softball Cricket Federation of India.

## T20 WC 2024: India Play Pakistan On June 9 In NY



**Press Trust of India**

**NEW DELHI:** The riveting cricketing rivalry between India and Pakistan will reach planet's biggest show city New York on June 9 when the arch-rivals go against each other there in a Group A match of the ICC T20 World Cup 2024.

The schedule for the show-piece was revealed on Friday, and India are clubbed with Pakistan, Ireland, Canada and co-hosts USA in Group A for the league stage games.

India will open their World Cup campaign with a match against Ireland on June 5 in New York.

After facing Pakistan, India will stay back in New York to take on the co-host nation on June 12, and then will travel to Florida to play against Canada in their final group assignment on June 15.

The tournament is being co-hosted by the West Indies and the USA with 20 teams, divided into four groups of five sides each, making it the largest ever T20 World Cup. Sixteen teams contested in the last edition in 2022 in Australia.

The tournament will start on June 1 with a match between the USA and Canada. The semi-finals are scheduled for June 26 in Guyana and June 27 in Trinidad while Barbados will host the final on June 29.

England are the title holders, having beaten Pakistan in Melbourne in November 2022.

The group stage matches will be played from June 1 to 18 while the Super 8 games are slotted from June 19 to 24.

The top two teams from each group will enter the Super 8, where the teams will be clubbed into two groups of four each.

The top two teams in each Super 8 group will advance to the semifinals.

A total of 55 games will be played across six venues in the West Indies -- Kensington Oval, Barbados; Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Trinidad; Providence Stadium, Guyana; Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, Antigua; Darren Sammy Cricket Ground, St Lucia; Arnos Vale Stadium, St Vincent -- and three stadiums in the USA Eisenhower Park, New York; Lauderhill, Florida and Grand Prairie, Texas.

Group A: India, Pakistan, Ireland, Canada, USA.  
Group B: England, Australia, Namibia, Scotland, Oman.  
Group C: New Zealand, West Indies, Afghanistan, Uganda, Papua New Guinea.  
Group D: South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Netherlands, Nepal.

## Haaland, De Bruyne, Doku Close To Man City Returns



**Agencies**

**MANCHESTER:** Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said Erling Haaland, Kevin de Bruyne and Jeremy Doku trained well this week, but he is unsure of their availability for Sunday's FA Cup third-round match against Huddersfield Town.

Haaland, the league's joint top scorer with 14 goals, has not played since Dec. 6 due to a bruised foot. "Jeremy feels really, really good and Kevin as well. And Erling is also a little bit better," Guardiola told reporters on Friday.

"In the two or three training sessions they feel good and are improving. I don't know about Sunday or Newcastle (a Jan. 13 Premier League match) but for the rest they will be ready." "No major setbacks, that would be the worst for Kevin or Jeremy or Erling, that is the most important."

De Bruyne, who is recovering from hamstring surgery, had not featured for Guardiola's team since the opening day of the Premier League season before returning to the bench for their Dec. 30 game against Sheffield. Doku has been sidelined with a hamstring injury

since early December.

Guardiola said John Stones has not returned to training since injuring his ankle last week and midfielder Rodri will not be available to face Championship side Huddersfield. "His grandad passed away so he is away in Madrid," the manager said. "He will not be with us for the next few days. Family is the most important thing."

Last year's treble winners are third in the Premier League standings, five points adrift of leaders Liverpool. "I would love (De Bruyne) to play the way he played the last eight years he has with me, I would love it," Guardiola said.

"I think he's not going to change his qualities there, but of course the injury is a big one and what I'm concerned the most is to try to avoid (re-injury)." After playing nine games in December, City only have four in January.

"I think the Premier League took a great decision to make Boxing Day intense and then have a break," Guardiola said. "We won a lot even in the tough period. It is good now to have the FA Cup, an important game at Newcastle and then two weeks after to refresh our minds."

**MAZBOOTI SE BANI HAR**  
— DEEWAR SE JHALAKTE HAI —  
**DIL KE EHSAAAS**

