

# KASHMIR OBSERVER™

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## ALARM!

### Coldwave Abates, No Trace of Snow

Press Trust Of India

**Srinagar:** The Kashmir Valley is basking in sun, still waiting for the first snowfall of the season even as Chillai Kalan, the harshest 40-day period, has crossed the halfway mark. On Tuesday there was some respite from the coldwave conditions but there was no forecast of any wet spell by the Met office.

Kashmir highlands and popular tourist destinations, like the ski resort of Gulmarg that usually receive a minimum of four-to-five feet thick



#### Agriculture and Horticulture At Risk, Say Experts

**S**nowfall in the winter season is indispensable for the Kashmir region as it plays a vital role in irrigating agriculture and horticulture crops, according to experts.

Glaciologist and climate change researcher, Professor Shakil A Romshoo said that winter snowfall provides essential water for crops and contributes significantly to [More on P6](#)

Satellite images from the European Space Agency (ESA) paint an alarming picture: from Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Tangmarg in the North to Pahalgam and Aru Valley in the South, popular winter destinations of Kashmir region are still awaiting snowfall this season even as Chillai Kalan, the harshest 40-day period, has crossed halfway mark.

—Source India Today

snow by now remain barren, presenting a dry look.

On Monday, Srinagar recorded a night temperature of minus 2.4 degrees Celsius, up from minus 4.3 degrees the previous day, the officials said.

Qazigund recorded a low of minus 2.6 degrees Celsius against minus 4.2 degrees on Sunday. The night temperature in the ski resort town of Gulmarg in north Kashmir was minus 4.6 degrees Celsius on Monday, slightly down from the minimum temperature the previous night. Pahalgam in [More on P6](#)

### Mirwaiz In Delhi For First Time After 2019

Press Trust Of India

**Srinagar:** Authorities here have allowed Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq to travel to Delhi for a "personal" visit.

"Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Muhammad Umar Farooq was allowed by the state authorities to travel to New Delhi yesterday (Monday). Mirwaiz had conveyed the personal nature of his visit after which the authorities allowed him," Anjum Anwar Jamia Masjid, the management body of the 14th-century mosque in Srinagar, said in a statement on Tuesday.

It claimed that despite his release from house detention in September last year, the Hurriyat chairman has been repeatedly detained at his residence at Nigeen, especially on Fridays.

He has not been allowed to visit the Jamia Masjid, where he delivers the Friday sermon, since the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out on October 7 last year, the mosque management body said.

"The Mirwaiz will be back (in Kashmir) in a couple of weeks," the statement added.

"I am on a personal visit to Delhi with my family including my mother," Mirwaiz informed the media.

Mirwaiz, who is also the Valley's chief cleric, was put under house arrest by the central government on August 4, 2019, a day before it abrogated Jammu and Kashmir's

## India-Saudi Fix 1.75 Lakh Hajj Quota For 2024

- Quota of 1,75,025 for Hajj pilgrimage in 2024
- 1,40,020 seats reserved for Hajj Committee
- 35,005 pilgrims to proceed through private operators
- India's Digital Initiatives Appreciated
- Simita Irani Becomes First Non-Muslim Indian Minister To Visit Madinah
- BJP's Proposal for Women Without Mehram in Hajj Discussed
- Irani Holds Meetings with Religious Authorities

Press Trust Of India

**Jeddah:** India and Saudi Arabia on Sunday signed a bilateral agreement under which New Delhi has been allocated a quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims for the annual Hajj pilgrimage in 2024.

Minority Affairs Minister Smriti Irani accompanied by Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan signed the Bilateral Hajj Agreement 2024 with Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan in Jeddah.

According to an official statement, a total quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims from India has been finalised for Hajj 2024 with 1,40,020 seats being reserved for pilgrims to proceed through Hajj Committee whereas 35,005 pilgrims would be permitted to proceed through private operators.

"Pleased to announce the formalisation of the Bilateral



Hajj Agreement 2024 between India and Saudi Arabia, I, along with Hon'ble MoS for External Affairs, Shri @MOS.MEA, presided over the signing. Also engaged in productive discussions on matters of mutual interest with @tbfahaj, Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Affairs," Irani said in a post on X.

She said the Saudi delegation expressed sincere

appreciation for India's exceptional digital initiatives, particularly in providing essential last-mile information to pilgrims. "Our proposal to encourage the participation of women without Mehram in the Hajj pilgrimage further underscores our commitment to inclusivity," she added.

Discussions also encompassed plans for the

**THE VISIT WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN the strategic partnership placing Hajj as a vital dimension in this relationship."**

enhancement of medical facilities, ensuring the comprehensive well-being of all pilgrims, she said. "I deeply value the collaborative spirit exhibited during these deliberations and eagerly anticipate the continued fortification of our bilateral relations." During the meeting, India's digital initiatives in facilitating and promoting ease and convenience for the Hajj pilgrims were greatly appreciated by the Saudi side and the Gulf Kingdom offered to extend all [More on P6](#)



### First Ever Non-Muslim Indian Delegation Visits Madinah

Observer News Service

**Srinagar:** Union Minister for Women and Child Development and Minority Affairs, Smriti Irani and Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V Muraleedharan made a historic visit to the holy city of Medina in Saudi Arabia on Monday. This unprecedented visit marks the first time a non-Muslim delegation has been welcomed to Madinah, hinting at the bonding of India-Saudi Arabia

bilateral relations. "This exceptional gesture by the Saudi side, welcoming a non-Muslim delegation to Madinah, underscores the strength of the bilateral relations between India and Saudi Arabia. As both nations continue to forge stronger ties, this historic visit is poised to contribute significantly to mutual understanding and co-operation in the realm of religious and cultural exchanges," a government statement said. The delegation also included CPS Bakshi. [More on P6](#)

### HCI Invites Applications For Hajj Trainers

The Hajj Committee of India (HCI) has invited online applications from desirous eligible candidates for selection as Trainer for imparting Orientation/ Training to the selected pilgrims of Hajj-2024 (Hjri-1445). [More on P6](#)

### NIA Charges Pak National in J&K Terror Conspiracy

Agencies

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday chargesheeted three more persons, affiliated with an offshoot of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), for conspiring to unleash violent terrorist attacks with sticky bombs, IEDs and small arms etc.

According to a statement, the accused include a Pakistani national Habibullah Malik hailing from Kasur district in Pak Punjab.

"He has been found to have been involved in various terrorist attacks in Poonch and Rajouri districts," the statement reads.



Habibullah, along with Hilal Yaqoob Deva and Musiabi Fayaz Baba both hailing from Shopian in Kashmir, has been named in the Supplementary Chargesheet filed today before the NIA Special Court, Jammu, under the relevant sections of [More on P6](#)

### STEERING CHODO ANDOLAN

### 'Transporters' Confederation Calls Off Strike

Agencies

**Srinagar:** All Kashmir Transporters' Confederation has called-off its 'Steering Chodo Andolan' after observing the initially proposed two-day strike for a day on Tuesday.

Chairman All Kashmir Transporters' Confederation, Mohammad Shafi Mir said that the strike has been called off as we have been communicated by our fellow bodies in different states that the Ministry of Home Affairs has assured of prior consultation with transporters' association

before the final adoption of newly-introduced laws.

"The further course of action will be decided as decided by the associations' countrywide," Mir said.

The strike call was given by the All Kashmir Transporters' Confederation. Public transport mostly remained off the roads even as another Association 'Kashmir Transport Welfare Association', based in central Kashmir, decided not to colude with the strike call.

The transporters have been demanding the rolling back of penal provisions [More on P6](#)

### Machine-made Copperware Being Sold As Handmade

Director Handloom To Enforce J&K Copper Utensils Act

Agencies

**Srinagar:** The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has designated the Director of Handicrafts and Handloom Kashmir as the authority responsible for enforcing the J&K Prohibition of Manufacture of Specified Copper Utensils (by machine) Act.

The step is aimed to combat the introduction of machines in crafting copper utensils which has resulted in marginalization of traditional artisans, and has allowed individuals without specific copper working skills to enter the



The public is urged to purchase copper items labeled with QR codes, as this supports authentic artisans."

industry, adversely affecting traditional craftsmen.

While the government's efforts to implement the act have encountered challenges, the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom Kashmir is actively working to address the issue of machine-made copperware being sold as handmade. The department is promoting genuine handmade copperware and has introduced hologram-based labeling to authenticate products. 291 Copperware labels were issued in the first three quarters of 2022-23. Additionally, a priority is placed on [More on P6](#)

### Jatin Kishore Assumes Charge As Director Information

Observer News Service

Jammu: Jatin Kishore assumed the charge of Director Information here on Tuesday, an official spokesperson said.

After assuming charge, he said the Director held a brief introductory meeting with the officers of the department during which he stressed on the need for further strengthening the activities and core competence of the department with the introduction of modern and new media platforms for maximizing its reach.

"The Director called upon the officers for timely



dissemination of accurate information to the public, fostering transparency and enhancing communication channels between the government and the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir," he said. Later, the spokesperson said, the Director took round of the office complex [More on P6](#)

### Severe Dry Spell Raises Concerns Over Fish Production In Kashmir

Agencies

**Srinagar:** As Kashmir Valley is grappling with a severe dry spell throughout the hard winter, the experts have raised concerns about its impact on fish production in the region.

They said the unusual absence of rain or snow is disrupting the delicate balance of water bodies, potentially jeopardising fish.

Dr Intiaz Ahmed Khan, Chief Proctor at University of Kashmir and renowned Ichthyologist said the effect of the dry spell on fish in Kashmir is evident.

When the water level decreases, it forces the fish out of their comfort zone, he said, adding, "In winter, fish usually



stay in lower water zones where the temperature is higher compared to the upper layers of water. The decrease in water depth affects the temperature stratification zone, disrupting the fish's comfort." Dr Khan said that in running water, oxygen exchange occurs, and nutrition comes from the catchment area, benefiting both stagnant and flowing

water. "However, during dry weather, water from the catchment area doesn't reach, affecting the fish. In the breeding season, if you kill a single fish, you are responsible for killing hundreds of fish," he said.

Natural fish breeding in Kashmir usually happens in February and March. Dr Intiaz said eating fish during this season is beneficial. "The dry spell affects fish breeding as well as production due to reduced water levels, disrupting the specific breeding spots of fish," he added.

Meanwhile, a Fisheries Department official said that the fish production in J&K has witnessed a substantial surge in the last four years and is expected to [More on P6](#)

### Raj Bhawan Bids Farewell To Sherpa



Agencies

**Jammu:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and the officers of Raj Bhawan bid farewell to Minga Sherpa, who served as Additional Secretary at the Lt Governor's Secretariat.

The Lt Governor complimented Sh Minga Sherpa for his professional conduct and sincere dedication [More on P6](#)





KASHMIR OBSERVER<sup>TM</sup>

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## Record Tourism

Jammu and Kashmir, according to official figures, welcomed around two crore visitors in 2023, marking the highest influx in 77 years. The surge reflects a significant transformation in the Union Territory over recent years. This has led to increased job opportunities and a flourishing hotel industry. Last year also attracted over 100 film shoots, something that testifies to the prevailing normalcy.

Significantly, recent Google data revealed that Kashmir surpassed Switzerland as the most searched destination globally in 2023, ranking sixth among the top searched destinations. This shift in online search patterns highlights the world's curiosity to explore Kashmir, often likened to Switzerland for its scenic beauty. The New Year's Eve celebrations at Lal Chowk in Srinagar further symbolized the evolving dynamics of the region following the abrogation of Article 370. Besides, with a significant increase in foreign tourist arrivals, travel agents anticipate further global promotion of Kashmir's tourism. The prospects of foreign tourists from Thailand, Europe, and the Gulf visiting in large numbers have raised hopes for a robust winter tourism season in the coming months.

The G20 meeting hosted in Srinagar, particularly the third tourism working group meeting, seems to have acted as a catalyst, increasing foreign tourist interest in the region. The growing tourism has gone a long way to shore up the Kashmir economy and bring back employment lost to the successive security and Covid-19 lockdown in recent years. The boom in tourism, which forms 6.8 percent of Kashmir's GDP and employs over two million people, is also having a positive spillover effect on other sectors.

Despite the ongoing winter being largely snowless, the tourist inflow has only increased. The Valley's upper reaches have already received some snowfall. To the delight of tourists, Affarwat in Gulmarg and Pir Panjal range of mountains have been draped in white blanket of snow. Snowfall in the Valley has traditionally been a great attraction for the people in mainland India, since it is a novelty for most of them.

The government in 2023 earmarked another 75 tourist destinations to enhance regional tourism in the region. The tourism department has actively participated in International Trade Fairs to engage international tourists. The homestay facilities have attracted tourists to far-off areas once considered a no-go zone due to security concerns. The facility was introduced by the government in 2022, and it has boosted border and rural tourism. However, amid the celebration of this success, it's crucial to ensure sustainable growth and preservation of the region's pristine landscapes and cultural heritage. Government should ensure not only the adequate infrastructure for the rising number of visitors but also check the number so as to protect the Valley's fragile ecology.

## OTHER OPINION

### Drug war

In the case of prophylactic use of antibiotics, the resultant antimicrobial resistance (AMR) will be deadly. The First Multicentre Point Prevalence Survey of Antibiotic Use at 20 NAC-NET Sites India 2021-22 conducted by the National Centre for Disease Control under the Health Ministry has thrown up startling statistics, but more importantly, examining the minutiae italics key issues that have been flagged by experts for years now. Over 70% of the patients in tertiary-care hospitals across 15 States and two Union Territories were prescribed antibiotics over 50% of antibiotics prescribed have the potential to cause AMR. But the most crucial reveal was that 55% of the patients surveyed were prescribed antibiotics as prophylaxis, or as a preventive; only 45% were prescribed antibiotics to actually treat infections; of this, only 6% were prescribed the drugs after identifying the specific bacteria.

AMR occurs when pathogens evolve, fortifying themselves against drugs, and stop responding to antimicrobial drugs. While it is the nature of pathogens to evolve, this ever-increasing crisis is constantly being exacerbated by unsound medical, and animal husbandry practices. It is precisely the sort of misuse and overuse of antimicrobials, as revealed by the survey, which cause the development of drug-resistant pathogens that in turn pose great risk to life and exacerbate morbidity. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that bacterial AMR was directly responsible for 1.27 million global deaths in 2019 and contributed to 4.56 million deaths. AMR invalidates the multiple gains that modern medicine has achieved over years, makes infections harder to treat, but also renders other medical procedures and treatments such as surgery, caesarean sections and cancer chemotherapy, much more risky. WHO warns. Infectious diseases specialists and critical-care experts have for long been waving the red flag over AMR, calling for rational prescription of antibiotics, and curbs on the use of drugs to promote growth in animals and plants. It is also clear that there is an antibiotic research and development pipeline crisis, and urgent measures are required to develop new drug candidates, and more equitable access to them. The role of doctors and the government in regulating use of drugs is crucial in this battle, but more so the latter. Patients too are impatient with the medical process, expecting immediate relief to ailments; but medical science offers no magical remedy. Ultimately, it is the agency with the help to do both, establish systems that strictly regulate the use of antimicrobials and promote and fund research on newer antibiotics that will draw the line — between life and death.

The Hindu

# Community Participation in Sustainable Forest Management

Let Govt allocate forest land legally under FRA to local communities and allow them to create Ecotourism facilities

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

For better resource management, effective community participation is highly recommended in every sector. The United Nations has passed several resolutions on this especially involving tribal groups in strengthening forest biodiversity. Infact, the Biodiversity Act in India was also enacted on the recommendations of the UN. The community involvement has not only been emphasized by several management authors and economists but has been proven to be effective on the ground as well through various studies.

Community participation in managing natural resources not only plays a vital role in better resource management but also helps in conserving our natural resources as well. The forest conservation in India by the local communities in the past is the best example of community's participation in resource conservation. The forest dwelling tribal communities or other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) used to protect the forest for their own survival as these communities were fully dependent on it.

A true symbiotic relationship existed between forest dwelling communities and forests. During British India rule, lots of changes took place in forest management and the Govt began controlling the forests directly. The intervention of the state in forest governance led to exclusion of the forest dwelling communities especially when the British Govt began laying rail lines and construction of roadways through forest areas and tribal population was evicted as well in many states of India. The Govt extended its control over the forest and the resources in the name of forest conservation but that hasn't helped the local communities at all which is otherwise mandatory for a welfare state like India.

### Enactment of Indian Forest Act

The Indian Forest Act of 1863 was the first legal framework which systematically introduced State's control over the forests in India. This law was amended in 1878 and after some decades the Indian Forest Act of 1927 was enacted repealing the previous laws. The Indian Forest Act 1927 is still applicable in India and it was extended to Jammu & Kashmir as well with effect from Oct 31, 2019 soon after article 370 of constitution was read down by Indian parliament on August 5th 2019. Prior to Oct 31st 2019 J&K was governed by the Jammu & Kashmir Forest Act 1930 (Samvat 1987). This law was repealed post article 370.

Indian Forest Act 1927 categorized forests into Reserved forest, Protected Forest and Village forest. The provision of village forests permitted access to these forests by the communities for their needs. Earlier, before these laws, the communities used to own and maintain forests. After Independence from the British Raj, the Govt couldn't change the Indian Forest Act of 1927 which is still applicable as discussed above. The Forest was kept under the State list in the Constitution of India and majority of the states have their own laws on it. Then it was transferred to the Concurrent list.

### UN's Forest Instrument

Respecting the role of indigenous communities in sustainable forest management the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI) was adopted by the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) in Mar 2007 followed by the UN General Assembly in December 2007. The Forest Instrument provides countries with a framework for promoting sustainable forest management (SFM). It recognizes SFM as a dynamic and evolving concept, which aims to maintain and en-

hance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests, for the benefit of present and future generations. The purpose of the Forest Instrument is to: strengthen political commitment and action at all levels to implement the sustainable management of all types of forests effectively. The UN Forest Instrument calls upon states to involve local communities, forest owners and other relevant stakeholders seeking their contribution in achieving sustainable forest management. It adds that they should be involved in a transparent and participatory way in forest decision-making processes that affect them, as well as in implementing sustainable forest management, in accordance with

acted on 18 December 2006 and is also known as Tribal Rights Act - Tribal Land Act. After 1 year the law was notified in Govt gazette and on Janist 2008 Govt came up with FRA Rules. This law was extended to J&K post article 370 and this author has extensively written on this legislation during the last 4 years. The aim of writing this piece is to do further advocacy on this law as this law is not being enforced properly on the ground. The amendments in the Forest Conservation Act - FCA overrides the Forest Rights Act 2006 - FRA, which applies to all types of forest land including unclassified forests, un-demarcated forests, existing or deemed forests, protected forests, wildlife sanctu-

in different states and UT's. In addition, the MPs also sought the number of IFR and CFR claims rejected under the FRA, particularly for Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) along with the general grounds on which these applications/claims were rejected? These MPs also sought information about the number of land allocation / rights granted under FRA to forest dwellers in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in the financial year 2021-2022?

The Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Govt of India Mr. Bishweshwar Tudu while replying the MPs on the floor of the Rajya Sabha said: "As per information submitted by States Governments up to the



national legislations like FRA.

### Forest Conservation Act 1980

In 1980, the Forest Conservation Act was enacted by Parliament that aimed at conservation of the forest. The Forest Conservation Act provides that the conversion of forest land for non-forest purposes can only be done with the prior approval of the Ministry of Environment and Forest. It introduced a two stage process for obtaining forest clearance, i.e. approval for the conversion of forest land for non-forest purposes. But this law was amended last year amid serious objections from ecologists, activists, former forest officers, bureaucrats and even opposition parties.

The Forest Conservation Act (FCA) 1980 restricts the de-forestation of forest or use of forest land for non-forest purposes, but under the amended law (Forest Conservation amendment Act 2023) such restrictions have been lifted. When we say non-forest purpose, this includes use of land for cultivating horticultural crops or for any purpose other than re-forestation. The amended law 2023 added activities like setting up of (i) zoos and safaris under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 owned by the government or any authority, in forest areas other than protected areas, (ii) eco-tourism facilities (iii) silvicultural operations (enhancing forest growth), and (iv) any other purpose specified by the central government. Once private players take up these activities it will convert forest areas into towns which is a clear violation of the Biodiversity Act (BDA).

### Forest Rights Act 2006

It took the Govt of India at least 60 years to enact a legislation that granted forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers the rights that existed before the British Rule. The Congress led UPA Govt came up with Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 also called Forest Rights Act - FRA in 2006. This law was en-

**“ We need to utilize forest land for providing sustainable livelihood to local communities which is in tandem with environment and local biodiversity rather than converting the forests into concrete jungles by setting up massive hotels or other tourism infrastructure**

aries, and national parks. Thus, such a restrictive definition of forests would allow diversion of land which is a clear violation of FRA. In fact several NGOs, tribal organisations have raised their concern over this issue.

### Land allocation under FRA not available

The latest report submitted by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs Govt of India before the parliament is shocking. It reveals that the quantum of land allocated to scheduled tribes - STs or Other Traditional Forest Dwellers - OTFDs in J&K under FRA isn't available at all? Rajya Sabha MPs Dr Syed Naseer Hussain and Dr Ameer Yajnik in February 2023 sought written response from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs on the implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006. The MPs sought a response about the number of Individual Forest Rights (IFR) and Community Forest Rights (CFR) claims rejected by the concerned administration

month of November, 2022 42,97,245 IFR and 1,69,372 CFR claims were received in all the states and UTs except Jammu & Kashmir. Out of these 16,98,456 IFR claims & 41,576 CFR claims were rejected. In total 22,49,671 claims were accepted which include 21,46,782 IFR & 1,02,889 CFR claims."

While responding to a question on FRA implementation in J&K - the Minister of State for Tribal Affairs said that this was being implemented at different stages as the FRA has been made applicable in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir with effect from 2021.

### Conclusion

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) has been in operation for more than 15 years now but a majority of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) of the country are yet to receive entitlement under this people legislation. The FRA will not only ensure tribals and other traditional forest dwellers will get their legitimate rights but this law will also strengthen the forest governance and ensure sustainable forest management by involving local communities through Gram Sabhas. We need to utilize forest land for providing sustainable livelihood to local communities which is in tandem with environment and local biodiversity rather than converting the forests into concrete jungles by setting up massive hotels or other tourism infrastructure. The Government must start allocating forest land to local communities under FRA so that they set up tourism related infrastructure rather than the forest department transferring this land to corporates and big hoteliers. Experts in Ecotourism can be assigned tasks to handhold the forest dwelling communities to achieve their targets on sustainable tourism. Let the J&K Govt give it a try and see the results.

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

## Empowering Rural Jammu and Kashmir Beyond Boundaries

In the heart of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, embodied by the iconic Modi ki Guarantee wali Gadi, is forging a path of progress and inclusivity. Despite the challenging sub-zero temperatures and harsh conditions in the valley, the Yatra continues to garner a rousing welcome, showcasing the commendable enthusiasm of the people in rural areas.

One of the Yatra's shining achievements lies in its commitment to rural farmers. With 26 thousand new beneficiaries enrolled under the PM Kisan Yojana, each installment of ₹2000 and an annual sum of ₹6000 are providing crucial financial support to farmers. This injection of funds enables them to purchase essential requirements like seeds and machinery, significantly contributing to the enhancement of agricultural practices in the region.

Parallel to this, more than 15 thousand Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) have been issued during the Yatra. The KCC scheme plays a vital role in freeing farmers from the clutches of money lenders, offering soft loans that are instrumental in supporting agricultural endeavors. This strategic move aligns with the broader vision of empowering farmers economically and ensuring sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.

The overarching objective of the Yatra is to leave no deserving beneficiary behind. As it winds through rural landscapes, efforts are being made to identify and include those who might have been overlooked in previous initiatives. This meticulous approach demonstrates a commitment to equity and fairness, ensuring that the benefits of government schemes reach every corner of rural Jammu and Kashmir.

Beyond the realm of agriculture, the Yatra has also become a platform to celebrate and recognize talent.



**THE KCC SCHEME PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN FREEING FARMERS FROM THE CLUTCHES OF MONEY LENDERS, OFFERING SOFT LOANS THAT ARE INSTRUMENTAL IN SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL ENDEAVORS.** This strategic move aligns with the broader vision of empowering farmers economically and ensuring sustainable growth in the agricultural sector

More than 7 thousand artists have been rewarded during the journey, acknowledging their contributions to the rich cultural tapestry of the region. This not only serves as a source of encouragement for local artists but also highlights the cultural diversity that defines the essence of Jammu and Kashmir.

Moreover, the Yatra has turned the spotlight on sports, with over 12 thousand sportspersons being awarded. This emphasis on sports not only promotes a healthy and ac-

tive lifestyle but also nurtures the budding talents that might one day bring glory to the nation. By recognizing and supporting sports at the grassroots level, the Yatra contributes to the holistic development of individuals and communities.

In conclusion, the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is more than a political journey – it is a transformative force that empowers rural Jammu and Kashmir across various fronts. From uplifting farmers through financial assistance to recognizing and re-

warding artists and sportspeople, the Yatra embodies a comprehensive approach to development. As it continues its path, the Yatra leaves an indelible mark on the lives of the people it touches, fostering a vision of an empowered and vibrant rural landscape in Jammu and Kashmir.

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### J&K'S PROGRESSIVE ODYSSEY

## Illuminating the Path of Development

Nestled within the captivating landscapes of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (UT), a remarkable metamorphosis is underway as the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra journeys through its diverse terrains. With an impressive participation of over 3.5 million individuals, the Yatra is creating ripples, striving to permeate government initiatives to every corner of the UT.

Over the past four years, Jammu and Kashmir has emerged as a frontrunner in the pursuit of progress. The Yatra symbolizes more than just a physical expedition; it serves as evidence of the state's unwavering commitment to development.

The UT has undergone a monumental transformation in its infrastructure and healthcare landscape. Jammu and Kashmir proudly stands as the pioneer in establishing 75 Amrit Sarovars across each district, embodying a dedication to spiritual and cultural heritage. Additionally, the operationalization of 2 new AIIMS, 7 medical colleges, 2 state cancer institutes, and 15 nursing colleges reflects a commitment to elevating healthcare facilities.

The educational sector has experienced significant advancements with the operationalization of IIT Jammu and IIM Jammu. This not only empowers the youth but also positions the UT as a hub for top-tier education.

Infrastructure development has become a hallmark of progress, exemplified by the Banihal-Quazind Road 2-Tube Tunnel, an ambitious project erected at an altitude of 5,800 ft. at a cost of ₹3,100 Crore. The Amrit Bharat Scheme has ushered in improvements in amenities at 4 railway stations, and the operationalization of the Vande Bharat Train further enhances connectivity.

Jammu and Kashmir is also making strides in contributing to sustainable energy solutions with the inauguration of a 500 kW solar plant in the Samba district, aligning with the nation's commitment to clean and green energy.

As the Yatra unfolds, it resonates with the vision articulated by Prime Minister Modi, envisioning a developed India by 2047 through "Sab Ka Prayas" (collective efforts). Jammu and Kashmir, on its developmental journey, commits to playing a pivotal role in realizing this ambitious goal. The Viksit Bharat Sankalp encapsulates the essence of progress, unity, and determination, symbolizing a radiant future for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the entire nation.

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### TRANSFORMATIVE EMPOWERMENT

## Reshaping Jammu And Kashmir Through Women-Centric Initiatives

The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is creating ripples across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on saturating government schemes with a goal to reach the last person in the queue and propel India into developed status by 2047.

In the realm of women's empowerment, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a series of strategic initiatives over the past four years, reflecting a commitment to fostering progress and inclusivity.

#### Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana: A Breath of Fresh Air

Under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, an impressive 12.45 lakh free LPG gas connections have been provided to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. This initiative not only ensures access to clean cooking fuel but also liberates women from health risks associated with traditional cooking methods involving smoke.

#### PM Awas Yojana - Gramin: Homes for All

Dedicated to providing housing for all, the PM Awas Yojana - Gramin has achieved significant milestones. Impressively, 83.79% of the total planned houses have been completed. Notably, a substantial portion of these homes belongs to women, reflecting a commitment to gender-inclusive development.

#### PM Mudra Yojana: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

The PM Mudra Yojana has played a pivotal role in facilitating entrepreneurship among women. Of the over 15.74 lakh MUDRA loans disbursed, a commendable 22% have been extended to women. This not only supports women in pursuing their entrepreneurial dreams but also contributes to economic growth and empowerment.



**THE STRIDES MADE IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THESE SCHEMES ARE NOT MERELY NUMERIC ACHIEVEMENTS;** they represent a commitment to creating a more equitable and prosperous society

#### Sukanya Samridhi Yojana: Securing the Future

With a focus on securing the future of girl children, the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana has seen over 2.43 lakh accounts opened. This long-term savings scheme empowers families to plan for the education and marriage expenses of their girl children, fostering a more secure and equitable future.

#### Sahi Poshan, Desh Koshan: Nourishing Women and Children

The commitment to holistic well-being is evident through the Sahi Poshan, Desh Koshan initiative. More than 8.06 lakh women and children have received vital nutritional benefits, underlining the comprehensive approach taken to enhance the health and prosperity of the community.

#### Strides in Women's Empowerment - Beyond Numbers

The strides made in women's empowerment through these schemes are not merely numeric achievements; they represent a commitment to creating a more equitable and prosperous society. The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra serves as a testament to the transformative power of targeted initiatives, paving the way

for a brighter and more inclusive future in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

#### Voices from the Ground

Gulnaz Kausar: She stated that PM Shoshan Abhiyan is aiding women by ensuring financial assistance for their nutritional needs during and after pregnancy. She termed it a commendable effort towards improving maternal and child health.

Vandhana from Kathua: She states that the Umeed scheme of NRLM has helped her self-help group become successful entrepreneurs, rather than dependent on anyone for financial support. She is thankful for such women empowerment schemes that have helped women become self-reliant.

Rampyari of Kathua: She shares how the PMAY Scheme

has saved them from the struggles of monsoon rains and other weather vagaries in the absence of a pakka house. She expresses gratitude to the Modi government for its pro-poor policies.

Shakti Sharma's Inspiring Journey: Her journey with the self-help group under UMEED is a testament to resilience and progress. With soft loans from the UMEED scheme of JKRLM, their mushroom-rearing venture soared from ₹5,10,000 to an incredible ₹5 lakh. She compliments PM Modi's policies for empowering women and promoting Aatmanirbhara (self-reliance).

Raziya Begum from Jhulak, Poonch: She expresses gratitude for the financial assistance under PMAY that enabled her financially shattered family to build a house. She is thankful to the government for its pro-poor policies.

Ms. Pushpa Devi: A recipient of the Ujjwala and monthly Old Age Pension schemes, expressed heartfelt thanks to PM Modi upon the arrival of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. The proper hand-holding provided has illuminated their lives. She is also thankful to the Modi Govt for providing free ration under the PM Garib Kalyan Awa Yojana.

Bimal Devi of Kathua: She expresses gratitude for the financial assistance provided by the government under PMAY, enabling her to build her house. She is thankful to the Modi government for the pro-poor schemes.

In conclusion, the multifaceted initiatives under the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra are ushering in a new era of women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir, shaping a more equitable and inclusive future for the region.

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

Centre Sanctions Over 150 Armed CISF Commandos Security Cover For Ayodhya Airport

Press Trust Of India

Ayodhya/New Delhi- The Union home ministry has sanctioned a more than 150 personnel strong CISF anti-terrorist cover for the Ayodhya airport, days before the high-profile consecration ceremony at the Ram temple on January 22, official sources said on Tuesday.



The Maharishi Vaidiki International Airport, Ayodhya, has become the 68th civil airport terminal in the country to come under the umbrella of the specialised aviation security group (ASG) of the central force.

and international airports, they said. An armed contingent of more than 150 CISF personnel under the command of a Deputy Commandant rank officer has been sanctioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for securing the Ayodhya airport that will be enhanced in phases over the 821 acres of land sanctioned for it, they said.

CISF, given the threat perception to the facility that will serve as the air gateway to pilgrims and visitors. A review by central security and intelligence agencies recommended a professional security cover for the airport like the one provided by the CISF.

square feet. Its capacity will be to handle two to three flights every hour. Work is on to build a 2,200-metre-long runway. It means that Boeing 737 and Airbus 319 and 320 will be able to land at this airport. Initially, there is an airport apron for eight aircraft, Scindia had told reporters.

He also said that soon approval from the Cabinet will be taken for the second phase. "In the second phase, as already said by the chief minister (Yogi Adityanath), the length of the runway will be increased from 2,200 metres to 3,700 metres. In other words, the length of the runway will be around four kilometres, so that international aircraft like Boeing 787 and Boeing 777 can land in Ayodhya," Scindia said.

The minister added that the second phase of the airport will be 50,000 square metres. The CISF was entrusted with the task of guarding civil airports in the aftermath of the 1999 hijack of the Indian Airlines Kathmandu-Delhi flight, IC-814, to Kandahar in Afghanistan.

Modi, UAE Prez Hail Rapidly Transforming Bilateral Ties; 4 MoUs Inked On Summit Eve

Press Trust Of India

Gandhinagar - Prime Minister Narendra Modi and United Arab Emirates President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan held a bilateral meeting here on Tuesday and hailed the rapidly transforming India-UAE partnership, officials said. Four MoUs were signed between India and the UAE in the presence of the two leaders, including one between the Gujarat government and DP World, a multinational logistics company based in Dubai, they said.

This was the fourth meeting between Modi and Al Nahyan in less than seven months. "Giving a boost to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership PM @narendramodiheld warm discussions with His @MohamedBinZayed, UAE President and Ruler of Abu Dhabi in Gandhinagar. In their 4th meeting in less than 7 months, the leaders hailed the rapidly transforming India-UAE partnership and

reaffirmed their commitment to a shared and prosperous future," said Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randeep Jaiswal in a post on social media platform X. Giving details about the MoUs in another post, Jaiswal said three of the agreements between India and the UAE were on investment cooperation in renewable energy sector, innovative health care projects and food park development.

Modi received the UAE president and ruler of Abu Dhabi at the Ahmedabad airport and the two leaders participated in a roadshow in the evening. "Welcome to India my brother, HH @MohamedBinZayed. It's an honour to have you visit us," PM Modi said in a tweet. "Reaffirming the strong bonds of friendship in a special gesture, PM @narendramodi warmly received HH @MohamedBinZayed, UAE President and Ruler of Abu Dhabi as he arrived at the Ahmedabad airport. HH

@MohamedBinZayed is the Chief Guest of the 10th @VibrantGujarat Summit," MEA spokesperson Jaiswal said on X. Al Nahyan is the chief guest at the 10th edition of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, which Modi is scheduled to inaugurate at the Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre in Gandhinagar on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the PM held bilateral meetings with President of Timor-Leste Jose Ramos Horta and Mozambique President Filipe Jacinto Nusi. This was followed by his meeting with CEOs of top global corporations. At around 3 pm, Modi inaugurated the Vibrant Gujarat Global Trade Show. The Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, which was started in 2003 when Modi was state CM, is a global forum for business collaboration, knowledge sharing and strategic partnerships for inclusive growth and sustainable development, a statement issued by the PMO said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Alarm! Coldwave

south Kashmir's Anantnag district recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.4 degrees Celsius, up from the previous night's minus 5.3 degrees, they said. The minimum temperature in Kokernag settled at minus 1.2 degrees Celsius and in Kupwara at minus 1.5 degrees.

Kashmir is currently under the grip of 'Chilla-i-Kalan' - the 40-day harshest winter period when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably, leading to the freezing of water bodies as well as water supply lines in several parts of the Valley. The chances of snowfall are the highest during this period and most areas, particularly the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall.

Agriculture and Horticulture

the region's water security when it melts during spring and summer. "Our research findings have confirmed a strong positive correlation between the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) and winter precipitation in the Kashmir region. In months where the NAO index is greater than 1 (positive), the subtropical jet is significantly more intense than in months where the NAO index is less than 1 (negative). Positive NAO leads to more active western disturbances (WDs) that bring the majority of winter precipitation to the Kashmir region," Romshoo explained.

"However, we had a negative NAO during December 2023 and a strongly negative NAO is predicted for January 2024, which could easily be one of the top four most negative NAOs of the past 25 years, leading to very low snowfall during December and January months this winter," he added. Romshoo expressed concern about potential water shortages during the summer due to less-than-normal snowfall, impacting the water-intensive paddy culture in Kashmir. While it is too early to predict snowfall/rainfall for February, March, and April, which are typically wet months. However, he remains hopeful for sufficient precipitation during this period.

development," he said. Dr Bandh said there is a need for strategic water management practices, drought-resistant crop varieties, and adaptive agricultural techniques to mitigate the impact of prolonged dry weather on Kashmir's vital fruit crops. Dr Tariq Kasool, a senior scientist at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST), acknowledged the uncertainty in predicting the impact of the current period on next year's farming. While there may be enough precipitation in the remaining winter days, a prolonged dry winter could potentially lead to fruit quality issues next year, he said.

Mirwais In Delhi

special status. When he was released from house arrest in September last year, Mirwais was allowed to deliver the Friday sermon from the historic mosque for the first time since 2019. However, a few weeks after his release, the government not only barred him from delivering Friday sermons again but also shut the grand mosque for Friday prayers fearing public rallies in support of Palestine.

India-Saudi Fix 1.75

possible help, the statement said. "The initiative of the Government of India towards encouraging participation under the Ladies without Mehram (LWM) category was discussed, deeply appreciated and lauded," it added. Irani and Muraleedharan later visited the Hajj Terminal of King Abdulaziz International Airport, Jeddah, to oversee the arrangements for pilgrims and explore ways to facilitate better logistics and monitoring mechanisms for their convenience. They also met with Prof. Dr. Ali Erba, President of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyane) in Türkiye and Dr. Hıj. Na'im bin Hıj. Mokhtar, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Islamic Affairs) separately on the sidelines of the signing of the bilateral. "Productive discussions today with Prof. @DIBAliErba, President of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyane), Türkiye. Explored avenues for shared growth and stronger India-Türkiye bilateral ties, while exchanging insights on Hajj management and adoption of best practices for enhanced pilgrimage experience," Irani said in another post.

delivery of services, setting up and enhancement of robust and reliable medical facilities for the pilgrims, and measures taken especially for the care and facilitation of the women pilgrims were particularly discussed. "It was further resolved that avenues and scope for further exchange of ideas and collaboration would be explored so as to ensure that maximum benefits from the adoption of best practices accrue to the Hajj pilgrims," another statement said.

First Ever Non-Muslim

joint Secretary Haj, an IRS officer from Punjab, and IRS officer Nirupama Kotru from Kashmir. On Monday, Irani will attend the opening ceremony of the 3rd Edition of Hajj and Umrah Conference in Jeddah being organised by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah Affairs. Irani, also serving as the Union Minister for Women & Child Development, will also meet the Indian business community and Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia.

Joint Secretary Haj

On Monday, Irani will attend the opening ceremony of the 3rd Edition of Hajj and Umrah Conference in Jeddah being organised by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah Affairs. Irani, also serving as the Union Minister for Women & Child Development, will also meet the Indian business community and Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia.

Undertook a historic journey to Madinah

today, one of Islam's holiest cities included a visit to the periphery of the revered Prophet's Mosque, Al Masjid Al Nabwi, the mountain of Uhud, and periphery of the Quba Mosque - the first Mosque of Islam," sumiri irani said in a post on X. "The significance of the visit to these sites courtesy Saudi officials, intertwined with early Islamic history, underscores the depth of our cultural and spiritual engagement," she added. Irani led a delegation of senior officials from the Ministry of Minority Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs to the Hajj and Umrah Conference and Exhibition organised by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah at Jeddah. The participation was a part of the ongoing visit to Saudi Arabia, during which the Bilateral Hajj Agreement for Hajj 2024 was signed between the two countries.

delegation also interacted with Umrah pilgrims from India.

The visit shall help provide a first hand insight into the arrangements required to be made for ensuring a comfortable Hajj 2024 for the Indian pilgrims, it added. The Government of India is deeply committed to assisting in providing facilities and services to Indian Muslims who undertake the Hajj pilgrimage, thereby providing them with a comfortable and fulfilling experience," it said. India and Saudi Arabia share warm and cordial ties and the Government of India deeply appreciates the special gesture of Saudi's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in facilitating this visit of the Indian delegation to Madinah, the statement added.

HCI Invites

Accordingly, all eligible interested persons are informed to go through the details of the said Circular and follow the instructions thereof for applying online as Hajj Trainer.

NIA Charges

IPC and UA (P) Act, 1967. The Supplementary chargesheet follows investigations in the case (RC-05/2022/NIA/JMU) registered suo-motu under the NIA on 21st June 2022. The case relates to a conspiracy hatched physically as well as in cyberspace by various proscribed terrorist organisations to spread fear and terror and disrupt peace in J&K. Investigations so far have revealed that the chargesheeted trio had entered into a criminal conspiracy to carry out terrorist attacks on security forces and others in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir with the intention to wage war against the Government of India. Habibullah Malik was an active Commander of Pakistan-based The Resistance Front (TRF), an offshoot of the proscribed LeT terrorist outfit. He was engaged in motivating vulnerable Kashmiri youth to join the TRF/LeT for carrying out terrorist activities in J&K.

As per NIA investigations, Habibullah had radicalised the other two accused, Hilal and Musaab, both of whom had started working as Awam Ground Workers (OGWs) for him. On Habibullah's directions, the two OGWs had collected and transported funds and weapons from/to his other OGWs to facilitate and support terror attacks in J&K. The entire conspiracy was found to be part of the bigger plans of the banned terrorist outfits to commit acts of terror and violence by indoctrinating local youth and mobilising overground workers to disturb peace and communal harmony in J&K. With the various banned terrorist organisations floating new outfits to carry out their terror related activities in J&K, the NIA has stepped up its crackdown and investigations in the region in recent months. Under the NIA scanner

are outfits such as The Resistance Front (TRF), United Liberation Front Jammu & Kashmir (ULF/J&K), Mujahideen Gazwat-ul-Hind (MGH), Jammu & Kashmir Freedom Fighters (JFF), Kashmir Tigers, PAAF and others. These outfits are affiliated to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Al-Badr, Al-Qaeda, etc.

Transporters' Machine-made

introduced by the Centre regarding hit-and-run cases. bringing handmade copperware under the protection of the Geographical Indication Act. Furthermore, the department has recently included copperware, along with 20 other crafts, in the category of "Notified Crafts" to support local artisans. This inclusion facilitated the registration of copperware artisans, granting them access to various government support programs.

Jatin Kishore

and interacted with the employees. Meanwhile, the officers and officials of DIPR also accorded an affectionate farewell to outgoing Director Mingsha Sherpa, who has been posted as Deputy Commissioner Baranulla. increase further in the coming season. "The fish production in Kashmir has increased by 5840 tons, generating 366.12 lakhs of revenue during this period," the official said. He added, "The production of trout has increased from 598 tons in 2019 to 1990 tons during the financial year 2022-23. To enhance fish productivity, the department imports fish seed from foreign countries." 1144 Trout Rearing Units have been set up in the private sector, and 56% (611 units) were established in the last four years to generate employment opportunities for the youth.

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 KING'S COLLEGE LONDON K PODCAST

## Ayushman Bharat PMJAY, SEHAT Scheme

### Over 93% Of Families In J&K Have At Least 1 Ayushman Card

**Observer News Service**  
**JAMMU:** Over 93% of families in Jammu and Kashmir now possess at least one Ayushman Card, with more than 83% of entitled beneficiaries having received their cards, officials said Tuesday.

These details were shared during a meeting chaired by Secretary Health and Medical Education (H&ME), Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah on Tuesday to review implementation of Ayushman Bharat PMJAY/SEHAT scheme in Jammu & Kashmir, an official spokesperson said.

CEO State Health Agency (SHA), Sanjiv Gadkar, presented a comprehensive overview of scheme's implementation across the region. Notably, it was highlighted that over 93% of families in J&K now possess at least one Ayushman Card, with more than 83% of entitled beneficiaries having received their cards.

It was informed in the meeting that so far more than 10.7 lakh medical treatments have been successfully administered under the scheme. This has resulted in claims amounting over Rs. 1449 crore being disbursed to hospitals. Besides, detailed

insights were also provided on the significant contributions made by both Public and Private empanelled hospitals.

Dr. Abid Rasheed emphasized the pivotal role of the Ayushman Bharat PMJAY/SEHAT scheme, terming it as one of the most ambitious healthcare initiatives in Jammu & Kashmir. He highlighted the substantial improvement in healthcare accessibility for the populace due to its effective implementation.

He urged upon all stakeholders to strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes, ensuring stringent action against any instance of fraud within the scheme. "This scheme, crafted under the guidance of Prime Minister, is for the welfare of the people, and we must ensure that its objectives are met in letter and spirit," he asserted.

Secretary further outlined the imperative need to focus on achieving 100% saturation of Ayushman cards within the UT of J&K, emphasizing the urgency of this objective.

According to the meeting, headed by Director Finance, H&ME, State Grievance Officer, SHA and other representatives from SHA besides other officials.



**A MAN TAKES A PICTURE** of his friend amidst the icicles formed due to sub-zero temperature in the Drang area of North Kashmir's Baramulla district. PHOTO: ABID BHAT

## SEC To Launch Campaign For Revision Of Panchayat Electoral Rolls

**Observer News Service**  
**JAMMU:** State Election Commission (SEC) has notified the dates for updation of Panchayat Electoral Roll-2024 in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.



According to the revision schedule issued by the Commission, the publication of draft Panchayat Electoral Roll will start from 15th January 2024. Besides, 1st January 2024 has been kept as qualifying date for all those who have attained age of 18 and have become eligible for registering their name in the Panchayat Electoral Roll-2024.

Similarly, the period for filing of claims, objections for additions, deletions, corrections and transposition will be from 15th January to 5th February 2024. The date for disposal of claims and objection

(PEBO) comprising Village Level Workers (VLMs), Multi Purpose Workers (MPWs) and Gram Rozgar Sevaks (GRS) along with Assembly Booth Level Officers shall remain available with requisite forms and Panchayat Roll for guidance of electors on 27-28th January and 3rd-4th February 2024.

It has also been informed in the schedule that special camps would be held at polling booth locations. The Panchayat Electoral Booth Officials

## Drug Peddlers House, Shops Attached In Pulwama

**Observer News Service**  
**SRINAGAR:** Intensifying its efforts to end drug menace, Police on Tuesday attached a house and shops worth lakhs of drug peddlers in South Kashmir's Pulwama district.

A double-storied residential house worth over Rs 20,92,291 belonging to a notorious drug peddler Fayaz Ahmad Rafter of Karimabad and wwo Shops with 2nd floor as residential apartment worth Rs 35,18,661 of another drug peddler Mohammad Maqbool Bhat alias Tola of Dalipora Pulwama was attached by police under section 8/21-29 NDPS Act 1985, a police spokesperson said.

This action, he said, follows a thorough investigation, identifying these properties as illegally acquired during the course of illicit drug trafficking.

"Both individuals are currently under legal custody, reinforcing J&K Police's commitment to combating activities detrimental to public safety and national security," he said.

The spokesperson further said that the attachment was carried out in accordance with the due legal process outlined in FIR No. 301/2023 U/S 8/21-29 NDPS Act of PS Pulwama, underscoring the vigilance of Pulwama Police against those involved in the drug trade.

"This action reaffirms the commitment of Police to combat the drug menace. Local people of the area have hailed the initiative of Police with regard to the attachment of properties, which have been raised/used for illicit trafficking of narcotics by the drug peddlers in the District Pulwama," he added.

## Dr Piyush Singla Reviews Working Of School Education Dept

**Observer News Service**  
**JAMMU:** After assuming charge of School Education Department as Secretary, Dr. Piyush Singla, took a comprehensive review of the department today at the Civil Secretariat here.

A detailed presentation on various facets of the department was made by the officers of the department.

The meeting had detailed discussion on functioning of the department, Centrally Sponsored Schemes, physical and financial progress made under UT Capex, issues of HRM and best practices and initiatives of the department.

Secretary laid emphasis on

timely completion of DPCs, analyzing seniority and ensuring availability of quality infrastructure to students. He enjoined upon all the officers and officials to uphold the principles of punctuality, discipline and ensure quality education. He also instructed them for effective implementation of new initiatives such as PM SHRI, Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK), Samiksha app and JK attend app.

The meeting was attended by both the Directors of School Education, Director Finance SED, Special Secretaries SED, Project Director Samagra Shiksha, Joint Director Planning and other officers of the department.



## LAC Stalemate

### Hope Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai Environment Is Rebuild Again: Dr Farooq

**Press Trust Of India**  
**JAMMU:** National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah Tuesday said India is making efforts to resolve the border issue with China through talks but unless Beijing comes forward with a positive response, "nothing can be done".

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a function here, he also hoped that the Hindi-Chini bhai bhai sentiment is rebuild again.



"The influence of China has been increasing everywhere. It is increasing its influence in Nepal, which is our neighbour. It has already had influence over Pakistan. Its influence is increasing in Bangladesh. China has encircled us. There are two things about it," he said.

Highlighting India's efforts for resolution through dialogue, Abdullah said, "India is making efforts to resolve issues through talks. Unless China comes forward with a positive response, nothing can be done."

Expressing hope for restoring

the camaraderie between India and China, he said, "India and China were friends at the time of formulation of Panchsheel during the period of Jawaharlal Nehru. But there was a wedge after the 1962 war. We hope the Hindi-Chini bhai bhai environment is rebuild again."

When asked about the controversy surrounding the Maldives, Abdullah said, "I have never been to the Maldives, so I don't know much about it. But India has always helped Maldives. I don't know the reason behind this controversy. Is this controversy a result of the Hindu-Muslim divide being created in India? I believe our foreign

ministry will be able to explain this controversy." He further said that India has come to rescue the Maldives at difficult times.

"India has always supported Maldives. When some rogue Indian had invaded it, the Indian Army went to that country, removed them, and saved the country. They came back after fulfilling the task. I don't know why this controversy happened," he added.

On the Ram temple opening and invitations being extended, Abdullah said, "Bhagwan Ram is among everyone in this world. Farooq Abdullah cannot say anything, who is to be invited or not. Everybody should go to the temple." He also urged leaders of all parties to refrain from politicising religious matters. "It is a religious matter. There should be no politics over it. It should not be connected to politics," he said.

Responding to a question about his potential invitation to the grand event, Abdullah said, "I am a small fly."

## Fire Renders 13 Families Homeless In Anantnag

Locals Demand Compensation; DC Visits Spot

**Agencies**  
**ANANTNAG:** More than a dozen structures were gutted in a massive fire that broke out in the Boat Colony area of Khanabal in South Kashmir's Anantnag district late last night, officials said on Tuesday.

An official said that the fire broke out last night at around 03:00 AM from one of the structures, which later spread to others, causing damage to the houses belonging to 13 families.

He said that soon after the incident, the fire tenders reached the spot to douse off the flames, however, by then, the houses had suffered extensive damage.

The official said that there was no loss of life reported in the incident.

According to locals, the damaged houses belong to Javid Ahmed Shaksaz, Abdul Gaffar Shaksaz, Mukhtar Ahmed Guroo, Baby Jan, Mohammed Ashraf Purosh, Nisar Ahmed Guroo, Reyaz Ahmed Guroo, Muzaffar Ahmed, Mushtaq Muzaffar Ahmed, Mohammed Rafiq Shah, Mohammed Ashraf Wali, Sajad Ahmed Wani and Abdul Gani Wani.

Meanwhile, locals urged the government to provide compensation to the affected families.

"In this harsh winter, the government should compensate the families and relocate them to safer places," they said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner of Anantnag, Syed Fakhruddin Hamid visited the spot on and assured the families full support from the district administration—(KNO)

## Govt Rejects Policeman's Plea For Change Of DoB After 2 Decades

**Agencies**  
**SRINAGAR:** The government on Tuesday rejected plea of a policeman, seeking "correction" of his date of birth after rendering around two decades of service.

Actually, the policeman Rajinder Kumar had filed an application before the Central Administrative Tribunal, Jammu, seeking direction the authorities to correct his date of birth as 3 July 1978 instead of 3 July 1976 in his character roll.

The CAT had disposed of Kumar's plea on 1 March 2021 with the direction to, Chief Accounts Officer, Police Head Quarters, J&K to implement the order (No. DE/2014/9008-11/009 dated 01.03.2014) passed by S&F Jammu and take a decision in accordance with law. In case, the order of the SAT was complied with, the CAT had directed that all consequential service benefits may be given to Kumar.

Referring to police rules as well as provisions governing the alteration of date of birth, provided in Article-35 AA (c) of the

Jammu & Kashmir Civil Service Regulations, 1956, the government said that alteration in the date of birth of an employee can be effected only within five years from the date of entry into Government service. "The official-applicant (Kumar) failed to represent for alteration of his recorded date of birth within the prescribed time limit and has filed a representation with PHQ after rendering over two decades of service," reads the order by Raj Kumar Goyal, Financial Commissioner (Home)/Additional Chief Secretary.

"Now, therefore, in due deference to the Order of the Central Administrative Tribunal, Srinagar in O.A. No. 61/507/2020 dated 01.03.2021 titled Rajinder Kumar vs. Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Ors, the claim of Rajinder Kumar, Constable, after having been examined and considered in terms of the relevant documents and the rules governing the subject, is for reasons recorded, found devoid of any merit and hence rejected," the order added. (GNS)

## 3rd Chief Secretaries Conference Dulloo Sensitizes Admin Secretaries About New Targets Set By PM

**Observer News Service**  
**JAMMU:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Tuesday chaired a meeting of all the Administrative Secretaries and other senior functionaries of the administration to take stock of the achievements made on different parameters and goals set during the first two National Conferences of Chief Secretaries besides setting the tone for smooth implementation of new targets set in the 3rd Conference.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon all the Administrative heads to look into the progress of implementation of all the focal points given in the first two conferences by the Prime Minister to States/UTs. He asked each of them to apprise him about the status of each item. He called for devising an effective strategy to achieve all the targets in a set timeline besides submission of Action Task Reports (ATRs) to his office in next few days.

Regarding the 3rd Conference which was held at New Delhi between 27th to 29th December previous year and was attended by Dulloo himself, he directed for taking all the pre-emptive measures to transform them into the reality in a time bound manner.

The Chief Secretary called these targets very ambitious and highly transformative that is going to change the style of governance for betterment of the common people. He made out that frequent reviews of these goals should be taken by each Administrative Secretary besides he himself desired to take periodical review of these targets each month.

While elucidating the Chief Secretary highlighted several areas on which the Prime Minister laid emphasis upon. He enumerated that the areas like water by resorting to testing by the consumers themselves.

## Bhaderwah's Ethnic Food Adds Zing To Tourists' Taste Buds

**Press Trust Of India**  
**BHADERWAH:** Snowy destinations of Jammu and Kashmir's Bhaderwah that are attracting visitors in droves is not only boosting the local economy but also acting as a catalyst to empower women from the area.

The snowy meadows of Gulanda on the Bhaderwah-Pathankot highway are the recently held 'Vibrant Bhaderwah Winter Festival', which witnessed unprecedented tourist footfall, are giving a new dimension to the local economy.

Local cuisine, including the GI-tagged rajma, sarson ka saag and makkhi ki roti (corn-based mustard greens), knoll khool pickle and shatlo (local noodles) have grown in popu-



but also bringing brisk business. The newfound success and recognition is giving the women confidence to further strengthen their ventures.

"I will start earning at this age by cooking sarson ka saag and makkhi ki roti but my grandson encouraged me to open a stall at Gulanda meadow. Surprisingly, it became an instant hit with the tourists," Shikuntla Devi (67) of Bheja village said.

She said the newfound success is giving her confidence and self-respect, besides the appreciation of tourists.

"My husband is a cab driver on the Bhaderwah-Sarbal route but the road got closed after the November snowfall and we were struggling to make a living. The sudden

rush of visitors has given a new lease of life to us," said Anuradha Katal (32) Katyara village. She has been serving the recently GI-tagged local rajma and rice and knoll-khol pickle to the visitors for the past month.

"The positive feedback from the customers has encouraged me to make cooking my permanent profession," she said.

The tourists who have been converging in large numbers since the first snowfall on October 19 last year are also ecstatic and said their taste buds will remember the zing of ethnic Bhaderwah food for a long time.

"After Gulanda, the local cuisine is the second best thing we will remember," said Simran, a tourist from Uttar Pradesh.

Email: [sonrajgoyal@gmail.com](mailto:sonrajgoyal@gmail.com) Ph. No: 0194-2319203  
Government of Jammu & Kashmir  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION RAJBAGH SRINAGAR.**  
LAL MANDI, NEAR I.D. HOSPITAL, SRINAGAR.

**Subject:-** Face lifting of Excise and Taxation Complex at Solina Srinagar.  
**Reference:-** This office NIT No. 49/R&B/Raj of 2024 issued under endorsement No.4123-33 Dated: 15.12.2023.

**CANCELLATION**  
The subject work floated for tenders vide above referred NIT No & date shall and shall be deemed to have been cancelled abinitio owing to the change in quantity and quality of requirements substantially/ Un-Rectifiable infirmity.

No. 5302-10 Sd/-  
Dated: 09.01.2024 Executive Engineer,  
DIPK-14928-23 R&B Division Rajbagh  
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## 4TH KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

## Have An Opportunity To Present Our Rich Culture, Hospitality: LG

Observer News Service

JAMMU: In the meeting, Sinha directed the departments concerned to complete all works expeditiously through time-bound action plans and ensure all the facilities meet the international standards.

The 4th Khelo India Winter Games is scheduled to begin on February 2nd at Gulmarg.

"The success of previous editions of Khelo India Winter Games has transformed J&K UT into a winter sports hub. It must be ensured that this year too becomes a momentous occasion for athletes and winter sports enthusiasts coming to J&K UT from across the country. We will have an opportunity to present our rich culture and warm hospitality and everyone must work



together to create a memorable experience for them," he said.

The meeting also discussed the comprehensive strategy for promotional campaigns, establishment of joint control rooms, deputation of Nodal officers, smooth flow of traffic, parking spaces, lodging, transportation, uninterrupted power & water

supply, medical facilities, public utility and other amenities.

Sinha directed the concerned departments for effective coordination for the smooth conduct of the games.

Earlier, the LG was briefed by Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary Youth Services and Sports, on the progress of preparatory works

assigned to the concerned departments.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to Lt Governor, Atal Dullo Chief Secretary; Dr Mandep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; senior officers of Police and Civil administration attended the meeting in person and through virtual mode.

## Huzaif Claims Gold In Under-14 Sqay Nationals

Observer News Service



SRINAGAR: Mohammad Huzaif secured a Gold medal in the Under-14 category at the 24th Sqay Martial Arts Championship, which was held at Suresh Gyan Vihar University in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The championship took place from January 4 to 6.

Huzaif is a student of Birla Open Minds School Pamore. The school announced its students had secured 3 Gold, 7 Silver and 1 Bronze in the championship.

## Vipul Sharma Wins Silver In Judo



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Vipul Sharma, an exceptional Judo athlete from J&K, achieved a remarkable feat at the 67th National School Games held in Ludhiana on Tuesday.

Sharma competed in the 73 kg weight category and secured the prestigious Silver medal.

Under the expert guidance of Judo Coach Rajive Kumar, Sharma displayed exceptional skill and determination throughout the competition.

Director Department of Youth Services and Sports J&K Subash Chander Chhibber expressed his heartfelt congratulations and good wishes to the deserving player and his coach.

## Iyer Added To Mumbai Squad For Ranji Trophy



Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: India batter Shreyas Iyer was on Tuesday added to the Mumbai squad for their next Ranji Trophy game against Andhra to be played here from January 12-15.

Having struggled with the bat largely during India's two-match Test series in South Africa in challenging conditions, the right-handed batter would be looking to regain form and bolster preparations for the Tests against England beginning January 25.

Iyer has replaced middle-order batter Sarfaraz Khan, who

will join the India A team for the series against England A in Ahmedabad.

However, Mumbai will be without the services of all-rounder Shivam Dube who has been summoned to the national team for the upcoming three-match series starting against Afghanistan beginning on January 11.

The 41-time winners in the Ranji Trophy, Mumbai, are coming off an outright win against Bihar in Patna. Mumbai bagged seven points after they crushed Bihar by a margin of an innings and 51 runs with their fast bowlers ruling the roost.

## J&amp;K Para Archer Sheetal Devi Receives Arjuna Award

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: India's best-performing athletes were on Tuesday conferred with the national sports awards by President Droupadi Murmu in a regal ceremony where cricketer Mohammed Shami and para archer Sheetal Devi, who hails from J&K's Kishtwar district, walked in to a rapturous applause at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Shuttlers Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy were chosen for the coveted Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award for a breakout 2023, during which they won their maiden Asian Games gold — a first for India in badminton —, while also clinching the Asian Championships title and the Indonesia Open Super 1000 title.

An atmosphere of gaiety pervaded the Rashtrapati Bhawan as 26 athletes and para-athletes were finalised for the Arjuna Awards this



year, with teenager pistol ace Esha Singh the only one to miss the ceremony.

The Durbar Hall reverberated with the claps of the dignitaries when para archer Sheetal Devi, winner of three gold medals at the Para Asian Games in Hangzhou, walked up to collect her Arjuna.

The 16-year-old is the only international para-archery champion without upper limbs due to a rare medical condition called Phocomelia. The President held Sheetal's award and the scroll as the teenager soaked in the atmosphere and the splendour of the hall.

## ICC Rates South Africa's Newlands Pitch As Unsatisfactory



Press Trust of India

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday rated the Newlands pitch for the second Test between India and South Africa as "unsatisfactory" after it ended inside five sessions.

India defeated the hosts by seven wickets in the match, which turned out to be the shortest-ever in the history of Test cricket. The victory allowed India to lead the two-match series 1-1.

The decision was made under the ICC Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process. Only 642 balls could be bowled in the match.

"The pitch in Newlands was very difficult to bat on. The ball bounced quickly and sometimes alarmingly throughout the match, making it difficult to play shots," said Chris Broad, the match referee for the Test, in his report submitted to the ICC.

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma was exceptionally vocal in his criticism of the Newlands surface.

"We saw what happened in this match, how the pitch played. I don't mind playing on pitches like this. As long as everyone keeps their mouth shut in India and don't talk too much about Indian pitches," Rohit had told reporters in his post-match press meet.

"Because you come to Test cricket to challenge yourself. Yes, it is dangerous. It is challenging. So, when people come to India, it is again pretty challenging as well."

If the pitch starts turning (in India), people start talking about 'Puff of dust! Puff of dust!' There's so much crack here (Newlands) on the pitch," he added.

## Werner, Toney, Henderson ... Mbappé? The Key Players Set For Possible PL Transfers

The Associated Press

It has been a slow start to the January transfer window in the Premier League. Expect that to change pretty quickly.

Deals are being mooted, speculation is starting to fly, sought-after stars — like Kylian Mbappé and Ivan Toney — have chosen to talk about their future to the media.

Here's a look at the situation surrounding a number of key players and teams:

## TIMO WERNER

Timo Werner might have won the Champions League during his time with Chelsea from 2020-22 but it was still an underwhelming stint in English soccer for the German forward.

It looks like he'll be returning to England — to London again, too — in a bid to ignite his career ahead of the European Championship.

Werner is widely reported to be close to joining Tottenham from Leipzig, initially on loan but with a view to a permanent move. In the short term, he would plug a gap left by the departure of captain Son Heung-min to the Asian Cup potentially until mid-February.

## IVAN TONEY

Ivan Toney's eight-month sus-

pension for breaching betting rules is almost over, with the Brentford striker available again from Jan. 17. It is interesting timing, with a number of top teams seemingly in need of a proven scorer for the second half of the season.

Toney would fit the bill — he was third in the Premier League's scoring charts last season, behind only Erling Haaland and Harry Kane — and he has been heavily linked with Arsenal, which is in the midst of a scoring slump that is perplexing manager Mikel Arteta.

Toney gave an interview to British broadcaster Sky Sports, published Monday, in which he said he owes Brentford for sticking by him during his long ban. Brentford manager Thomas Frank has said Toney won't be sold in January, and the team needs its star striker after plunging into relegation danger in recent weeks.

Money talks, though, and Toney's future could be a talking point right until the end of the window.

## LEAVING SAUDI?

Jordan Henderson took plenty of flak when he decided to join the exodus of players moving to Saudi Arabia on lucrative deals, with advocates of LGBTQ+ rights feeling let down by the former Liverpool captain because he has been an out-



## KYLIAN MBAPPE

Something has to give soon in the ongoing transfer saga involving Kylian Mbappé, arguably the world's best player.

His contract at Paris Saint-Germain is up at the end of the season, when he can leave for nothing. PSG is saying the club will not let him go for free. Mbappé appears happy to stay until the summer, and scored a hat trick in PSG's 9-0 win over sixth-tier side Revel in the French Cup on Sunday.

The widespread belief is that Mbappé will end up at Real Madrid, though there is scope for a team from the lucrative Premier League to come in for him.

Liverpool has long seemed the most likely destination for the France international if he did move to England. The departure of Mohamed Salah, potentially to Saudi Arabia, would leave a gap in Liverpool's forward line but that won't happen before the summer, by which time it could be too late.

A move to Manchester United, a team that could offer Mbappé's wages, as the centerpiece of a new era for the club seems fanciful given it is far from assured of playing in the Champions League next season.

spoken supporter in the past.

Six months later and it appears he wants out, with sections of the British media reporting he will consider a return to the Premier League this month after struggling

to settle in the Middle East. Similarly, Roberto Firmino — another former Liverpool player — is reportedly willing to leave the Saudi league and Karim Benzema could yet be enticed back to Europe to

return to playing at the highest level.

Tottenham and Chelsea could be options for Henderson as they have been light on central midfielders at times this season.