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Chasing The Kashmir Dream

Tourists Forge Their Own Snowy Trails, Flock to Sinthan Top



Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Tourists are making a beeline to Sinthan Top as the off-beat destination boasts of being the only place in Kashmir which is snow-clad these days while the rest of the valley battles with dry weather. Sinthan top is a snow-clad mountain peak situated at 12,500 feet connecting Anantnag in south Kashmir to Kishtwar in Jammu region via Kokernag.

As Kashmir is going through one of its worst dry phases, snow has melted at most places which usually remained

covered under a thick blanket of snow for this time of the year, officials said.

Higher reaches of the valley, which used to look pristine with a white carpet of snow, are looking barren as most of the glaciers have melted up. Similar is the case in Ladakh region, they said.

The officials said scores of tourists have returned home from Kashmir dejected without getting a feel of snow. A large number of tourists, who arrived here around the New Year's Eve in the hope of enjoying skiing and other snow-related activities in the | [More on P6](#)



Amidst the warming weather in Kashmir, a young boy picks ripe oranges in an orchard in Srinagar. In the days of yore, who would have imagined that tropical fruits like lemon and oranges would find a home in the lush Kashmir valley? Yet, unexpectedly, the changing climate patterns have granted the zestful fruits a new territory to flourish. KO Pix Abid Bhat

Light Rain, Snow From Jan 25 In J&K: MeT

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Weatherman has forecasted light rain and snow at a few places in Jammu and Kashmir from January 25-27.

While dry weather was likely to continue till January 24, a meteorological department official said that there is also the possibility of light rain and snow at scattered places from January 28-30.

He said that there is going to be improvement in visibility and maximum temperature during the next 2 days over Jammu Division which is presently witnessing fog during the morning.

Meanwhile, there was some respite from the intense cold wave in Kashmir as night temperatures rose significantly at most places in the valley, the official said. Srinagar city recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.4 degrees | [More on P6](#)

Iran's Attack in Pakistan Sparks Diplomatic Crisis

Agencies

Pakistan: Pakistan recalled its ambassador to Tehran on Wednesday, a day after Iran launched airstrikes on Pakistan that it claimed targeted bases of a terror group. Islamabad angrily denounced the attack as a "blatant violation" of its airspace and said it killed two children.

Tuesday's strike on Pakistan's restive southwestern Baluchistan province imperiled diplomatic relations between the two neighbors, but both sides appeared wary of provoking the other. Iran and nuclear-armed Pakistan have long regarded each other with suspicion over militant attacks.

The attack also threatened to further ignite violence in a Middle East unsettled by Israel's ongoing war on Gaza. Iran launched strikes late Monday in Iraq and Syria over a suicide bombing that killed more than 90 people earlier this month. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the bombing. | [More on P6](#)

THERE IS NO SNOW ELSEWHERE IN KASHMIR IN THE MONTH OF JANUARY, but my heart filled with joy when I reached Sinthan Top. The weather is very good, Kashmir is truly a paradise.

Ayushman Health Insurance Cover Likely To Be Doubled

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The government is working on finalising a proposal to double the insurance cover under its flagship Ayushman Bharat health scheme to Rs 10 lakh to ensure that serious diseases like cancer and transplants that entail more expenditure are

supported by it, official sources said on Wednesday.

An announcement to this effect is likely to be made in the interim Union Budget on February 1, the sources told PTI.

The Union health ministry is also planning to double the beneficiaries to 100 crore under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri | [More on P6](#)

FOREST FIRE RISKS

Entry In Forests, Wildlife Protected Areas Banned

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: In response to recent forest fires brought on by the prolonged dry spell in the valley, the Department of Wildlife Protection has prohibited unauthorized entry into forest and wildlife protected areas.

The department, in this direction, has issued a notice expressing concerns about potential forest fires which may be challenging to manage and could result in harm to the forest and protected areas.

"Due to the long prevailing dry spell in the Valley, there

have been incidents of forest fires and there is strong apprehension of forest fires which may be hard to control and can cause big damages to the forest and wildlife protected areas in view of the dry vegetation," reads the notice.

It said that anyone found within a forest area without proper permission from the department concerned shall be strictly dealt with under the provisions of Wildlife Protection Act.

"Persistent dry weather in Kashmir has led to frequent unauthorized camping in forest areas, | [More on P6](#)

Two Injured In Kulgam Forest Fire

The ongoing dry spell has triggered a massive bushfire in South Kashmir's Kulgam district while two of the forest department employees have sustained injuries during a | [More on P6](#)

'Admissions For J&K Students In Pakistani Colleges'

ED Attaches Assets In Terror Funding Case

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday said it has attached immovable assets and bank deposits worth Rs 5 crore as part of an investigation against some Jammu and Kashmir-based operatives who channelled funds for terrorist activities and stone pelting.

Seven immovable assets and two bank accounts have been provisionally attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). They belong to separatist organisation Salvation Front's chief Mohd Akbar Bhat,

Fatima Shah, Qazi Yasir, Mohammad Abdullah Shah and Iqbal Mir, the ED said in a statement.

The money laundering case stems from Jammu and Kashmir Police FIR and a charge sheet it filed against Akbar Bhat, Fatima Shah, Akbar Ahmad Bhat, Qazi Yasir, Syed Khalid Geelani alias Khalid Andrab and others on charges of being

"hand-in-glove with some Pakistani handlers who arranged admission in MBBS and other courses in Pakistani colleges for J&K students". Each student was charged about Rs | [More on P6](#)

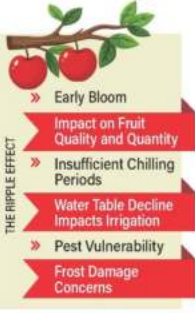
Kashmir Fruit Growers Stare At Losses Amid Prolonged Dry spell

Agencies

Srinagar: Fruit growers in Kashmir stare at losses as experts predict that the prolonged dry spell may lead to early flowering, impacting the quality and quantity of the fruit.

The continuous dry spell, with no rainfall or snowfall even in January, has raised concerns among fruit growers and farmers in the valley.

Experts who spoke with Kashmir News Observer warned that the lack of soil moisture resulting from the prolonged dry spell could adversely affect the quality and yield of fruits, particularly



apples, in the upcoming season.

Prof Khalid Mushtaq, Head, Division of Fruit Sciences at SKUAST Srinagar said, "As of now, we are in a safe zone and let's hope for the best."

However, if this dryness continues till February and the temperature rises to 20-25°C, then it could lead to early flowering that will impact the fruit set, he warned.

Dr Mushtaq said the fruit set will be less and will impact the yield as well. He advised against pruning in these weather conditions, saying it can affect the trees.

Akhtar Malik, a scientist at the Kashmir University's Department | [More on P6](#)

LG Released J&K Haj Committee's Coffee Table Book

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha released the Coffee Table Book of Jammu Kashmir Haj Committee "The Spiritual Journey Haj" at Raj Bhawan.

The LG congratulated Jammu and Kashmir Haj Committee and the editorial team on the occasion.

Sinha said that the pilgrimage to the Holy places during Haj and Umrah is a cherished life-long dream and the Coffee Table Book will considerably improve the ease of travel and provide much-needed information about services rendered to the respected Hajis.

"I extend my greetings and felicitations to the Jammu Kashmir Haj Committee for this



thoughtful publication, which will also provide glimpses of places, instructions as well as the guidelines to pilgrims to ensure they are able to perform their pilgrimage in a proper and befitting manner," the LG said. Safina Baig, Chairperson of J&K Haj Committee; Vijay

Kumar Bidhuri, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Dr Shujaat Ahmad, Executive Officer J&K Haj Committee; Moulvi Mohammad Ashraf, Member J&K Haj Committee and Irshad Ahmad, Haj Officer were present on the occasion. Meanwhile, Lieutenant

Governor Manoj Sinha released 'Intikhab-e-Kalam-e-Rahi' Urdu translation of the poetic compositions of Jnanpith Award recipient poet Prof. Rehman Rahi by noted writer Dr Satish Vimal.

The LG congratulated Dr Satish Vimal and the team associated with | [More on P6](#)

HOW MUCH GAMING IS TOO MUCH?

Video Gamers At Higher Risk Of Irreversible Hearing Loss, Tinnitus, New Research Finds

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Video gamers worldwide might be at a higher risk of irreversible hearing loss or developing a persistent ringing, or tinnitus, in their ears, new research published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Public Health has found.

Such gamers are known to often expose themselves to high-intensity sound levels and for several hours at a stretch, and researchers have found that the sound levels often near, or exceed, permissible safe limits, which for children is 75 decibels for 40 hours a week.

3 BILLION Gamers Worldwide in 2022

The international research team, including researchers from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Medical University of South Carolina, US, reviewed 14 studies from 9 countries in North America, Europe, South East Asia, Asia and Australasia, that included more than 50,000 people in all.

The researchers said that "relatively little" attention has been paid to the effects of video games, including e-sports, on hearing loss, even as headphones, earbuds, and music venues have been acknowledged as sources of

potentially unsafe sound levels.

"The findings suggest that there may be a need to prioritise interventions, such as initiatives focused on education and awareness of the potential risks of gaming, that can help promote safe listening among gamers," they wrote.

One of the research papers the team analysed estimated that there were more than 3 billion gamers worldwide in 2022, and six papers reported that video gaming prevalence among young people ranged from 20 to 68 per cent, they said.

20 TO 68 % Video Gaming Prevalence Among Young

In their analysis, the researchers found that of the five studies that evaluated associations between gaming and self-reported hearing loss or tinnitus, two linked the use of school students' gaming centres to more chances of severe tinnitus and high-frequency sound hearing loss in both ears.

Other studies in the overall analysis associated video gaming with higher odds of self-reported hearing loss severity and measured sound levels of five video games through headphones attached to the gaming console - these averaged at 88.5, 87.6,

85.6 and 91.2 decibels (dB) for 4 separate shooter games, and 85.6 dB for a racing game.

The authors concluded that the daily level of sound exposure from these video games is close to maximum permissible levels of sound exposure, according to the standards of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which, in collaboration with the WHO, has described a time-intensity trade-off, known as an exchange rate, for permissible levels and duration of exposure.

For children, the ITU has defined the permissible noise

RISKS in Headphones, Earbuds, and Music Venues

exposure level as 75 decibels for 40 hours a week with a 3-dB exchange rate, which means that the permissible exposure time halves with every 3 dB increase in noise level.

The children can therefore safely listen to an 83-decibel sound for around 6.5 hours, 86 dB for around 3.25 hours, 92 dB for 45 minutes, and 98 dB for only 12 minutes a week, the researchers explained. Acknowledging that the data provided in the review was limited, the researchers said that "some gamers, particularly those who play frequently, and at or above the average sound levels described | [More on P6](#)

SOUNDS EXCEED Permissible Safe Limit

75 DB, 40 HRS/ Week Safe Noise Exposure For Children

KASHMIR OBSERVERTM

Thursday | 18-01-2024

Trump's Potential Return

In a resounding triumph, former US President Donald Trump secured a landslide victory in the Iowa caucuses on Monday, marking his first major win in the contest for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination. Trump's commanding performance, with over 51% of the vote, not only solidifies his position as the clear frontrunner but also sets a record as the largest-ever vote share in a contested Iowa caucus, surpassing George W. Bush's 41% in 2000.

The results leave no doubt about Trump's continued influence within the Republican Party, as voters rallied behind him despite facing numerous federal criminal charges. Ron DeSantis, the governor of Florida, emerged as a distant second, narrowly beating Nikki Haley, the former ambassador to the UN, who secured the third spot with just over 21% and around 19% support, respectively. Vivek Ramaswamy, an Indian-origin biotech entrepreneur, bowed out of the race after winning less than 8% of the vote, throwing his support behind Trump. This consolidation of support behind the former president underlines the challenge faced by other contenders in building a broad coalition within the party.

Trump has called for unity in an effort to consolidate support and present a united front against potential Democratic opponents in the general election. The Iowa outcome is crucial, determining the allocation of the state's 40 delegates to the Republican National Convention in July.

The focus now shifts to how the dynamics of the race will evolve. Trump's early and clear victory in Iowa, despite adverse weather conditions, positions him as the candidate to beat in the Republican nomination race. The 2024 contest is shaping up to be a fierce battle, with Trump's dominance casting a long shadow over the political landscape.

Trump's chances may have been further brightened by the liberal disillusionment with the incumbent president Joe Biden whose unqualified support for Israel has not just disappointed many of his admirers around the world but also within the US. More so, the Muslim voter base of the Democratic Party which has felt betrayed by Biden's complicity in the ongoing carnage in Gaza.

But Trump as Biden's replacement would be akin to going from frying pan into fire. The Iowa result has demonstrated that Trump has a wide and a surging support in the US and from hereon it seems likely that he will not only be nominated as the Republican candidate for president but may go on to defeat Biden in November. To stop the Trump juggernaut, it will not only require a Herculean campaign effort by the Democratic party but more importantly get its supporters to believe in its liberal credentials, something that seems a tall order now.

OTHER OPINION

On Airport Chaos

On Sunday, a passenger on an IndiGo Delhi-Goa flight was arrested for allegedly assaulting the pilot after dense fog forced a flight delay of more than 10 hours. This IndiGo flight was not the only one to have been delayed. As reported in this paper, data from Flightradar24 show that 506 outbound flights from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport were delayed on Sunday, while 87 were cancelled. More than 400 inbound flights were delayed and 42 were cancelled. As airline networks are integrated, and aircraft and crew tend to serve multiple flights across sectors, delays due to bad weather in one airport, especially a hub like Delhi, can have ripple effects. Social media platforms are awash with passengers complaining about long delays and cancellations.

There cannot be any justification for the violence by the passenger. However, their recent criticism of the aviation sector should lead to course corrections. In recent times, several cases of passenger neglect, shoddy services and unprofessional behaviour by airline staff have come to light. Part of the explanation could be traced to the structure of the sector — a duopoly dominated by IndiGo and the Tata Group.

DGCA data show that IndiGo controls 60 per cent of the market, while the Tata Group-owned Vistara, Air India and AIX Connect have a combined market share of 26 per cent. It is axiomatic that in markets characterised by a lack of strong competition, companies focus less on innovation and quality. This has a bearing on the services they offer. The consumers, airline passengers, in this case, have limited alternatives. While delays due to weather, inadequate airport infrastructure or unforeseen emergencies may be beyond the control of airlines, at the very least they can ensure that the passengers are well looked after.

The Delhi airport has four runways, of which two can handle aircraft in extremely low visibility. However, as reported in this newspaper, one of these runways is currently inoperative. Compounding the problem, the other runway "was recently downgraded in category from one end due to construction activity". Following the chaos on Sunday, the authorities seem to have sprung into action.

The DGCA has issued a set of standard operating procedures asking airlines to publish real-time information about flight delays and ensure that all passengers are kept informed. The aviation sector needs to do more. Dense fog has become inextricably linked to Delhi's winter season. These aren't really unforeseeable weather events. Shouldn't the airlines, the airport authorities and DGCA plan for them? The inadequacy of infrastructure facilities can be anticipated in advance and corrective actions taken to prevent chaos. Considering the dramatic expansion of the airline sector in India — the number of operational airports in the country has touched 148 — much more planning and preparation is called for.

The Indian Express

An Unequal World

Oxfam has released the upsetting details of the global rich-poor divide in a report, as the world's richest people gathered in Davos, Switzerland, for the annual World Economic Forum meeting of political leaders, corporate executives and the super-rich



Asad Mirza

The cavernous gap between rich and poor is likely to increase globally, the Oxfam report says, and that since 2020, the richest five men in the world have doubled their fortunes. During the same period, almost five billion people globally have become poorer. Hardship and hunger are a daily reality for many people worldwide. At current rates, it will take 230 years to end poverty. But we could have our first trillionaire in 10 years.

Oxfam's Report

Citing huge concentration of global corporate and monopoly power contributing to exacerbating inequality economy-wide, the report further says that seven out of ten of the world's biggest corporates have either a billionaire CEO or a billionaire as their principal shareholder.

Through squeezing workers, dodging tax, privatising the state and spurring climate breakdown, global corporations are driving inequality and acting in the service of delivering ever greater wealth to their rich owners. To end extreme inequality, governments must radically redistribute the power of billionaires and corporations back to ordinary people, the report urges.

For years, Oxfam has raised alarm about widening and extreme inequality. As we enter 2024, the very real danger is that these extraordinary extremes are becoming the new normal. Corporate and monopoly power is an unrelenting inequality-generating machine.

For most people around the world, the start of this decade has been incredibly hard. For the poorest people, who are more likely to be women, racialised peoples, and marginalised groups in every society, daily life has become more brutal still. Global inequality — the gap between Global North and the Global South — has grown for the first time in 25 years. In addition, climate breakdown, driven by the super-rich, is dramatically increasing global inequality.

Governments are finding it impossible to stay financially afloat in the face of mounting

debt and the escalating costs of importing fuel, food and medicines. Low- and lower-middle-income countries are set to pay nearly half a billion US dollars a day in interest and debt payments between now and 2029, and they are having to make severe cuts to spending to be able to pay their creditors.

Rich becoming richer

Meanwhile, the dramatic increase in extreme wealth witnessed since 2020 has become set in stone. Billionaires are now US \$3.3 trillion or 34% richer than they were at the beginning of this decade of crisis, with their wealth growing three times as fast as the rate of inflation.

This wealth is concentrated in the Global North. Only 21% of humanity lives in the countries of the Global North, but these countries are home to 80% of private wealth, and 74% of the world's billionaire wealth.

The other big winners in this period of crisis are global corporations. For huge corporations, just as for super-rich individuals, the last two decades have been extraordinarily lucrative and the last few years have been better still: the biggest firms experienced an 88% leap in profits in 2021 and 2022-23. New data shows that 2023 is set to shatter all records as the most profitable yet.

An era of monopoly

The report uses new data to demonstrate that the richest people are not only the biggest beneficiaries of the global economy but exercise significant control over it too.

New research by Oxfam illuminates just how much of the world's financial assets are owned by the top 1%. Using data from Wealth X, the report says that the richest 1% own 43% of all global financial assets. In the Middle East, the richest 1% hold 48% of financial wealth; in Asia, the richest 1% own 50% of wealth; and in Europe, the richest 1% own 47% of wealth.

It further asserts that we are living through an era of monopoly power that enables corporations to control markets, set the terms of exchange, and profit without fear of losing business.

Around the world, corporate power is relentlessly pushing into the public sector, commodifying and segregating access to vital services such as education, water and healthcare, while enjoying massive, taxpayer-backed profits. This can gut governments' ability to deliver the type of high-quality, universal public services that can reduce inequality

The report says that far from being accidental, this power has been handed to monopolies by our governments.

Workers overlooked

Basically, global corporations drive inequality by using their power to force wages down and direct profits to the ultra-wealthy. Oxfam's analysis finds that 791 million workers have seen their wages fall to keep up with inflation and as a result have lost US \$1.3 trillion over the last two years. Women are vastly overrepresented in the poorest-paid and least

Around the world, corporate power is relentlessly pushing into the public sector, commodifying and segregating access to vital services such as education, water and healthcare, while enjoying massive, taxpayer-backed profits. This can gut governments' ability to deliver the type of high-quality, universal public services that can reduce inequality.

The Remedy

The report besides bringing out the glaring inequality globally, also offers remedial steps to ease the balance of wealth.

Firstly, it says that the corporate power should be reigned in. It could be done by building a strong and effective state, which is the best bulwark against corporate power. Report urges the governments to take a proactive role in shaping their economies

for the common good. State must guarantee inequality-busting public services including health-care, education, care services and food security, by investing in public transport, energy, housing, and other public infrastructure.

Secondly, the governments need to use their power to rein in the runaway power of corporates and prevent injustices across their supply chains, nationally and internationally. They must also stop the monopoly over knowledge by democratising trade and ending the abuse of patent rules that drive inequality.

Further, the corporations must pay living wages and commit to ensure climate and gender justice: dividend payments and buybacks should be banned until this is guaranteed. Trade unions must be supported, protected and encouraged. CEO's pay should be capped, besides a permanent wealth tax and a permanent excess profit tax.

Thirdly, the governments can use their power to reinvent and repurpose the private sector. They can also use tax and other economic instruments such as public procurement to prioritise equitable business models. No economic aid or government contracts should be given to companies that are missing their net zero targets, paying below living wages, or dodging taxes.

Thus, a more equal world is possible, if the governments effectively regulate and reinvigorate the private sector.

However, in just the last three years, we have experienced a global pandemic, wars, a cost-of-living crisis and climate breakdown. Each crisis has widened the gap — not so much between the rich and people living in poverty, but between an oligarchic few and the vast majority.

But in reality we are also not confident that the remedial measures suggested by Oxfam will ever see the light of the day, in view of the immense power enjoyed by the oligarchs.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. Asad Mirza is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator



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Power of Words

Words carry a lot of power. They can build and lift, comfort and calm, and teach and inspire. Contrarily, words can destroy and demolish, incite and enrage, and embarrass and demean. Their meanings crystallize perceptions that shape our beliefs, drive our behaviour, and ultimately, create our world. The power of words

arises from our emotional responses when we read, speak or hear them. The words we write or speak to others can leave a huge impact and create a lasting memory, either good or bad. It is therefore very important to choose them wisely and use them properly. Words are like music — when played well, they can enchant and delight the whole environment. And, words

are free. But, if used in a wrongful and harmful manner, they even cost you a mountain. Words hold incredible power to shape our lives. Positive communication, rooted in empathy and understanding, can transform relationships, boost our physical and mental well-being, and inspire personal growth. By choosing our words carefully, we can harness the power

of language to create a brighter, more fulfilling life. So, let us embrace the power of words and use them to uplift, inspire, and transform the world. Said Mother Teresa: "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

Ranganathan Sivakumar

Re-inventing Silk Road Saga

Why Re-Opening the Silk Road is Crucial for Asia and the World

Rita Farhat Mukand
Dr. Rizwan Rumi

The Old Silk Road was so widely used in the 4th century that in the 21st Century, its geopolitical significance led most nations to wish for the same dominance over this route. Charles C. Mann, an American journalist and author believes that inventions such as silk, paper, gunpowder, stirrup, and moldboard plow all started in Asia which led to more complicated innovations in the West which reached Europe through the Silk Road.

The era in China of the 4th century BC to 2nd century AD witnessed an exponential silk trade surge making China one of the most prosperous nations, known as the Land of Silk. This route started at Luoyang and Seyang, where the Silk Routes crossed the Yellow River at Lanzhou, and then followed the Gansu Corridor. At Dunhuang, the route split three ways, the northern branch crossed the Tianshan Mountains and the other two crossed the Taklamakan Desert. The Silk Route crossing China did not only impact Northern China but the history of the whole world.

The ancient silk route connected land and sea routes linking it with China, India, East Asia, Persian Peninsula, South East Asia, South Asia, Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, Central Asia, and the Mediterranean as well as Southern Europe. All ancient cities started thriving through this trade and were equal stakeholders with an unspoken language of trust between each other.

Trade activities were noticed back 4000 years in Xinjiang. During that time, green jade was a precious stone in Xinjiang while silk became wildly popular. By 600 BC, gold, jade and silk became popular items among merchants between Europe and Western Asia in the advanced states of the Zhou Dynasty. Around 300 BC, civilizations along the Silk Road including ancient Greece, Persia, Yezhi and the Qin State had control over the eastern parts of the Gansu Corridor crossing a huge long valley from Luoyang to Xinjiang.

Development of the trade route started during the Han Empire 206 B to 220 AD, until hindered by attacks of small nomads from Central Asia on their trade caravans.

The reinforced development of the Silk Road dates back to the 5th century BCE when Darius the Great Persian ruler built the first royal road from the Tigris River to the Asian Sea. Besides facilitating easy trade, the invasion of Asia by the powerful Greek King Alexander expanded into Asia by conquering Samarkand (a city in South East Uzbekistan) and new ones gave the idea of a connecting bridge between China and Europe. The spreading eastward of Greek, Egyptian, Indian and Persian made the Silk Road's passage extensively sought after.

In the 7th century, the Tang Dynasty touched its Golden Age. The rise of the Mongols between 1207 AD and 1360 brought political stability which promoted the Silk Road. Western travellers such as the Venetian traveller Marco Polo went on the Silk Road controlled by the East between 1271 and 1295 was very impressed by his discoveries in the East led him to say that the East was far more developed and innovative than the West.

During this time, to protect their trade routes, in 138 BCE, a general was sent as an envoy to the Western regions to scout out the territory and to form an anti-Xinjiang alliance with the Western people to build trade relationships with it. He returned to the Han Empire with stories of highly developed civilized societies in the West sharing about their wide diversity of products over the Western world. It was not long before silk and jade were exchanged for horses and cotton by diplomats. This marked the

formal beginning of the Silk Road trade bringing silks and ceramics to other parts of the world. At the end of the Han Empire's rule in 220 AD, it was split into three warring states, Wei, Shu and Wu marking the history of the beginning of the three kingdom periods.

During the ancient Roman Empire era, the demand for Chinese silk rose to levels that royal orders were passed to ban Chinese silk and went as far as calling Chinese silk immoral! However, the Eastern Roman Empire was so obsessed with Chinese silk that they even spies to steal the silkworm eggs and learned the secrets of

Bengal. This less-travelled route, known as the South West Silk Route, connected the Yunnan Province of China to Tibet and India, trading in horses, tea, sugar, salt, copper, and cotton. The route's history is intertwined with the rise and fall of empires and the exchange of cultures along its path.

From the third and fourth centuries BCE, Southeast Asian countries started becoming Indianized linguistically, politically, and religiously where Hindu and Buddhist thoughts started to dominate, and dance styles and forms of art were taken from India.

through Belarus and Poland.

WHY IS IT VITAL TO REVIVE THE SILK ROAD?

It Will Challenge Western Hegemony and Bring Political Balance to the World.

In today's modern world, when we envision power and money, we immediately think of Western nations, but the Silk Road outdates every modern trade. The Silk Road may be the answer to challenge Western hegemony and its world dominance.

With Western dominance, the East appears to become slaves to the West. Western decisions

tions which used to be more relevant in the 1950s-1960s. In fact, during the attack on Gaza, China holds the same view as India, being a proponent of a two-state solution where people are engaged in a struggle for national rights, and this cause deserves unwavering support.

Demonstrating their backing, Chinese Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas visited Beijing in June, marking the initial visit by an Arab leader to China this year. Following this, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang asserted that Israel had exceeded the bounds of

Emirates proves so.

Ironically, with all its criticisms, U.S. trade with China has grown widely in recent decades and while they may hate to admit it openly, trade between them is vital for both nations. Today, China is one of the largest export markets for the U.S. The surge in trade between the United States and China gained momentum over the two decades following China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001. While this trade has brought advantages to consumers and businesses in both nations, there is growing apprehension among Washington officials regarding the potential hazards associated with Beijing's state-driven development. President Biden has opted to uphold tariffs on Chinese goods and implement additional trade restrictions as part of an initiative to redefine the bilateral relationship.

THE NEW SILK ROAD WILL STRENGTHEN THE EASTERN ENTREPRENEURIAL AND INNOVATIVE SPIRIT

The revival of the Silk Road will draw out the Eastern world's entrepreneurial spirit and develop its innovative powers, to link with each other culturally reviving ancient traditions and this itself is a cause for celebration and unity. The buildup of Eastern confidence and self-assertion, new inventions and growth will spring up.

The New Silk Road goes via the Suez Canal in Egypt where Asian and European trade flourishes. During the 1990s, with the growth of Chinese industrialization and trade, the Silk Road was revived. China focused on Central Asia, Central Europe, and Africa. With this, 40 percent of the world trade was established through the Silk Road, concentrated mainly through its Maritime Routes.

At present, in the Maritime Silk Road, several deep water ports are being developed to have seamless connectivity through roads, railways and ports. China connects to major cities such as Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Singapore, and Colombo through these routes. In the West, the Silk Road connects to Djibouti, the Red Sea, Haifa, Istanbul, Athens, Italy, and the Adriatic Sea.

Presently, through rail connection, Central Europe and near the North Sea, Poland is being connected. There is a railway network through South China, Russia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan are being connected called the Eurasian Land Bridge now called the New Silk Road - a new network working its route into Europe.

The Trans-Surasia Logistics is a joint venture of companies between China, Germany and Russia to connect China with Germany through Belarus and Poland.

In the ancient world, there were equivalent shareholders such as South Asia, South East Asia, and Central Asia. The new Silk Road will have a larger geographic spread compared to the old Silk Road covering Africa going all the way to Latin America. China is trying to reach Nairobi through rail with fresh ambition to reach the Arctic Ocean through the Northern Sea Route.

With good trade comes brighter fortune and confidence. Fear makes countries do weird things and this fear will leave when most of the nation's stand on an equal platform. The golden ages of the past always signified periods of rest, peace, wealth and harmony and this is what the revival of the new Silk Road can do for the world.

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

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making Chinese silk. They produced silk in the Byzantine Empire, but Chinese silk was still superior!

Indian and Chinese Connections: For thousands of years, India and China have been connected by two silk routes, the Overland Silk Road and the lesser-known Maritime Silk Road transporting silk, spices, and other luxury goods. Maritime Silk Routes have powerful evidence that ancient Asia was deeply connected, used by Hindu Brahmins and Buddhist monks, by diplomats and adventurers, used for trade, cultural expansion, diplomacy, piracy, and raids.

India has twelve very important Silk Road sites that used to play a big role in ancient trade through the Silk Road such as Indraprastha (in New Delhi), Shrivasthi (in Uttar Pradesh), Kushinagar (in Uttar Pradesh), Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Kaushambi (in Uttar Pradesh), Vaishali (in Bihar), Vikramshila (in Bihar), Arikamedu (in Puducherry), Kaveripattinam (in Tamil Nadu) and Nalopara (in Maharashtra) where gold was exported from this town. All these 12 main sites associated with the Silk Road are on UNESCO's tentative list including the ruins of ancient Vaishali in Bihar, the Remains of Vikramshila Ancient University, and Buddhist sites like Kushinagar, Sravasti, Kaushambi, and Ahichhatra in Uttar Pradesh.

The Silk Route wasn't merely about trade; it was an information superhighway, facilitating the exchange of ideas, art, and science. Greek art flowed into India, Buddhism spread globally, and Chinese travellers like Fa Hien and Hsuen Tsang visited India through these routes. The Arabs gained knowledge from India and China, shaping new sciences like Algebra.

In Sikkim, the Silk Route is an offshoot of an ancient trade route originating from Lhasa, passing through Nathula Pass and reaching the port of Tamralipta in West

THE NEW SILK ROAD

Now in modern times, the New Silk Road travels via the Suez Canal in Egypt where Asian and European trade flourishes. In the 20th century, due to World Wars 1 and 2, along with the Cold Wars,

the Silk Routes were subdued. During the 1990s, with the growth of Chinese industrialization and trade, the Silk Road was revived. China focused on Central Asia, Central Europe, and Africa.

China launched its Belt and Road initiative in 2013 - the land-based economic belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road. China vigorously invested in Africa to connect more easily with North and Central Africa and near the North Sea, Poland is being connected. There is a railway network through which China, Russia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan are being connected called the Eurasian Land Bridge now called the New Silk Road - a new network working its route into Europe.

Presently, through rail connection, Central Europe and near the North Sea, Poland is being connected. There is a railway network through which China, Russia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan are being connected called the Eurasian Land Bridge now called the New Silk Road - a new network working its route into Europe.

The Trans-Surasia Logistics is a joint venture of companies between China, Germany and Russia to connect China with Germany

on the global stage always where their last say without any challenges. The disconnection of the Silk Road disunited the East and Middle East and fear and distrust were created between nations in the East.

Due to Western imperialism, radicalization in the Middle East especially rose as counter-attacks on the West, which the West used to their advantage to "prove" that Easterners were barbaric and savages.

China's flagship scheme, the Belt and Road Initiative will elevate the political and cultural significance in the East. In the coming days, Eurasia consisting of China to Eurasia, Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Indian Peninsula, going all the way to the Mediterranean would pave a powerful message to the world.

The New Silk Road connections can counter Western control over Asia where their "Pivot to Asia" can be challenged. Silk Routes would be opened not only for trade but for harmonious unity in Asia and the Middle East, which would strengthen these nations against Western dominance and unbalanced and unreasonable rules

Eurasia would pave a powerful passage and message now with the limitations of the United Na-

self-defense in its military operations in Gaza. One can conclude that the new BRICS alliance will start speaking more strongly against human rights abuses. On January 11, 2023, South Africa, the only nation in the world to speak up against Israel's attack on Gaza presented its case at the United Nation's highest court, aiming to halt the widespread killing of civilians in Gaza Israel accusing them of carrying out genocide against Palestinians in the region.

Nations only have power when they have money and military strength which keeps more powerful nations in line and speaking up against unreasonable Western hegemony will bring more balance and peace into the world.

REVIVAL OF TRADE THROUGH THE SILK ROAD WILL REMOVE AN IMAGINARY FEAR OF CHINA

The Silk Road and BRICS together will remove an imaginary fear of China. Some Western theorists have propagated teachings that the "Yellow Army" will march across the mountains and take over the world and with these worries; a lot has been done to curb China.

In the ancient world, while there were conquests and battles, peace and trade also flourished. Today, the world has evolved with modernization, technology, the Internet, knowledge, and social awareness. These aims of global peace are still shaping; however, the fresh modern 21st-century renaissance of science, arts, and growth is not as seen on colonising or taking over nations as in the past. Nations such as the United Kingdom and Europe which colonised most of the East and Africa have taken a step back. Asia today mainly focuses on trade, money, and good global relations along with reviving industrialization and trade with other nations. The formation of BRICS, an intergovernmental organisation comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

The New Silk Road connections can counter Western control over Asia where their "Pivot to Asia" can be challenged. Silk Routes would be opened not only for trade but for harmonious unity in Asia and the Middle East, which would strengthen these nations against Western dominance and unbalanced and unreasonable rules

Govt. Orders Probe Into Installation Of Fencing Across 10 Jails

Agencies
SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Government has ordered a high-level probe into irregularities committed during installation of power fencing systems across 10 prisons of the Union Territory.
The J&K government has constituted a three-member committee to probe into the irregularities committed during the execution of the project "supply and installation of power fencing across 10 jails of the Union Territory of J&K".
Details available with the news agency reveal that the committee comprises Director General Prisons, Commissioner Secretary, General Administration Department and Financial Advisor/ Chief Accounts Officer, Home Department.



92% Of Anantnag Youth, Aged 14-18, Use Smartphones For Social Media: Report

Agencies
SRINAGAR: In a survey conducted by Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), at least 75 percent youth aged 14 to 18 year in south Kashmir's Anantnag district have done at least one education related activity in the week prior to the survey as compared to 92.7 percent who used any social media. The report further states that a high proportion of youth used social media in the reference week, a far smaller proportion knew how to access its safety features like blocking a profile, making a profile private, etc.
"In Anantnag, 73.5 percent could bring a smartphone to do digital tasks and of these, 86.1 percent could do the task of setting an alarm, 93.2 percent could browse the internet to find information, 57.9 percent could use Google Maps and 94.8 percent could find a YouTube video. Across all digital tasks, males outperform females," it reads.
Pertinently, ASER 2023 'Beyond Basics' was released on Wednesday in New Delhi today—putting the spotlight on youth aged 14 to 18 years in rural India.
In Jammu and Kashmir, the ASER 2023 survey was conducted in Anantnag by volunteers from the Human Welfare Foundation—(KNO).



Silk Industry Boost: Cocoon Bank Fund Raised To Rs. 3.50 Crore

KO NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR: Director Sericulture J&K, Ajaz Ahmad Bhat on Wednesday inaugurated a one-day Resham Kriishi Mela at P-4, Basic Seed Farm, Manasbal.
In the event more than 500 Silkworm Rearing's youths from all districts of Kashmir participated with great enthusiasm and fervor.
On the occasion, the Director Sericulture J&K felicitated 20 progressive silkworm rearers and 5 Sericulture Entrepreneurs with memento, certificates, and tool kits as a token of appreciation.
The event was jointly organized by the Sericulture Dev. Department J&K and Central Sericulture Research & Training Institute, CSB, Pamphore, showcasing the achievements of the sericulture community who have relentlessly dedicated themselves for the welfare of the sericulture sector, farmers and silkworm rearers.
The Director Sericulture J&K also released various booklets/pamphlets on the occasion of the programme exhibiting technical activities and information related to the sericulture practices as a whole.
The stalls highlighting various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADD), UT level schemes, and an array of silk/mulberry products were set up by the Sericulture Dev. Department J&K, CSB, Pamphore, and various Entrepreneurs of U.T. of J&K.

Ladakh's Apricot Growers Sound Alarm Over Unprecedented Dry Spell

Agencies
SRINAGAR: The crucial part of winter is almost nearing its end and it has not snowed yet in Ladakh.
Like the rest of the farmers, the current weather pattern has doubled the worries of Sadiq Hardassi, an apricot farmer of Hardas village in Kargil district of Ladakh, who has been associated with the cultivation of this fruit for many decades.
"Snow is a blessing for apricot farmers of Ladakh. Our livelihood is determined by the crop, which we harvest to sell in various parts of the country. No snow means a death blow to the apricot trees," he said as per news agency.
Like Sadiq, hundreds of apricot farmers in the high-altitude region of Ladakh are also expressing growing concerns as they grapple with an unusual snowless and dry winter.
Traditionally reliant on a blanket of snow for irrigation, the absence of snow poses significant challenges to the cultivation of apricots, a vital crop for the region.
"We are experiencing a snowless winter for the first time here. Farmers of Ladakh particularly from Kargil district are very much worried because of the topography of the area. Farmers know that they won't be able to manage irrigation for apricot orchards in Spring time when it doesn't or snows less during winter," Sadiq said.
He said the farmers ideally need to irrigate their apricot orchards once in every 10 days to ensure quality fruit during the season.
"The main source of irrigation for our orchards is glacial water. We are worried that our apricot trees will wither if there is no timely snowfall during winter. It will be a big loss to the apricot farmers of Ladakh, who harvest apricots worth Rs 10 crore during the season," Sadiq said.



Mohammad Jawed, another apricot farmer said the current dry weather may affect the health of apricot trees.
"Apricot trees require adequate moisture during their dormancy period, and the current conditions may impact the overall health of the orchards. So, there must be a timely snowfall so that the earth retains moisture," he said—(KNO)

Winter Of Despair For Kashmir's Line Producers, Artists

Press Trust of India
SRINAGAR: As snowfall continues to elude the picturesque valley of Kashmir, local line producers and others associated with the Indian film industry are in a state of despair as shooting requests are drying up due to a snowless winter.
The mighty mountains of Pir Panjal region, which are draped in a thick white blanket of snow during this time of the season, are bare, highlighting the climatic changes gradually sweeping the Himalayan region.
"The dry spell in Kashmir has significantly impacted us. We've three projects lined up but they hang in balance. If snowfall doesn't occur, these projects may either get canceled, postponed, or relocated to places with snow. Snow holds immense importance for Kashmir, and we are fervently praying and hoping for it," Akid Hussain, casting manager at KG Production, told PTI.
The snowless winter and the extended dry spell, Hussain said, has even led some people associated with the industry to experience depression due to lack of work. He said the people associated with the film industry in Mumbai are also eagerly awaiting the snowfall in Kashmir to commence film shootings.
"Kashmir's fame is intricately linked to snow, and there's a substantial adverse effect on line producers this time due to absence of snow," he added.
Bismah Masoodi, a Line Producer, said some scheduled shoots have already been postponed due to the lack of snow in the valley. However, she expressed optimism that once snowfall occurs, filmmakers will travel to Kashmir for shooting.
"Our projects require meticulous planning and we are optimistic that snowfall will happen, allowing filmmakers to come for shoots and enabling us to continue our work," she said.
Bismah, who has worked with famous celebrities like Karan Kundra, Aamir Malik and others and has contributed to various ad films and biopics, said the dry spell not only stalls movie shootings but also stalls hotels offering catering services, transportation and hotels as well.
"The entire Kashmir region suffers due to this extended dry spell. The absence of snowfall has adversely affected our work, but we remain hopeful for snowfall to fulfill the plans of filmmakers visiting and shooting in Kashmir," she added.
Mir Sarwar, a popular filmmaker and actor from Kashmir, is also concerned with the unusual weather pattern as the valley is witnessing warm days in the harshest 40-day period of winter, locally called Chhail Kallan.



Security Beefed Up In Jammu Ahead Of R-Day, Ram Temple Event

Agencies
JAMMU: Security has been beefed up in Jammu ahead of Republic Day and the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.
Security forces and the police have been put on alert across the Jammu region, including the Indo-Pakistan border, to ensure the deployment of fool-proof security in the region.
"The security measures have been beefed up ahead of the Pran Pratishtha ceremony on January 22 and also the Republic Day celebrations. Security setup has been put on alert," a senior officer said.
The security forces have intensified checking and frisking of vehicles and pedestrians in several parts of the city here as well as in other parts of the region, the officials said.
Jammu SSP Vinod Kumar led the review of the security on the ground, including checking points and nakas, today, he said.
Nakas and mobile vehicle checkpoints (MVCP) have been established at intersections in the city, its entry and exit points and roads leading in the capital city, they added.
The police and paramilitary personnel of the CRPF have been deployed in important areas, the officials said.
Several high-level meetings have been held in the capital city and districts to review security measures ahead of these two mega events during the past one week.
Additional DGP Anand Jain on Monday directed all the intelligence agencies to generate intelligence in advance so that anti-national and anti-social elements do not succeed in their nefarious designs in the Jammu region.
"Proper coordination be maintained among all the intelligence agencies and security organisations in their respective areas of jurisdiction to foil the nefarious designs of anti-national elements and ensure smooth and incident-free conduct of national events," the ADGP said.

Omar Dares Centre To Hold J-K Assembly And Parliament Polls Together

Press Trust of India
JAMMU: National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah on Wednesday challenged the central government to hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir along with the 2024 Lok Sabha polls if it was serious about its idea of 'one nation, one election'.
He said this government, which talks so much about simultaneous elections in the country, is unable to put its money where its mouth is, even in one state much less than the entire nation.
"If the government is serious about 'one nation, one election', I hope that they will put their money where their mouth is and show us that it is possible by doing it first in Jammu and Kashmir."
"We have Parliament elections in a few months. Let us have assembly elections at the same time and then see," Abdullah told reporters here.
The former J-K chief minister questioned the government's commitment to the unified election idea.
"If you cannot have assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir) together with Parliament now, how do you imagine that you will ever have (nationwide) assembly elections together with Parliament elections, when states like UP, Bihar and others, which require a significant presence of security forces, will also go to the polls simultaneously," he said.
Abdullah expressed confidence that the INDIA bloc will get a resounding mandate in J&K.
"When the mandate is delivered, it will be a resounding mandate for one-party rule. So no post-poll alliance will exist. I do not believe in post-poll alliance," he said in reply to a question about the possibility of going with any other party in case of a fractured mandate in the assembly elections.
Regarding distribution, Abdullah dismissed the talk of conflicts within the alliance.
"No talks have been held with the Congress on seat sharing. Our efforts should be to win all six seats and they should remain with the INDIA alliance."
"Several people want to contest. Let us first talk to them. Three seats are with the INDIA alliance, there is no need to discuss them but the talks will be held on how to win the rest of the three seats currently held by BJP," he said.



Maintain A Secure Environment For Religious Gatherings:IGP

Agencies
SRINAGAR: Stressing the importance of maintaining a secure environment for religious gatherings, Inspector General of Police Kashmir Zoon VK Birdi assured the people of the police force's commitment in facilitating peaceful and undisturbed observances. The IGP made these remarks on Wednesday as he undertook a visit to Gurudwara Rainawari, Srinagar on the auspicious occasion of Gurudwara personally inspect and review the arrangements in place for the devotees.
Accompanied by the officers, IGP Kashmir participated in the celebrations and later on interacted with the Gurudwara management, local authorities, and community leaders to ensure seamless coordination for the comfort and safety of worshippers.
Birdi appreciated the efforts of the Gurudwara committee in fostering a spirit of unity and nurturing a harmonious environment.
He highlighted the importance of fostering a strong and positive relationship between the police force and the community it serves. To put all the arrangements in place, he exhorted to work in close coordination to facilitate the community while celebrating the festival. He also urged the officials to remain available for the assistance of visiting devotees.



VBSY Emerges As Potent Force Of Positive Change At Kupwara

KO NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA: The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) the nationwide campaign to spread awareness about the welfare Schemes and initiatives of the Government of India, reached, Maratgam, Monbal, Nowgam A and Nowgam B Panchayats of Mawar Qalamabad block of Kupwara district, on Wednesday.
The focus of the Yatra was to reach out to the people, create awareness about the welfare schemes aimed at sanitation facilities, essential financial services, access to LPG cylinders, housing for the poor, food security, proper nutrition, reliable healthcare, clean drinking water, etc.
The VBSY witnessed overwhelming response from the people in the border district Kupwara. Today the VB Vans were received in grand welcome ceremonies organised at the venues by officers and officials from various departments.
As part of the yatra, the government initiatives had set up stalls to provide citizens, on the spot services, like free health check ups, issuance and updation of the Aadhar cards, registration of beneficiaries for various welfare schemes benefiting scores of people at these camps.
The day-long program began with participants taking the pledge to make India a developed and self-reliant nation by the year 2047.
Videos of beneficiaries of various departmental schemes under Meri Kahani Meri Zubani were also played and cultural programmes were organised.

Rohit Dazzles As India Eke Out Thrilling Win

Press Trust of India

BENGALURU: The third T20I served up a thrilling tie as it went into a super-over. It may have been a dead rubber, but India and Afghanistan served up a thrilling encounter, with the hosts walking away with a nerve-wrecking win.

After Rohit Sharma and Rinku Singh powered India to 212/4, Afghanistan batters took Indian bowlers to a thrilling encounter, with the hosts walking away with a nerve-wrecking win.

In the Super-Over, Mukesh Kumar was handed the ball. Afghanistan posted 16 for the loss of 1 wicket in the Super Over. In reply, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rohit came on to bat. Rohit continued in the same vein, but Afghanistan held India to 16/1, which took the match into the second super over.



Samson departed without scoring, India posted 11 for 2 wickets. In reply, Ravi Bishnoi played the hero for India as he picked up two wickets. Earlier, skipper Rohit Sharma produced a marvellous, situation-defying hundred, his fifth in T20is, as India recovered from a top-order

meltdown to post a massive 212 for 4 against Afghanistan in the third and final T20I in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Rohit (121 not out, 69b, 11x4, 8x6) and his perfect sidekick Rinku Singh (69 not out, 39b, 2x4, 6x6) shared 190 runs for a stellar, unbeaten fifth-wicket stand as India

came back from a flaky 22 for four after opting to bat first. Virat Kohli lasted just one ball. Entering the field to a rapturous welcome from a near-capal stadium, Kohli could not negate a climbing delivery from Ahmad, slicing the pull to Ibrahim Zadran just inside the circle.

Axar Patel, Jaiswal Enter Top 10 Of ICC T20I Rankings



Press Trust of India

DUBAI: Riding on two excellent outings against Afghanistan in the ongoing series, India left-arm spinner Axar Patel on Wednesday leaped to his career-best fifth place, while opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal rose to the sixth spot in the latest ICC men's T20I player rankings. Patel's hauls of two for 23 and two for 16 in India's identical six-wicket wins over Afghanistan in the first two T20Is of their three-match series have also lifted him two places to 16th among all-rounders. Jaiswal's 34-ball 68 in the first T20I in Indore lifted him seven

places to a career-best sixth position, while other left-hander Shivam Dube's successive unbeaten knocks of 60 and 63 have helped him shoot up from 26th to 58th. Batter Shubman Gill moved up seven places to 60th while left-handed batsman Tilak Verma gained three places to joint-61st while left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh jumped four places to 21st spot. Among the Afghans, Najibullah Zadran (up one place to 46th) and Mohammad Nabi (up two places to 54th) moved up in the batting rankings. New Zealand's Finn Allen,

whose two innings of 34 off 15 and 74 off 41 against Pakistan helped him to reach 16th among batters. His teammate Tim Southey, who took six wickets in the first two matches, is up eight places to 18th in the bowlers' list. Pakistan's star batter Babar Azam is up one place to fourth after notching two consecutive half-centuries against New Zealand. The bowling rankings saw Sri Lanka spinners Wamindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekshana take joint-third position. Pakistan fast bowler Harris Raul's haul of five wickets in two matches against the Kiwis have lifted him two places to joint 14th.

J&K Blind Cricket Team Loses By 1 Run In Nagesh Trophy



Agencies

HYDERABAD: Telangana smashed 101/5 in the 10 overs with one run in the eliminator match of the ongoing 6th edition of the Nagesh Trophy - Men's National T20 Cricket Tournament for the Blind 2023-24 at JB Cricket Ground in Hyderabad. With this win, Telangana qualified for the Super eighth stage of the Nagesh Trophy and became the 8th team to do so after Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Delhi qualified for the Super 8 stage following their exemplary performances. Uttar Pradesh and Tripura, Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir locked horns in the Eliminator games. The Super 8 stage of the Nagesh Trophy will begin on January 29 following an inauguration in Nagpur on January 28. The Super 8 stage will run for three days and the semi-finals will be played on February 1. The finals of the mega event will take place on February 2 in Nagpur. Nagesh Trophy was launched in memory of the late SP Nagesh, Founder and President of the Cricket Association for the Blind in India and Founder Trustee, Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled. The launch of the tournament brought together the entire blind cricket community into one huge platform, by creating a milestone in the blind cricket history. (ANI)

League Stage in December 2023, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Delhi qualified for the Super 8 stage following their exemplary performances. Uttar Pradesh and Tripura, Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir locked horns in the Eliminator games. The Super 8 stage of the Nagesh Trophy will begin on January 29 following an inauguration in Nagpur on January 28. The Super 8 stage will run for three days and the semi-finals will be played on February 1. The finals of the mega event will take place on February 2 in Nagpur. Nagesh Trophy was launched in memory of the late SP Nagesh, Founder and President of the Cricket Association for the Blind in India and Founder Trustee, Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled. The launch of the tournament brought together the entire blind cricket community into one huge platform, by creating a milestone in the blind cricket history. (ANI)

Praggnanandhaa Beats World Chess Champion Ding Liren

Agencies

NEW DELHI: Chess prodigy Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa clinched the number one spot among India's chess players following his victory over World Champion Ding Liren. The 18-year-old defeated China's Liren with the black pieces at the 2024 Tata Steel Chess Tournament on Wednesday and surpassed the legendary Viswanathan Anand to take the number one spot. Praggnanandhaa said he was surprised with the outcome as he didn't expect the world champion to get out-

"I think any day, if you beat such a strong player, it's always special because it's not very easy to beat them. The first time winning against a world champion in classical chess feels good," he added. Praggnanandhaa, who started playing at the tender age of 5, went on to become India's youngest and the then world's second-youngest Grandmaster at age 12 in 2018. He is the fifth-youngest person ever to achieve the title of Grandmaster after Abhimanyu Mishra, Sergey Karjakin, Gukesh D and Javokhir Sindarov. Incidentally, his elder sister R Vaishali is also a Grandmaster, which makes the



ed in such a fashion.

"I felt I equalized very easily and then somehow things started to go wrong for him. Even after I won the pawn I felt it should be holdable," Praggnanandhaa was quoted as saying by Chess.com.

siblings the world's first-ever brother-sister GM duo. In the Masters category, Grandmaster Anish Giri headed into the first rest day as the sole leader in the group. Giri's sensational moves helped him secure a victory over D Gukesh.

Australian Open: Djokovic, Sabalenka Go Through

Agencies

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic fought off another feisty challenge to reach the third round of the Australian Open on Wednesday after women's champion Aryna Sabalenka made more serene progress and Ons Jabeur crashed out at the hands of a schoolgirl.



Top 10 seeds Coco Gauff, Barbara Krejcklova, Beatriz Haddad Maia, Janik Sinner, Andrey Rublev and Stefanos Tsitsipas all got through their second-round contests in varying conditions as Melbourne lived up to its reputation for changeable weather. Rain washed out more than three hours of play on the outer courts at the start of the day but the skies had long cleared by the time Djokovic took to the court where he has won 10 of his 24 Grand Slam titles. As in his four-hour first round

clash against qualifier Dino Prizmic, the 36-year-old Serbian looked in full pump in the opening set against Australian Alexei Popyrin but lost the second. The aggressive Popyrin, backed by a crowd in full voice, had set points in the third set but Djokovic saved them and, niled by an exchange with a fan in the crowd, ran out a 6-3 4-6 7-6(4) 6-3 winner.

"I haven't been playing my best but I'm still trying to find my form," Djokovic said. "I think both my first and second round opponents were really, really great quality tennis players and I managed to find a way to win four. That's what counts in the end." Sabalenka made short work of 16-year-old Brenda Fruhvirtova with a 6-3 6-2 in the early evening match on Rod Laver Arena -- a second dominant victory over a qualifier for the Belarussian in her first Grand Slam title defence.



Coach Hopes Support For Palestine Won't Distract UAE

Agencies

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES coach Paulo Bento said on Wednesday he hopes his team will not be distracted by the huge support Palestine are expected to receive when the two teams meet in their second Asian Cup Group C encounter. Palestine enjoyed massive support at the stadium during their 4-1 loss to Iran in their group opener. Iranian fans also gave the Palestine team a warm welcome in a show of solidarity, with the conflict in Gaza raging for over 100 days. "For me, no, it's not going to distract me... I hope it doesn't disturb our players as well," Bento told reporters ahead of Thursday's game at Al Janoub Stadium. "Some of the players have some

experience while others not so much since it's their first time in such a competition... What I think all the players and coaches like is that all stadiums should be full. "Maybe it's a little bit different experience because in our league there aren't many people watching the games in stadiums. Until now I didn't see many people in stadiums for games of the national team in Abu Dhabi or Dubai." UAE, semi-finalists in 2019, beat Hong Kong 3-1 in their opener and Bento is looking to secure six points and put one foot in the knockout stage. While Palestine are seeking their first ever win at the Asian Cup since making their debut at the continental championship in 2015, the Portuguese coach said he is not taking them lightly.

Finn Allen Helps NZ Clinch Series Win Over Pakistan



Agencies

DUNEDIN: Finn Allen's 137-run onslaught powered New Zealand to seal a 45-run win against Pakistan in the 3rd T20I match at University Oval in Dunedin on Wednesday. In the five-match 20-over series, the Kiwis gained an unassailable lead over Pakistan after the end of the third T20I game. After receiving the toss, Pakistan decided to field first. However, their decision did not go in their favour as they failed to restrict the Kiwis' run rate. Allen's (137 runs from 62 balls) onslaught put doubts over Pakistan skipper Shabean Afridi's mind following his decision to bat after winning the toss. The Blackcaps showed their intent in the powerplay as the hosts raced to 67/1. Following the early departure of Devon Conway, Allen and Tim Seifert led the charge with the bat and stitched up a 125-run partnership.

New Zealand ended up with a total of 224-7 which saw the likes of Harris Rauf and Afridi conceding 69 and 144 respectively. Muhammad Wasim's spell of 1/35 (4) was the least expensive among the Pakistani bowlers. In the second inning, Saim Ayub (10 runs from 13 balls) and Mohammad Rizwan (24 runs from 20 balls) opened for Pakistan to chase down a total of 225 runs from 20 overs. However, the openers failed to make a mark as the Kiwis picked up early wickets. Babar Azam (58 runs from 37 balls) was the only standout batter for the 'Men in Green' and helped them to take a better position, but the hosts did not give the visitors a chance to make a solid partnership. In the end, Shabean Afridi (16*) and Mohammad Wasim Jr (1*) were unbeaten on the crease and took Pakistan to 159/7 after the end of 20 overs. Meanwhile, Tim Southey led the Kiwi bowling attack after he scalped two wickets in his four-over spell.

Onana Back Training With Cameroon And Likely To Play

Agencies

ABIDJAN: Goalkeeper Andre Onana is likely to be included in Cameroon's line-up for Friday's Africa Cup of Nations group game against holders Senegal after returning to training with the team on Wednesday. Onana missed Cameroon's opening match of the tournament in the Ivory Coast on Monday after he was allowed to stay at Manchester United and play in their 2-2 draw with Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday. He flew by charter plane overnight to the Ivory Coast after the clash at Old Trafford but only arrived hours before kick off of the Group C clash against Guinea, in which Cameroon came from behind to force a 1-1 draw. The decision to allow the 27-year-old to forgo the opening match of the tournament caused controversy among Cameroon supporters. In an interview after his arrival in the Ivory Coast, Onana told reporters

of the difficult tug of loyalty between club and country, especially for African internationals forced to leave their European clubs mid-season to compete at the Cup of Nations. "It's like choosing between my father and my mother, but my country comes first, that's why I'm here," he said. "Let people continue to criticise me. I'm used to it. I do what is good for my country," Onana added. Onana has a chequered history with Cameroon after breaking through into the team while still a teenager at Ajax Amsterdam. He turned down a call-up to the 2017 Cup of Nations finals, which Cameroon went on to win, and at the last World Cup in Qatar was named in the squad but never following a row with coach Rigoberto Song, which has since been patched up. But he did compete at the last edition of the Cup of Nations two years ago, just months after returning from a lengthy doping ban.

