

KASHMIR OBSERVER

Saturday 10 February 2024 | Srinagar | Vol: 27 | Issue: 35 | Pages: 08 | Price: ₹3

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Fractious Pakistan Election

Khan Steals Show But Sharif Delivers Victory Speech



AP

Islamabad: Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif changed tack on Friday and said he will seek to form a coalition government after his party trailed independent candidates backed by his rival Imran Khan in preliminary results a day after the country's parliamentary election.

Sharif told reporters he was sending his younger brother, former premier Shehbaz Sharif, to meet the leaders of other parties to join the coalition. Nawaz Sharif had rejected the idea of a coalition just a day earlier, when he told reporters after casting his vote that he wanted a single party running Pakistan.

"We don't have enough of a majority to form a government without the support of others and we invite allies to join the coalition so we can make joint efforts to

pull Pakistan out of its problems," he said.

He spoke after results earlier on Friday showed candidates backed by imprisoned Khan leading in the election, a surprise given claims by his supporters and a national rights body that the balloting was manipulated against Khan.

3 major parties in the mix

Khan, a former cricket star turned Islamist politician with a significant grassroots following, was disqualified from running in Thursday's election because of criminal convictions against him.

His party's candidates ran as independents after they were barred from using the party symbol — a cricket bat — to help illiterate voters find them on ballots.

Of the 200 National Assembly results announced by the country's election oversight body as of Friday evening, [| More on P6](#)

J&K Wildlife Board Meeting

Enhance Awareness For Protection And Conservation Of Wildlife Resources: LG

Observer News Service

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired the 5th meeting of Wildlife Board for the UT of J&K, at Civil Secretariat today.

The meeting discussed various key interventions for sustainable management of rich biodiversity and integrated development of wildlife habitats. In-principle approval was accorded to several agenda points to further strengthen the wildlife ecosystem.

The LG directed the concerned authorities to increase the awareness for protection and conservation of valuable wildlife resources. He further instructed for organizing a series of promotional activities to increase the visibility of mega projects like Jambu Zoo at all the major public places.

The LG reviewed the proposal for expansion of Jambu Zoo. He also sought an action taken report on the directions passed in the previous Board meeting.

Various agenda points presented during the meeting include Kandori Ski Lift in



Gulmarg Wildlife Sanctuary, Construction of Yatri Niwas and Disaster Management Centre by Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board at Bahu Conservation Reserve Jammu; Chhat Zorawar Operational Track; procurement of vehicles for Man-Animal Conflict Management, various Water Supply Schemes and road projects.

The meeting was attended by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment; A. K. Choudhary, Special DG

Crime; Shailendra Kumar, Principal Secretary, Agriculture Production Department; Roshan Jaggi, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Hoff and Sarvesh Rai, PCCF / Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K.

On the occasion, the LG inaugurated the Wildlife Office Complex at Raj Bagh Srinagar, and released a Coffee Table Book and a short film on Jambu Zoo.

A report on the Biodiversity Assessment of Wild Fauna (Mammals, Birds and Butterflies) and Flora in Jasrota Wildlife

Sanctuary Kathua, J&K and a booklet on Kashmir's Wetland Conservation Reserves titled Conservation Triumph- 2024 was also released by the LG.

Dr Mandeep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to LG; Shiv Anant Tayal, Secretary Tribal Affairs; eminent Conservationists, Ecologists, Environmentalists, representatives of Army, Botanical Survey of India, National Society on Water Resources, Wetlands & Forests and other board members also attended the meeting.

Parliament Passes 3 Bills On J&K

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Parliament on Friday cleared a bill to add four groups including Paddari and Pahari in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir.

The house approved the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which adds two other communities -- Gadda Brahmin and Koli -- to the Scheduled Tribes list.

The Upper House also cleared The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 by voice vote.

The Lok Sabha had cleared the bills earlier this week.

The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill-2024 seeks to provide reservation to Other Backward Classes in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu and Kashmir and bring consistency in the local body laws of the Union territory with the provisions of the Constitution.

Currently, there is no provision for reservation of seats for OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order [| More on P6](#)

Making Full Road Map For 3rd Term: PM Says Have Taken Suggestions From Over 15 Lakh People

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that he has already begun preparing a road map for his third term and has taken suggestions from more than 15 lakh people, asserting that the new India "will now work with super speed".

Addressing the Times Group's ET NOW Global Business Summit, Modi said that for nearly one and a half years he has been putting in place details of new schemes to give new pace to the country's development and curb poverty.

Giving an account of the massive transformation in the pace of work and the change in governance style he has effected in his 10 years compared to the preceding decade-long rule of the Congress-led UPA, he said his third term will witness even bigger decisions.

"I am making a full road map (of third term)... I have taken suggestions from over 15 lakh people in different ways. This is the first time I am telling this. The work is on and it will take a final shape in 20-30 days. New India will work with this super speed. This is Modi's guarantee," he said with characteristic confidence, drawing cheers from the audience.

The prime minister referred



I AM MAKING A FULL ROAD MAP (of third term)... I have taken suggestions from over 15 lakh people in different ways. This is the first time I am telling this. The work is on and it will take a final shape in 20-30 days. New India will work with this super speed. This is Modi's guarantee."

to the "white paper" his government has brought in Parliament to highlight the alleged mismanagement of the economy and other governance issues, including national security, and

changes it has brought to fly the previous dispensation.

The policies of the 10 years before his government came to power in 2014 would have pauperised the [| More on P6](#)

Modi Govt Has Put Economy Back On Rails: FM

Press Trust Of India

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said that 10 years of dedicated efforts of the Modi government have put the economy back on rails. "We corrected all misgovernance, and focused on reforms," Sitharaman said. Replying to

a debate in Lok Sabha on the White Paper on India's economy and its impact on the lives of people, Sitharaman said the UPA government indulged in "glaring mismanagement" of the defence sector and its highlight was the Rs 3,600 crore Augusta Westland scam. "Critical shortage of ammunition & defence equipment was the main feature of [| More on P6](#)

Parliament Passes Bill To Curb Exam Malpractices

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Parliament on Friday passed a bill that aims to curb malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations, and entails provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to Rs 1 crore for offences.

The bill was passed through a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha, after amendments proposed by some opposition members were rejected. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on February 6.

Replying to a discussion on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024 in the Rajya Sabha, Union minister Jitendra Singh said the youth power of the country is "vital" and asserted that the bill is meant to deter those who are playing with their future.

He asserted that merit cannot be allowed to be hijacked by

non-merit.

"We can't allow vital youth power of this country to be surrendered or sacrificed in the hands of a handful few... Very cautiously, we have kept the bona fide candidate out of purview of the law, be it a job aspirant or a student. So the message does not go that this new legislation is meant to harass the youth of this country. It is only meant to deter those who are playing with their future, and thereby the future of the nation," Singh, the Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions said.

"I am sure the entire House, in one voice, will support this (bill)... It is a dynamic journey we have started," Singh said.

The bill seeks to deal sternly with malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations with [| More on P6](#)

In A First, Govt Confers 5 Bharat Ratna Award In Single Yr

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The decision to award Bharat Ratna to former prime ministers P V Narasimha Rao and Charan Singh and green revolution pioneer M S Swaminathan has taken the number of recipients of the country's highest civilian award to 53, five of them within 2024, maximum in a year so far.

Till now, the maximum Bharat Ratnas were awarded in 1999 when four recipients were given the coveted award. Former prime ministers P V Narasimha Rao, whose liberalisation policies revolutionised the economy, and Charan Singh, a champion of farmers' cause, and green revolution pioneer M S Swaminathan will be conferred Bharat Ratna, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Friday.

Singh, a Jat leader from western Uttar Pradesh, was one of the pioneers of the anti-Congress politics at a time when the Congress was the hegemonic political force.

Rao, a Telugu, is widely

recognised for ushering in economic reforms.

Renowned Indian agricultural scientist Swaminathan was instrumental in developing high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice, which significantly increased food grain production across India during the 1960s and 1970s. He is credited with helping India achieve self-reliance in agriculture during challenging times and made outstanding efforts towards modernising Indian agriculture.

The last Bharat Ratna award was conferred upon Pranab Mukherjee in 2019 and was posthumously awarded to Bhupendra Kumar Hazarika and Nanaji Deshmukh. The award was not given to anyone between 2020 and 2023.

The Government of India had instituted two civilian awards - Bharat Ratna and Padma Vibhushan - in 1954. The latter had three classes namely Pahlala Varg, Dusra Varg and Tisra Varg. These were subsequently renamed as Padma Vibhushan, [| More on P6](#)

Two Hideouts Unearthed In North Kashmir

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Security forces have unearthed two terrorist hideouts in Sopore area of Baramulla district in Jammu and Kashmir and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition, officials said on Friday.

Two suspected terror associates were also arrested during the search operation which yielded the arms and ammunition haul, the officials said.

They said police, while investigating a terror-related case of last year in Sopore Police Station area developed actionable leads.

A search operation was launched in the house of slain commander Abdul Qayoom Najar where security forces found a concrete hideout [| More on P6](#)

Favouritism Or Discrimination In Selection Matters Courts Not Powerless To Enter Into Domain Of Experts: CAT

M Ahmad

Srinagar: While courts have left it in the domain of experts, they are not powerless to step in to prevent gross arbitrariness, discrimination or favouritism, the Central Administrative Tribunal has held.

"We are afraid if Courts have the power to enter the arena of experts which has all alone been left to the domain of the experts as Courts are not experts in this field, however, at the same time Courts are not powerless to interfere where there is gross apparent arbitrariness, discrimination or favouritism," said a bench of M. S. Latif (Member (J)) and Prasant Kumar (Member (A)) while hearing a plea in a

selection matter involving JK Public Service Commission.

The Bench observed that a detailed order was passed by it on December 5 last where the authorities concerned were directed to file their detailed response and the Secretary/Controller of examination, PSC was asked to explain as to whether there is any rule which permits them to review earlier notification following receiving of the notifications.

The Secretary PSC in his response averred that it was in view of the representations received that a sympathetic stance was taken up which compelled the Commission to re-refer the

concerns so raised to the experts once again for scrutiny.

However, the counsel representing the petitioner said that there is no provision in the Business Rules of the PSC or in the Rules of Conduct of Examinations that there can be a review after review.

"Perusal of the relief clause of the OA reads that the petitioners have sought for quashment of the preliminary examinations held on 15-10-2023 issued vide notification no. 12- PSC DR of 2023 dated 13-04-2023 and in the alternative has sought for a direction to declare the petitioners to have qualified the preliminary examinations as

the applicants have correctly marked the questions whose answer key has been changed by changing these answers from correct to incorrect and has also sought for allowing the applicants to sit in the written and viva voce examination," the Bench said.

Counsel for PSC said that it was incumbent upon the petitioner to have arrayed the affected persons as party respondents in the OA as he seeks for quashment of the whole list.

The counsel further submitted that there are as many as 2266 aspirants who have made it to the second round, as such all those candidates who would be affected by such a relief deserved to be arrayed as a party [| More on P6](#)

Only 30% Schools Have Internet Connection In J&K

Agencies

Srinagar: In Jammu and Kashmir only 30 percent of overall government and recognized private schools have internet connection available for the students and staff members—thus raising a question on communicating and teaching students virtually.

According to Kashmir News Observer, the current official revealed that only '5115' government-run-schools have internet like facilities available for the students and the staff members that include 152 girl schools, 4895 co-educational institutes and 68 boys schools.

It also reveals that only one government aided school has an internet connection available.

The official figures further state that only 34 Kendriya Vidyalaya central schools were having the internet like facilities available for the students and staff.



According to the official figures, a total of 36 schools run by the Wakf Board were having internet facilities available.

About the recognized private schools of Jammu and Kashmir, the official figures reveal that only 3335 educational institutes were having internet facilities available that includes 3312 co-educational private, 20 girls and 13 boys' schools.

Pertinently, in August 2023, the Jammu and Kashmir government had initiated providing of smart classes in more than 23,000 [| More on P6](#)

No Respite From Cold Wave

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: There was no respite from cold wave conditions in Kashmir as the minimum temperatures stayed several degrees below freezing point at most places in the valley on Friday, officials said here.

The mercury in Gulmarg skiing resort in north Kashmir fell to minus 9.0

degrees Celsius, the officials said. Pahalgam in south Kashmir, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded the lowest temperature in the valley last night at minus 10.3 degrees Celsius.

Kokernag and Qazigund towns in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 5.0 degrees Celsius [| More on P6](#)



Chronic Pain Both Psychological, Social; Women More Affected: Experts

Press Trust Of India

Chronic pain, persisting beyond the typical healing period of three months, often has complex psychological and social dimensions, say experts who urge people, particularly women who are more susceptible, not to hesitate in seeking support from psychologists.

The experts noted that pain clinics, found in many tertiary or multi-specialty hospitals, are equipped with specialists along with psychologists to holistically treat a person, rather than just target their physical problem.

"The trend nowadays is to focus on the disease rather than the person. We must always keep in mind that pain is a biopsychosocial phenomenon," said Dr. Mary Abraham, a Senior Consultant at Max Hospital, Panchsheel, and Max Institute of Cancer Care, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi.

Biopsychosocial models examine how a combination of biological, psychological, and socio-environmental factors impact wide-ranging issues from human development to health and disease.

A 2023 round-up of pain research in The Lancet noted that a common biopsychosocial risk factors - poor

sleep, despondency, tiredness, stress, and a body mass index (BMI) of over 30 - were the most important ones for localised pain to progress to chronic pain, independently of the underlying pain-related medical condition.

"The mind and the body cannot be separated. All these problems lead to what is known as pain behaviour," said Dr. Vandana V. Prakash, Senior Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Max Multi-specialty Hospital, Vaishali, who was formerly associated with a pain clinic at Fortis Hospital, Noida.

The concept of 'total pain' was introduced in the 1960s by British palliative care physician, Dame Cicely Saunders, who defined it as the "suffering that encompasses all of a person's physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and practical struggles."

Saunders emphasised the importance of palliative (pain-related) care in modern medicine. "Palliative care has to improve in our country. Also, even as more palliative centres have come up in the recent past, awareness regarding pain and palliative care management has to improve," said Abraham.

The doctors have observed that women tend to experience chronic pain more than men.



Dr. Lakshmi Vas, Director, of Ashirvad Institute for Pain Management and Research, Mumbai, attributed this tendency to women's cyclical hormonal activity, including pregnancy surges, along with generally high emotional responses to surroundings

stemming from their innate sensitivity and empathy.

"It also doesn't help that societies around the world are largely patriarchal, forcing women's ideas and thoughts to take a second place. While some might adjust and triumph, oth-

ers don't and the lifetime of inequality, discrimination and friction can create internal stresses in them," Vas told PTI.

For example, in fibromyalgia, a common chronic pain condition characterised by widespread pain and tenderness, fatigue, sleep disturbances, along with mood and cognitive changes, Prakash said there is no external injury but a person still experiences pain throughout the body and leads a miserable life.

"There is a huge psychological component which needs to be addressed here. Otherwise, patients suffer from central sensitisation in which both the brain and the spinal cord become supersensitive to pain," she explained.

"In fact, among all the fibromyalgia patients I have seen, I've not yet seen a man. Even the literature says that there is a female preponderance," Abraham added.

An October 2023 study, published in The Open Rheumatology Journal, enrolled 121 patients with fibromyalgia at tertiary hospitals in India. It observed that most were women (93 per cent), 88 per cent married and nearly 70 per cent homemakers.

Bodyache and fatigue were found to be the most common clinical symp-

toms reported by the participants, along with difficulty in concentrating and gastrointestinal complaints.

The researchers of the study also noticed high prevalence of headaches, obsessive-compulsive behaviour, sleep problems - snoring, waking up at night and daytime sleepiness - and mild-to-moderate depression.

The typical profile of an Indian fibromyalgia patient is that of a middle-aged married homemaker (woman) living in a nuclear family within a middle to upper-middle-class society and with a satisfactory educational status, they said.

However, even though women are sensitive to pain, Abraham noted that they are also the more resilient ones, as they try to cope with all their varied responsibilities.

On the treatment front, Abraham and Vas have observed dry needling to be highly effective in relieving the physical aspect of pain and to some extent, the psychological aspect, owing to the calming effects accompanying the pain relief.

Dry needling involves relieving pain in muscles by inserting needles to relax the spots which become "knotted", due to aggressive firing of the nerves.

AI Model Could Predict Onset Of Psychosis Using Brain Scans, Finds Research

Press Trust Of India

Researchers have developed a new artificial intelligence (AI) model that can predict the onset of psychosis in people using brain scans.

They said that the model, trained on brain scans from people globally, could be helpful in clinical settings, as earlier intervention typically leads to better outcomes with less negative impact on people's lives, even as most experiencing psychosis recover fully.

Psychosis is a mental state characterised by being out of touch with reality and symptoms can include delusions, hallucinations or radical changes in behaviour and thinking. The condition has no single cause, but can be triggered by trauma, drug or alcohol use, or a genetic predisposition.

"At most only 30 per cent of clinical high-risk individuals later have overt psychotic symptoms, while the remaining 70 per cent do not," said associate professor Shinsuke Koike from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo, Japan, and the corresponding author of the study published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry.

"Therefore, clinicians need help to identify those who will go on to have psychotic symptoms using not only subclinical signs, such as changes in thinking, behaviour and emotions, but also some biological markers," said Koike.

For developing the model, the international team of researchers enrolled close to 2,200 adolescent and young adult participants, over half of whom were clinically identified to be at high risk of developing psychosis.

Recruited from 21 locations worldwide, the



"diverse" group was divided into four groups - those who later developed psychosis, those who didn't develop psychosis and people with uncertain follow-up status, and healthy controls.

Using their magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans, the researchers trained a machine learning algorithm - one that learns from past data to make predictions - to discern patterns in the anatomy of the participants' brains. Previous studies have shown the onset of psychosis to be accompanied by structural differences in the brain.

On the training data, the researchers found that the AI model was 85 per cent accurate in differentiating between those at high risk who went on to develop overt psychotic symptoms later and those healthy. On new data, however,

the model showed a 73 per cent accuracy in predicting which participants were at high risk of psychosis onset.

Research of psychotic disorders using MRI can be challenging, according to Koike, owing to variations in brain development and MRI machines, that can make it difficult to get accurate, comparable results.

Further, with young people, it can be difficult to distinguish between typical developmental changes and those occurring due to a mental illness, said Koike.

However, this was the first time that differences in the brains of those at high risk but have not yet experienced psychosis have been identified, the researchers said.

MATTOO'S BEREAVED

With profound grief and sorrow we inform the sad demise of our beloved **Farooq Ahmad Mattoo S/O Late Ali Mohammad Mattoo, R/O Arampora Nawa Kadal Srinagar, who left for heavenly abode on 9th February 2024**



May Almighty grant Jannat-ul-Firdous to the departed soul.

The Congregational Fateh-khani will be held on **12th February 2024 (Monday) at 11 A.M.** at our ancestral graveyard at Mala-Hajun Maqbara, Aram-Pora, Nawa Kadal Srinagar.

Bereaved Family

Contact No.: 9906483786

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PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost the DOB certificate of my Daughter Namely Maisha Jan somewhere. Now I have applied for the issuance of duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.
 Umer Muneer F/o Maisha Jan nj
 R/o Madina Chowk Near Animal Husbandary GOWKadal Sgr

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have applied for the issuance of DOB Certificate for my Son namely Basit Ali Dar who was born on 09-03-2017. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the Srinagar Municipal Corporation within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.
 Manzoor Ahmad Dar F/o Basit Ali Dar nj
 R/o Mallapora Khumani Chowk Bemina Sgr

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have applied for the issuance of DOB Certificate for my Son namely Anzar Ishfaq who was born on 14-10-2017. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.
 Ishfaq Ahmad Beigh bmg
 F/o Anzar Ishfaq
 R/o Takiya Batpora

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have applied for the issuance of DOB Certificate for my daughter namely Sumaya Ishfaq who was born on 12-10-2015. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.
 Ishfaq Ahmad Beigh bmg
 F/o Sumaya Ishfaq
 R/o Takiya Batpora

Houseboat Owners Seek Govt Assistance For License Renewal, Timber Supply

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Concerned about preserving the houseboats, the owners here have sought the government assistance for license renewal and timber supply for the repairing.

President of the Houseboat Association of Kashmir (HBOA), Manzoor Pakhtoon, stated that houseboat owners in Kashmir are concerned over the administrative hurdles affecting their livelihoods.

He added that the own-

ers of houseboats in Dal Lake, Nigeen Lake, and other places are facing immense hardships in getting their licenses renewed while the shortage of timber supply has added to their woes.

Pakhtoon said, "Our license renewals are pending in the honorable court, until our licenses are renewed, we cannot avail the schemes of the government."

He appealed to the government to look into the matter and redress their genuine demands at an earliest.

Youth Stabbed In Srinagar's Gaw Kadal

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A youth was injured after being stabbed in Gaw Kadal area of Srinagar late Friday evening, an official said.

An official said that one person identified as Shafat Husain was in-

jured after being stabbed by an unknown person near Gaw Kadal Srinagar this evening.

He said that soon after the incident, the injured was shifted to the nearest hospital for first aid and an FIR has been registered in this regard.

Many Old City Areas Still Await Public Transport Facility

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Even though people heaved a sigh of relief after the introduction of E-autos and E-buses in Srinagar, many areas especially in old city continue to face difficulties in absence of proper public transport facilities.

Various areas of the city including Fateh Kadal, Jamlatta and Naidyaar lack the facilities of public transport.

People who have to travel daily for work or study suffer the most. Quraiba, a resident of Naidyaar, Rainawaro said it has become a necessity to own a vehicle in absence of public transport facility.



PIC: Abid Bhat/KO

Thousands Throng Hazratbal Shrine On Friday Following 'Meraj'

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: Thousands of devotees from length and breadth of the valley thronged Asar-e-Shareef Dargah Hazratbal to participate in congregational prayers on Friday following Shab-e-Meraj.

Preceded by night long prayers, Meraj also known as Qisra is observed on 27th day of the month of Rajab, according to the Islamic lunar calendar, marking Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) miraculous journey to heaven.

Congregations on Friday following Meraj were held at mosques and shrines across Kashmir, while major gathering on the occasion was witnessed at Dargah Hazratbal shrine, housing the holy relic of Allah's last messenger.

Holy relic, which is believed to be the hair strand of the Prophet (PBUH), was displayed at the shrine after every prayer. A siz-

able number of worshippers including men, women and children from across Kashmir flocked the revered shrine along the banks of Dal Lake to seek blessings of Allah on the occasion.

Similar congregations were also witnessed Asar-e-Shareef Shahr-e-Kalashpora, Jenab Sahab Soura, Khanqah-e-Maula, Ziarat Hazrat Dastageer Sahab (RA) Khanyar and Sarai Payeen, Syed Yaqoob Sahab (RA) Sonwar, Khawaja Naqshband Sahab (RA) and Ziarat Makhdoom Sahib (RA).

Religious cleric's on the occasion highlighted the importance of Meraj in their sermons and shed light on the life and teachings of Allah's last messenger. Elaborate arrangements were put in place by the authorities for the devotees on the eve of Meraj, a night of immense spiritual significance, which is marked by prayers and the recitation of the holy Quran.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

No. 413-2023-24-JAT-DRM-FZR Date: 09.02.2024

Sr. DEN-#FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.reps.gov.in with closing date-04/03/2024 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. In place of Earnest money deposit, "Bid Security Declaration" is to be submitted or prescribed format as available in document section on the portal.

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| 09.02.2024/15:39 | 19.02.2024 | 04.03.2024/15:00 Hrs. |
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Details of Tender: Provision of 10 Nos. Security Mochas, 05 Nos. Guard Room, 04 Nos. Watch Tower, 5500 meter Boundary Wall at JAT Railway Station in Phase-1 Security Infrastructure on Jammu-Lakhanpur in c/w Security works Multi-Disciplinary Committee Report.

| Advertised Value (Rs.) | Earnest Money (Rs.) | Validity of Offer | Period of Completion |
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I informed to general public that my daughter FATIMA MAJEED her Date of birth (DOB) is 22/02/2023 and my Son USMAN MAJEED MALIK his Date of birth (DOB) is 25/09/2019 ...Now I am applying for his/her date of birth certificates (DOB) if anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file His/her objection in the (BDO) office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained Name...ABDUL MAJEED MALIK

F/O... FATIMA MAJEED
F/O... USMAN MAJEED
R/O...MANAGAM
Block.... WAGOORA

kri

حاجی غلام احمد زرگر انتقال کر گئے

یہ خبر انتہائی دلہا اور افسوس کے ساتھ دی جاتی ہے کہ حاجی غلام احمد زرگر صاحب 86 برسوں کے بعد 11 فروری 2024 کو انتقال کر گئے۔ اللہ تعالیٰ مرحوم کو جوار رحمت میں جگہ دے اور لواحقین کو یہ صدمہ برداشت کرنے کی توفیق عطا کرے۔ مرحوم کی اجتماعی فاتحہ خوانی 11 فروری 2024 بروز اتوار صبح گیارہ بجے ان کے آبائی مقبرہ واقع ابراہیم مسجد کو منٹ باؤنٹنگ ہالوں میں چھانڈ پورہ میں انجام دی جائے گی۔ سوگواران: حاجی شعیب احمد زرگر (فرزند) ادیب بن شعیب، شعیب بن شعیب (نواسے) محمد شعیب زرگر (برادر)، حاجی غلام مصطفیٰ بیٹ (برادر بستی)، جاوید اقبال زرگر (بھتیجا) حاجی منظور احمد زرگر (کران)؛ فون نمبر 9818999651

Over 25,000 Devotees Facilitated To Hazratbal On Meraj

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Road Transport Corporation (JKRTC) facilitated over 25,000 devotees including 15,000 on Friday to reach Dargah (Hazratbal) from different parts of the Valley in the last three days on Mehraj-Ul-Alam, said an official.

A senior official from JKRTC said during the past three days they pressed men and machinery into service to ensure smooth movement of devotees with over 15,000 worshippers facilitated to Dargah Hazratbal from various parts of the Valley on Friday alone.

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HIGHWAY STATUS

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

PRAYERS

FAJR 5:56
ZUHR 12:45
ASR 4:30
Magrib 6:12
ISHA 7:34

HIJRI CALENDAR
29 Rajab
1445

This Day In History

- 1859- General Horsford defeats Begum of Oude and Nana Sahib in Indian Mutiny
- 1868- Conservatives & military seize Convention Hall in Florida
- 1880- Pope Leo XIII publishes encyclical Arcanum about Christian marriage
- 1904- Japan and Russia declare war
- 1914- In accordance with the understanding reached by General Jan Smuts and Mahatma Gandhi, 60 passive resistance prisoners are released from Pietermaritzburg Prison; 40 passive resisters released in Durban, 8 in Newcastle, 11 in Port Elizabeth
- 1915- US President Woodrow Wilson protests to Britain on the use of US flags on British merchant ships to deceive the Germans
- 1915- US President Woodrow Wilson warns Germany that the US will hold it 'to a strict accountability' for 'property endangered or lives lost'
- 1916- Military conscription begins in Britain
- 1918- Leon Trotsky declares that Russia is leaving World War I
- 1931- New Delhi becomes the capital of India
- 1933- Adolf Hitler proclaims end of Marxism
- 1940 - "Tom & Jerry" cartoon created by William Hanna & Joseph Barbera debut by MGM.
- 1943 - British 8th Army sweeps through North Africa to Tunisia
- 1952 - India holds its first general election: Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru remains in power

From KO Archives

Police Detect 150 Fake Finance Companies In J&K

Observer News Service

Jammu: The crime branch of Jammu and Kashmir police has detected 150 finance companies operating in the state allegedly without any registration from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). These have defrauded gullible depositors to the tune of Rs 80 crore. Cases have been registered against 40 such allegedly fake companies, mostly in Jammu involving over 200 accused.

Disclosing this to Kashmir Observer, the inspector general of police, crime and railways, Masood Chaudhary, said over 99 per cent or the companies were fake and had defrauded people mostly from rural areas in the name of higher interest on their deposits. Most of these operators are believed to have gone abroad along with their families while some of them have declared themselves bankrupt and closed down their companies.

Chaudhary said the cases were registered on receipt of complaints from the affected people. A special team of senior police officials, headed by the deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, crime and railways, Prem Kumar, has been constituted to investigate the cases. He said some of the accused have been apprehended while some more were likely to be arrested shortly.

In the absence of more stringent laws, Chaudhary said, police were finding it difficult to intervene in the matter. It can take action only after a formal complaint is received. Some of the accused had defrauded the depositors to the tune of Rs 10 crore to Rs 15 crore. He said some special teams had been rushed to places like Mumbai and other major cities across the country to apprehend the culprits.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 10 February, 2001)

Reflecting on Simpler Times

In the race against time, the motto appears to be "jaldi, jaldi" (quick, quick). This perpetual hurry not only impacts the quality of our interactions but also has an impact on our health. Cardiac arrests, once linked mostly to older individuals, now has started affecting the lives of younger people

Dr. Shahid Amin

“As we struggle with this current contradiction, it becomes necessary to stop and contemplate. The technical progress that offered improved effectiveness should not be at the expense of disregarding our relationships and well-being. The excessive speed that is present in our lives needs to be examined, as it does not result in progress but rather the possible loss of the fundamental nature of existence

Looking back into the past, we typically see a simpler time. On the other hand, the current situation presents a contrasting image, characterized by intricacy and a sense of urgency that appears to be present in many areas of our lives. In the past, life was a fabric of simplicity, stitched together with the warmth of tight-knit communities. Friendships were more than just links; they were authentic bonds that endured throughout time. Neighbours were not just people we knew but a crucial source of help and support, forming a close-knit community.

Jump ahead to the present, and life has transformed into a diverse fabric of intricacy. Although technology has undoubtedly changed the way we live, it has also brought a fast-paced lifestyle that feels never-ending. In the midst of a busy activity, the importance of solid relationships and sincere concern often becomes less important, resulting in a constant rush. In the race against time, the motto appears to be "jaldi, jaldi" (quick, quick). This perpetual hurry not only impacts the quality of our interactions but also has an impact on our health. Cardiac arrests, once linked mostly to older individuals, now has started affecting the lives of younger people. The speed of life has become a quiet but powerful factor in the concerning increase in unexpected fatalities. Our environment, food, and work-life balance are some of the serious issues that demand attention.

As we struggle with this current contradiction, it becomes necessary to stop and contemplate. The technical progress that offered improved effectiveness should not be at the expense of disregarding our relationships and well-being. The excessive speed that is present in our lives needs to be examined, as it does not result in progress but rather the possible loss of the fundamental nature of existence.

Sad stories of losing loved ones, especially young ones, to the relentless speed of life are potent reminders. The need to reevaluate our priorities is not only about personal welfare; it is a shared responsibility to protect the foundation of society.

What is more serious is that we are confronted with a difficult situation - a lack of effective leadership that frequently needs to understand the idea of happiness. When life is joyful, miracles can happen. It's not overly complicated, but it's pretty straightforward for someone who has some maturity and experience. These days, many people are feeling unduly stressed and are overly concerned about the future. It is beneficial to make plans and give our best effort, but there are boundaries. When this excessive desire for the future surpasses boundaries, it becomes detrimental to one's life. Accepting our distinct capabilities and advocating for what genuinely



Feature image credits: Photo by Abid Bhat for Kashmir Observer

counts can alter the course of our lives, allowing us to make a beneficial impact on society.

Most importantly, in the midst of the disorder of the contemporary world, we must give importance to our well-being and contentment. Our goals, aspirations, and everyday habits should centre around these fundamental aspects of a satisfying existence. Finding a middle ground between the benefits of modern life and the values of a satisfied life is essential for building a future that is both progressive and focused on personal welfare and joy.

When it comes to managing the interaction between technology, social relationships, and our health, it is essential to learn from both the past and the present. Accepting the advantages

of the contemporary era should not entail forsaking the merits of authentic relationships and a thoughtful attitude towards life. As we progress, let us remember the essential social connections that formerly made life wonderful, and let them lead us in constructing a future that is both modern and peaceful, where well-being and joy are paramount.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer
Dr. Shahid Amin is Associate Professor, School of Management and Commerce, ITM University Gwalior and is an IIMA Alumnus and can be reached at dr.shahidamin15@gmail.com

India's Great Jobs Challenge

JAYATI GHOSH

India seems to be everyone's favorite growth story nowadays. Despite valid concerns about the accuracy of official statistics, the Indian economy is projected to expand by 6.3% in 2024 - an undeniably remarkable feat given that its GDP exceeds \$4.1 trillion. While it remains a lower-middle-income country with a per capita income under \$3,000 (at market exchange rates), India's rapid growth suggests that its economic potential may be greater than expected.¹

But any optimism about India's economic prospects must be tempered by its inability to address two related challenges. The first is the unequal distribution of the benefits of rapid economic growth, which have accrued predominantly to the top 10-20% of income earners.

India's failure to release any consumption figures since 2011-12 has made it difficult to produce reliable estimates of potential increases in inequality and poverty. Such estimates rely heavily on consumer expenditure surveys, typically conducted every five years. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government scrapped the 2017-18 survey because the findings did not align with its preferred narrative. The government has refused to conduct subsequent surveys, even though up-to-date data are vital for informed policymaking.

Moreover, the decennial census, which was meant to be completed in 2021, has been postponed indefinitely. Consequently, neither the government nor citizens know how many people there are in India, where they live, or their living conditions and employment status. Nevertheless, various indicators suggest that the incomes of top earners have increased sharply while the wages of most workers,

especially those in the bottom half of the distribution, have stagnated or declined.

The second major challenge facing India is that rapid GDP growth has not created enough jobs to accommodate its youthful population. With tens of millions of highly educated young people joining the workforce every year, unmet expectations and growing social unrest threaten to turn the country's much-anticipated "demographic dividend" into a disaster.

India has long struggled with low job creation, especially over the past decade. According to the government's own labor force surveys, the country's worker-to-population ratio has declined from 38.6% in 2011-12 to 37.3% in 2022-23. Official statistics also show that the female workforce participation rate has fallen to just 20.8%. But even this figure is inflated, as the government includes "unpaid helpers in family enterprises" in its definition of workers.¹

This approach to labor data is unique to India. Categorizing unpaid helpers as "self-employed," even though they earn no income, runs counter to international best practices, which clearly define employment as work that is remunerated, either in the form of wages and salaries or earnings from self-employment. Moreover, other forms of unpaid labor in India, such as housework and caregiving, are not classified as employment. Notably, women who continue to perform the vast majority of household labor are not considered part of the workforce.¹

Excluding unpaid workers reveals a far lower workforce participation rate than official figures suggest. In 2022-23, 48% of men in India were engaged in paid employment, compared to just 13% of Indian women, resulting in one of the world's lowest female workforce participation rates.

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This underscores the biggest shortcoming of India's much-vaunted growth model: its inability to generate employment opportunities, even relatively low-paid and poor-quality jobs, despite rapid increases in aggregate GDP. It should come as little surprise, then, that real wages have remained largely stagnant over the past decade.

Notably, even among agricultural workers, who experienced the highest real wage growth (albeit at a modest average annual rate of 0.9%), real wages actually declined between 2014-15 and 2021-22 in major states like Haryana, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, about half of India's workforce remains employed in low-productivity sectors that account for just one-fifth of national income.

Consequently, mass consumption has remained constrained, which may explain the government's unwillingness to conduct consumer-spending surveys. This contributed to a sharp decline in domestic investment, which fell from a peak of 42% of GDP in 2006-07 to roughly 31% in 2022-23. Moreover, basic human-development indicators, particularly those related to nutrition, have remained poor and even worsened in recent years, related to low public spending on health, education, and social protection.

Regrettably, creating more high-quality jobs does not appear to be one of the Modi government's top priorities. Instead, the government's economic strategy has focused on "incentivizing" a select group of corporate investors through taxpayer-funded subsidies and regulatory changes. The needs of the vast majority of micro, small, and medium-size enterprises, which employ most of India's workforce, are often overlooked. Moreover, these companies have been adversely affected by policy mistakes such as the demonetization project that abruptly nullified 86% of India's currency in 2016 and the poorly designed and hurriedly implemented Goods and Services Tax of 2017.¹

Without far-reaching reforms aimed at boosting employment and guaranteeing living wages, India will struggle to achieve genuine economic success. The general election due in April and May offers Indian voters a chance to reorient the economy toward a more sustainable, equitable path. They must not squander it.

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

Toxic Masculinity in Indian Cinema and Its Implicit Danger

Ayat Adil

In the vast tapestry of Indian cinema, the portrayal of women has been a contentious issue, with some films inadvertently perpetuating harmful stereotypes and toxic masculinity. Journeying through the corridors of time, classics like "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" and "Raanjhanaa" have etched themselves into Bollywood's legacy, yet they stand accused of normalising harassment and violence against women.

The cinematic landscape further unfolds with the 1993 masterpiece "Darr," directed by Yash Chopra, where Shah Rukh Khan embodies a psychopathic stalker named Rahul. Despite refraining from glorifying Rahul's actions, the film's narrative structure and Khan's compelling performance inadvertently cultivate empathy, blurring the boundaries between toxic love and genuine emotion. This intricate dance exposes the delicate interplay between cinematic brilliance and the inadvertent perpetuation of problematic behaviours.

The repercussions of such portrayals transcend the reel world, infiltrating societal perceptions and attitudes. The normalisation of toxic masculinity, echoed in commercially successful films like "Kabir Singh" and "Animal," draws criticism for fostering gender inequality, misogyny, and harmful stereotypes. These movies, despite their box office triumphs, face scrutiny for reducing women to mere objects of desire, posing a fundamental challenge to the essence of gender equality.

The insidious impact of movies showcasing toxic masculinity extends beyond entertainment, seeping into the minds of the Indian audience. A disconcerting trend emerges as audiences seemingly prefer narratives glorifying toxic masculinity



A still from recently released Bollywood movie "Animal"

over those advocating women empowerment. This shift raises concerns about a potential brainwashing effect, gradually normalising and even instigating the practice of toxic masculinity in their personal lives.

As films like "Kabir Singh" and "Animal" amass popularity, they mirror an audience demand for characters embodying aggression, dominance, and misogyny. This preference, when mirrored in real-life behaviours, contributes to a worrisome perpetuation of toxic attitudes and behaviours within society. The blurred line between reel and reality sees viewers inadvertently adopting or condoning behaviours that undermine gender equality and respect for women.

The film industry's pivotal role

in shaping this narrative cannot be overlooked. The inadvertent blueprint provided by movies portraying toxic masculinity shapes individuals' perception of acceptable behaviour. The normalisation of such conduct in popular culture poses a risk of cementing harmful stereotypes and contributing to the persistence of gender-based violence and discrimination.

In the face of this stark reality, the Indian film industry must embark on a journey of reflection, acknowledging the impact it wields and the responsibility it bears. Beyond the allure of commercial success, filmmakers must be attuned to the potential consequences of perpetuating toxic masculinity on a wide scale. This self-reflection becomes a

potent tool in steering the narrative towards stories that inspire positive change, challenge societal norms, and ultimately contribute to fostering a more equitable and respectful society.

As audiences continue to consume media content, a collective awakening becomes imperative. Viewers, as active participants in this cultural exchange, must critically assess the messages portrayed on screen. By consciously choosing films that advocate for women empowerment and challenge toxic masculinity, the audience can actively contribute to reshaping the narrative and fostering a society that values equality, respect, and the empowerment of all individuals, regardless of gender.

Yet, within this narrative,

there are beacons of hope - films like "Manikarnika," "Neerja," "Mardaani," and "English Vinglish" showcase dominant and strong female characters. However, the paradox emerges as Indian society, seemingly, doesn't show as much interest in these empowering narratives. The industry's struggle to balance audience preferences with responsible storytelling becomes glaring, questioning the societal dynamics that steer attention toward narratives portraying toxic masculinity.

The responsibility to challenge these norms transcends the confines of filmmakers alone. As consumers of media, the audience's critical engagement with content becomes paramount, demanding narratives that uplift

and empower women. The ongoing dichotomy between movies showcasing toxic masculinity and those promoting women empowerment underscores the industry's struggle to balance entertainment and responsible storytelling. The evolving paradigm in Indian cinema calls for a collective effort from filmmakers, actors, writers, and audi-



As films like "Kabir Singh" and "Animal" amass popularity, they mirror an audience demand for characters embodying aggression, dominance, and misogyny. This preference, when mirrored in real-life behaviours, contributes to a worrisome perpetuation of toxic attitudes and behaviours within society

ences to create a positive impact on the industry and society as a whole. The journey towards a more inclusive and empowering representation of women is ongoing, with the hope for narratives that inspire change, challenge stereotypes, and herald a new era of equitable storytelling in the world of Indian cinema.

Views expressed are the author's own

The Pharkiyian Top-Half Marathon

Tani Khan

Embarking on a half marathon in the cold weather from Kralpora Kupwara to Pharkiyian Top is an exhilarating and challenging adventure. This route, however, demands special attention to security due to its proximity to the Line of Control (LOC). In this write-up, I will explore the unique aspects of this marathon, the precautions to be taken, and the incredible experience it offers.

The Route

The Half marathon from Kralpora Kupwara to Pharkiyian Top takes us through stunning landscapes, including snow-covered mountains, dense forests, and picturesque valleys. The route spans approximately 23 kilometers, offering a thrilling and scenic journey for runners.

Security Concerns

Given the route's proximity to the LOC, it is crucial to prioritize security during the marathon. Stringent security measures, including regular patrols and checkpoints, are put in place to mitigate any potential risks. Participants are advised to follow all instructions and guidelines provided by police and security personnel. Make sure to get permission from the local police station.

Precautions for Cold Weather

Running in cold weather requires extra precautions to ensure the well-being of participants. Here are some essential tips to bear in mind:

- Layered Clothing:** Dress in layers to regulate body temperature. Start with a moisture-wicking base layer, add insulating layers, and top it off with a windproof and waterproof outer layer.
- Proper Footwear:** Wear shoes

with good traction to prevent slipping on icy or snowy terrain. Consider using gaiters to keep snow out of your shoes.

- Hydration and Nutrition:** Cold weather can lead to dehydration, so it's vital to drink fluids regularly. Consume energy-rich foods to maintain your energy levels throughout the marathon.
- Protect Extremities:** Wear gloves, a hat, and warm socks to protect your hands, head, and feet from the cold. Consider using hand warmers or foot warmers for added comfort.
- Sun Protection:** Even in cold weather, the sun's rays can be harmful. Apply sunscreen to exposed skin and wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.

The Incredible Experience

Despite the challenges, participating in the half marathon from Kralpora Kupwara to Pharkiyian Top offers a unique and unforgettable experience. The breathtaking beauty of the surroundings, coupled with the adrenaline rush of the marathon, creates an atmosphere of pure exhilaration. The camaraderie among fellow participants, the support from spectators, and the sense of accomplishment upon crossing the finish line make this marathon a truly remarkable event.

Embarking on the half marathon from Kralpora Kupwara to Pharkiyian Top in cold weather is a test of endurance and determination. While security concerns due to the route's proximity to the LOC are important, participants take necessary precautions to ensure safety. By following the recommended precautions for cold weather and embracing the incredible experience, runners can conquer this challenging marathon and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Artificial Intelligence vs Human Stupidity

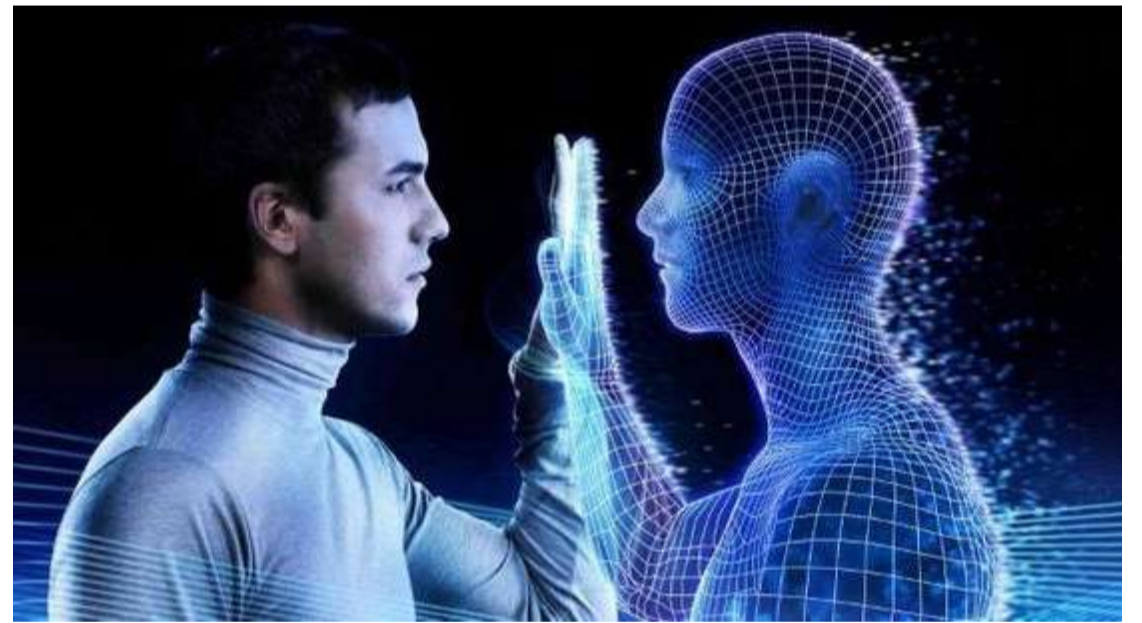
Nouriel Roubini

Since returning from this year's World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, I have been asked repeatedly for my biggest takeaways. Among the most widely discussed issues this year was artificial intelligence - especially generative AI (GenAI). With the recent adoption of large language models (like the one powering ChatGPT), there is much hope - and hype - about what AI could do for productivity and economic growth in the future.

To address this question, we must bear in mind that our world is dominated far more by human stupidity than by AI. The proliferation of megathreats - each an element in the broader "polycrisis" - confirms that our politics are too dysfunctional, and our policies too misguided, to address even the most serious and obvious risks to our future. These include climate change, which will have huge economic costs; failed states, which will make waves of climate refugees even larger; and recurrent, virulent pandemics that could be even more economically damaging than Covid-19.

Making matters worse, dangerous geopolitical rivalries are evolving into new cold wars - such as between the United States and China - and into potentially explosive hot wars, like those in Ukraine and the Middle East. Around the world, rising income and wealth inequality, partly driven by hyper-globalisation and labor-saving technologies, have triggered a backlash against liberal democracy, creating opportunities for populist, autocratic, and violent political movements.

Unsustainable levels of private and public debt threaten to precipitate debt and financial crises, and we may yet see a return of inflation and stagflationary negative aggregate supply shocks. The broader trend globally is toward protectionism, de-globalization, de-coupling, and de-dollarisation. Moreover, the same brave new AI technologies that could contribute to growth and human welfare also have great destructive potential. They are already being used to push disinforma-



tion, deepfakes, and election manipulation into hyperdrive, as well as raising fears about permanent technological unemployment and even starker inequality. The rise of autonomous weapons and AI-augmented cyber-warfare is equally ominous.

Blinded by the dazzle of AI, Davos attendees did not focus on most of these megathreats. This came as no surprise. The WEF zeitgeist is, in my experience, a counter-indicator of where the world is really heading. Policymakers and business leaders are there to flog their books and spew platitudes. They represent the conventional wisdom, which is often based on a rear-window view of global and macroeconomic developments.

Hence, when I warned, at the WEF's 2006 meeting, that a global financial crisis was coming, I was dismissed as a doomster. And when I predicted, in 2007, that many eurozone member states would soon face sovereign debt problems, I was verbally browbeaten by Italy's finance minister. In 2016, when everyone asked me if the Chinese stock-market crash augured a hard landing that would cause a repeat of the global financial crisis, I argued - correctly - that China would have a bumpy but managed landing. Between 2019 and 2021, the fad-

dish topic at Davos was the crypto bubble that went bust starting in 2022. Then the focus shifted to clean and green hydrogen, another fad that is already fading.

When it comes to AI, there is a very good chance that the technology will indeed change the world in the coming decades. But the WEF's focus on GenAI already seems misplaced, considering that the AI technologies and industries of the future will go far beyond these models. Consider, for example, the ongoing revolution in robotics and automation, which will soon lead to the development of robots with human-like features that can learn and multitask the way we do. Or consider what AI will do for biotech, medicine, and ultimately human health and lifespans. No less intriguing are the developments in quantum computing, which will eventually merge with AI to produce advanced cryptography and cybersecurity applications.

The same long-term perspective also should be applied to climate debates. It is becoming increasingly likely that the problem will not be resolved with renewable energy - which is growing too slowly to make significant difference - or expensive technologies like carbon capture and sequestration and green hydrogen. Instead, we may see a fu-

sion energy revolution, provided that a commercial reactor can be built in the next 15 years. This abundant source of cheap, clean energy, combined with inexpensive desalination and agro-tech, would allow us to feed the ten billion people who will be living on the planet by the end of this century.

Similarly, the revolution in financial services will not be centered around decentralized blockchains or cryptocurrencies. Rather, it will feature the kind of AI-enabled centralized fintech that is already improving payment systems, lending and credit allocation, insurance underwriting, and asset management. Materials science will lead to a revolution in new components, 3D-printing manufacturing, nanotechnologies, and synthetic biology. Space exploration and exploitation will help us save the planet and find ways to create extra-planetary modes of living.

These and many other technologies could change the world for the better, but only if we can manage their negative side effects, and only if they are used to resolve all the megathreats we face. One hopes that artificial intelligence someday will overcome human stupidity. But it will never get the chance if we destroy ourselves first. - Project Syndicate

EESL inks MOUs worth INR 500 crores with State Bodies and Industry Partners for Energy Efficiency at India Energy Week 2024

Agencis

New Delhi: Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of Public Sector Undertakings under the administration of the Ministry of Power has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) valued at INR 500 crores with key state bodies and industry partners at the India Energy Week 2024. The focus of the MoUs signed during the event is to formulate a framework for longstanding collaboration in key areas of energy efficiency.

Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh (LAHDC), and Vidhya Pratishtan have partnered with EESL. The exchanged MoUs, worth INR 300 crores and INR 200 crores respectively, during the event, focus on crucial aspects of energy efficiency, including lighting, clean cooking, space heating, renewables, e-mobility, cooling, and consultancy. These agreements lay the foundation for executing projects that implement energy-efficient measures across various facilities, regions, and

communities. The MoU with LAHDC includes space heating solutions across various locations in the Union Territory of Ladakh, using innovative heat pump technology. This is a follow-up to the recent signing of the company's MoU for the distribution of 2000 induction cookstoves in Ladakh, which demonstrates EESL's commitment to comprehensive energy solutions in the region. Mr. Vishal Kapoor, Chief Executive Officer, EESL, said, "At the India Energy Week 2024, this joint association between EESL and our esteemed

partner organizations marks a strategic step forward in our collective pursuit of energy efficiency and sustainability. Through these partnerships, we are setting the groundwork for transformative projects that will significantly contribute to India's journey towards an energy-efficient future. In line with the vision set forth by the G20 Presidency and COP28, this collaborative initiative aims to propel India towards its ambitious carbon neutrality goals." India Energy Week is India's largest and only

all-encompassing energy exhibition and conference, bringing together the entire energy value chain. EESL actively participated in the event, showcasing its remarkable programmes and initiatives aimed at revolutionizing the energy sector and fostering sustainable development. The EESL booth featured cutting-edge energy-efficient appliances, including the induction cookstoves, rechargeable inverter bulb, 9-watt 3-star LED Bulb, e-bicycles, 5-Star rated BLDG ceiling fan, super-efficient air conditioners, and tube lights.

Sheetal Nanda spearheads public darbar at Samba Fort Emphasizes time bound redressal of public issues



SAMBA: Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare, Sheetal Nanda, spearheaded a public darbar at Samba Fort to facilitate direct communication with the local community for resolving their issues and concerns. The event witnessed the locals actively participating and projecting their developmental issues while seeking speedy redressal of the same. The delegations, comprising former BDC members, former PRIs, social workers and community representatives, presented a memorandum of demands and grievances, covering a wide range of developmental and infrastructural issues concerning their respective areas.

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Khan Steals Show

candidates backed by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, had won 85 seats. The Pakistan Muslim League of his rival, three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, had 59 seats. With the results for 66 more seats still pending and a third major party in the mix, it was too soon for any party to declare victory. However, that did not stop Sharif's relatives and loyalists from appearing on a balcony at the party headquarters in the eastern city of Lahore, waving to the crowds below. People threw rose petals on Sharif's car as he arrived to give a speech to supporters. PTI chairman Gohar Khan told Pakistani news channel Geo that the party's own count showed it securing a total of 150 seats, enough for it to form a government, although 169 seats are required for a majority in the 336-seat National Assembly, or the lower house of parliament.

Outcome defies most pre-election predictions

Observers had expected the Pakistan Muslim League to prevail and put Sharif on track for another term as prime minister due to the disadvantages faced by PTI. Along with Khan being in prison and accruing more criminal convictions, election officials and police blocked his party from holding rallies and opening campaign offices, and its online events were blocked. The PTI said the moves were intended to prevent them from competing in the election and gaining momentum with voters. The partial results released Friday showed the Pakistan People's Party of Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, the son of the assassinated former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, in third place with 39 seats. All results were expected to be known by Friday night. Bhutto-Zardari did not respond to requests for comment about his party's performance. After many Pakistani news channels reported early Friday that PTI-backed candidates were giving the parties led by Sharif and Bhutto-Zardari a run for their money, Sen. Mushahid Hussain, a Pakistan Muslim League member, called the media tallies "probably the biggest election upset" in the country's last 50 years. If no party wins an outright majority, the one with the most seats can try to form a coalition government. Pakistan's deeply divided political climate, however, is unlikely to produce a coalition pulling together for the betterment of the country, which is grappling with high inflation, year-round energy outages and militant attacks.

Sporadic violence

Sporadic violence and a cellphone service shutdown overshadowed Thursday's voting. The chief election commissioner previously said the results would be communicated to the oversight body by early Friday and

released to the public after that. But it started happening only at midday. The interior ministry attributed the delay to a "lack of connectivity" resulting from security precautions. The election commission also started announcing election results for the country's four provincial assemblies. The commission posted results on its website more than 15 hours after polls closed. Sharif struck a confident and defiant note on polling day, brushing off suggestions his party might not win an outright majority in parliament. Sharif and Khan's circumstances on election day represented a reversal of fortunes for the two men. Sharif returned to Pakistan in October after four years of self-imposed exile abroad to avoid serving prison sentences. Within weeks of his return, his convictions were overturned, leaving him free to seek a fourth term in office.

Parliament Passes

(Amendment) Bill, 2024, adds Valmiki community as a synonym of Chura, Balmiki, Bhangi, and Mehtar communities in the list of Scheduled Castes in Jammu and Kashmir. The bill seeks to amend the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order of 1956, which lists the castes deemed to be Scheduled Castes in Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. The three bills were taken simultaneously for discussion and passage in the Upper House. Replying to the discussion on the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Minister of Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda said the bill seeks to give justice to the communities who were demanding ST status for long. "The scrapping of Article 370 has allowed us to bring these laws," he noted. Replying to the Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityananda Rai said the government has taken several steps for the welfare of the OBCs in the Union territory and this amendment is another step in that direction. There are three main amendments to the bill. Firstly, the bill ensures reservation for OBCs in panchayats and municipal bodies in Jammu and Kashmir. Secondly, the state election commission will be in-charge of conducting elections to panchayats and municipalities, he said. Thirdly, the removal process of state election commissioner will be according to the constitutional provisions and can only be removed under circumstances similar to those of a judge of a high court, Rai added. He also listed out the development works undertaken after removal of Article 370 in the union territory and said Jammu & Kashmir is now peaceful and on the path of development. Rai said incidents of terrorist activities and stone pelting have come down. Replying to the discussion on

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar said the communities will get the benefits of so many schemes with the passing of the bills. "We do not do vote bank politics but try to strengthen the weaker section of the society," he stated. Making Full Road country, he said, adding that he chose "rashtreaneti" over "rajneeti" by not releasing the white paper at that time as it would shaken people's confidence in the country's abilities. The white paper would have served him politically but he chose national interests over politics, he said. His government has rescued the country from very dire straits to take it to this position, he said, asserting there was never such positive sentiments about India's abilities and success as being seen now. A virtuous cycle has begun as the country's growth rate and exports are consistently high and its fiscal deficit and current account deficit are declining. "It's a time when our productive investment is at a record high and inflation is in control," he said, adding that it is also a time when the number of critics is at an all-time low. His government's interim budget has drawn all-round praise for shunning populism, he said. Modi asserted that he keeps far away from the cheap politics of spending public money extravagantly for a few votes. Attacking the previous Congress governments, he said the slogan of "garibi hatao" was raised for seven decades but poverty did not decline. Whereas an industry in the name of removing poverty cropped up and people enriched themselves by offering suggestion from air-conditioned room on how to do that, he said. "For years, they debated over wine and cheese on the formula to remove poverty but it did not decline," he said, asserting that when a poor person's son in him became the prime minister in 2014, he shut down that industry. His government lifted 25 crore people out of poverty, he noted. In a swipe at political parties offering free electricity in the states ruled by them, he said without elaborating that their handling of the issue would bring ruins and cited his government's programme for rooftop solar power to assert that this will help people immensely. In many sectors more work has been done in the last 10 years than in the previous decades since independence, the prime minister said. More than 650 km metro tracks were laid since 2014 while it was only 250 km before that. Tap water reached only 3.5 crore households till 2014 but his government's Jal Jeevan Mission has taken it to 10 crore houses, he said. Over 40,000 km rail tracks have been electrified in the 10 years of his government while the figure was only

20,000 km till then, he said. Then he asked, "Tell me, is there any contest." He then added in a lighter vein, "I am not talking of May." The Lok Sabha results are expected to be declared in May. Modi said there is discussion now in every development expert group that India has transformed in the last 10 years. "In Davos, which is like a Kumbh Mela for business people, also there was great enthusiasm for India. Someone there said India is an unprecedented success story, someone said India's digital...infrastructure is touching new heights and someone said there is no place where India does not have influence," Modi said. He said that in any country's development journey, a time comes when all circumstances are in its favour and when that country strengthens itself for many centuries to come. "I see that time for India now," he added. "This is the time when opportunity and incomes are both rising and poverty is declining. This is the time when consumption and corporate profitability are both rising and there is record reduction in bank NPAs (non-performing assets). This is the time when production and productivity are increasing and this is the time when our critics are at an all-time low," the prime minister said. He said his government's policy is stability, consistency and continuity. Modi said inflation was a side-effect of overspending and his government followed the mantra of 'money saved is money earned' for time-bound completion of projects. "We valued taxpayers' money by completing big projects like Parliament building in record time, and earned money even from scrap removed from government office in cleanliness exercise," the prime minister said.

Parliament Passes provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to Rs 1 crore. The bill also proposes a high-level national technical committee on public examinations that will make recommendations to make the computerised examination process more secure. Modi Govt Has Put 2014 when we inherited the economy. Bullet proof jackets were not available for our soldiers. Night vision goggles were not available," Sitharaman said. She said 'Jayanti Tax' during the UPA tenure delayed environment clearances for projects up to a year. The average time to clear projects increased to 316 days from 86 days between 2011 and 2014. She said that national security was compromised, environmental clearances delayed and leadership failed during the previous Congress-led UPA government. The minister said big ticket corruptions during the UPA tenure averaged one each year and common people were disillusioned.

The Modi government more than doubled defence budget to Rs 6.22 lakh crore for fiscal 2024-25, from Rs 2.53 lakh crore in 2013-14, she added. Only 30% Schools public schools with educationally backwards blocks on priority. The government had said that it took the initiative of providing a computer lab with smart class facilities in all the 23,283 schools of the Union Territory (UT). It also states that the government was keen to take up the digital initiatives on priority for the schools falling in educationally backwards blocks and tribal areas. The official figures reveal that at least 1420 were set up at elementary level and over 1500 ICT labs at secondary and senior secondary level. "Till Aug-2023, 1420 CAL centers have been established at Upper Primary School level and 1588 ICT labs at Secondary and Higher Secondary Level and are functional till date (May-2023)," it reads. Principal Secretary, School Education Department was not available for his comments.

No Respite From and minus 6.4 degrees Celsius respectively, the officials said. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 4.8 degrees Celsius compared to the previous night's minus 5.2 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperatures in Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Qazigund and Srinagar were around five degrees below normal for this time of the year. Meanwhile, the forecast indicates dry weather until February 17, with occasional cloudy evenings expected on February 14. From February 18-20, there's a possibility of light snow and rain. Favouritism Or Discrimination respondents, and in absence, this petition deserves to be dismissed. "Learned counsel for the petitioner in essence seeks correction of the answer key as circulated by the PSC and submits that the PSC have wrongly decided this objection of the petitioners and submits that his assertion in support of the answer is supported by cogent material which has been taken care of by the PSC experts," the bench said, adding, "We are afraid if Courts have the power to enter the arena of experts which has all alone been left to the domain of the experts as Courts are not experts in this field, however, at the same time Courts are not powerless to interfere where there is gross apparent arbitrariness, discrimination or favouritism." Be that as it may, the Bench directed the counsel for the parties to advance their arguments on these two points whether absence of all those who would be affected by such a relief renders the original application as liable to be dismissed and whether Courts have the power to enter into the arena and domain of the experts

in such matters. Two Hideouts "During the search, a secret concrete hideout was found inside the residential house of Abdul Rashid Najar from which arms and ammunition like IEDs, pistol, pistol magazine, live ammunition and other incriminating electronic items were recovered," the officials said. They said Abdul Rashid Najar, a relative of the slain commander, was taken into custody and, during questioning, he revealed the involvement of one Abdul Jameel Larah, a resident of Sopore, in similar subversive activities. The searches at Larah's residence led to recovery of arms and ammunition and other incriminating material, the officials said, adding both the accused persons were arrested. In A First, Govt Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri through a presidential notification on January 8, 1955. The Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of the country. It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service or performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour. It is treated on a different footing from Padma awards. The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the prime minister to the president. No formal recommendations for Bharat Ratna are necessary. It was given to three persons in a year on several occasions, including in 2019, 1997, 1992, 1991, 1955 and 1954. On several occasions it was given to two persons including in 2015, 2014, 2001, 1998, 1990, 1963 and 1961, while there have also been years when the award was not conferred on anyone. In the first year, the coveted award was conferred upon C Rajagopalachari, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. Those conferred with this award in the past include Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Zakir Hussain, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Abul Kalam Azad, Indira Gandhi, K Kamraj, Mother Teresa, Vinoba Bhave, M G Ramachandran, B R Ambedkar, Nelson Mandela, Rajiv Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Morarji Desai, Satyajit Ray, A P J Abdul Kalam, Jayaprakash Narayan, Amartya Sen, Sachin Tendulkar, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Madan Mohan Malaviya. The other recipients are Bhagwan Das, M Visvesvaraya, Govind Ballabh Pant, Dhondo Keshav Karve, Bidhan Chandra Roy, Purshottam Das Tandon, Pandurang Vaman Kane, Varahgiri Venkata Giri, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Jahangir Ratanji Dadabhai Tata, Gulzarilal Nanda, Bismillah Khan, M Subbulakshmi, Gopinath Bordoloi, Pandit Ravi Shankar, C N R Rao, Bhimsen Gururaj Joshi, Lata Mangeshkar, Chidambaram Subramaniam and Aruna Asaf Ali. On conferment of the award, the recipient receives a Sanad (certificate) signed by the President and a medalion. The award does not carry any monetary grant.

Aes Kaeshir

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








KO PODCAST

Surgical Microscope Lies Defunct At Tral Hospital

Agencies

PULWAMA: A surgical microscope in the Ophthalmology department at Sub District Hospital Tral in south Kashmir's Pulwama district has been lying defunct, causing inconvenience to patients. Patients hailing from various areas of Tral informed the news agency that they were given operation dates three months ago but are still awaiting their turn due to the malfunctioning of the microscopic equipment, which occurred three months ago. They said some patients have resorted to seeking treatment at private clinics or travelling to Srinagar for medical assistance. Shabir Ahmad, a local, expressed concern over the situation, saying the hospital serves approximately 2 lakh people in the Tral sub-division, yet patients have been enduring difficulties for the past three months. He said the authorities are

paying inadequate attention to patient care. "Their (administration's) failure to address the machine issue in the Ophthalmology department over this prolonged period speaks volumes about their concern towards health care," Ahmad said. Residents and patients said they have raised this matter on multiple occasions but to no avail. They appealed to the higher-ups to address the matter immediately and repair the malfunctioning machine to alleviate the suffering of poor patients who cannot afford treatment at private facilities.

Officials said that ophthalmic operating microscopes are crucial for providing high contrast and detailed imaging of all areas of the human eye. BMO Tral, Zahoor Ahmad told KNO that the machine would be repaired tomorrow—(KNO)



18 Medical Shops Closed For Violating Rules In Bandipora

Agencies

BANDIPORA: Authorities in north Kashmir's Bandipora district have closed at least 18 medical shops which failed to adhere to directives regarding the maintenance of records for narcotics and psychotropic drugs, as well as the implementation of a computerized billing system. An official from the drug control department, speaking to the news agency, said due to non-compliance with the crucial directives, they have closed down at least 18 medical shops. The crackdown comes as part of the ongoing drive to regulate the sale and distribution of drugs in the region, he said. Expressing deep concern over the persistent non-compliance with regulations aimed at curbing the drug menace, the official said the closure of these medical shops is a necessary step to ensure strict adherence to established protocols. "Earlier, we also sealed several unlicensed shops and we will continue to take stringent measures to maintain the integrity of our regulatory framework," he added. The Jammu & Kashmir administration in March 2023 directed the chemists and pharmacy shops to maintain the record for each

Nrx medicine dispensed and install CCTV surveillance cameras in their stores on a priority basis — which will monitor the sale of prescription drugs and act as a deterrent for illegal activities. "Currently, 97 percent of medical shops in Bandipora district are equipped with CCTV surveillance cameras — a crucial measure in ensuring transparency and monitoring. The remaining 3 percent in far-flung areas will soon be covered under this initiative," the official said. Regarding computerized billing systems, the official said that over 50 percent of medical shops in the district have adopted this technology, with a gradual increase in adoption observed. Despite consistent advisories, some shops are yet to comply, and the official urged them to expedite the adoption process. "Over the last several months, we have consistently advised and urged them to follow the prescribed orders. We encourage all remaining shops to expedite this adaptation," he added. The official further said that they are taking the implementation seriously, as it serves as a significant curb for drug menaces and those establishments that are still yet to adopt this system must do it at any cost.—(KNO)

12 Arrested, Counterfeit Currency Notes Seized In Kangan

Agencies

GANDERBAL: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Friday said to have arrested 12 persons and seized counterfeit currency of Rs 1,500,000 and genuine Indian currency of Rs 56,000. Police officials told the news agency that the Kangan Police Station acted upon credible information received regarding suspicious activity in Kijpara, situated behind the Dumping Park. "Under the direction of SSP Ganderbal Sandeep Gupta, a specialized police team, led by SDPO Kangan Muzaffar Jan and supervised by SHO Kangan Turk Zahoor, swiftly moved in," police said. "The diligence of the police led to the apprehension of 12 individuals engaged in dubious conduct at the targeted location. Upon thorough search of both the suspects and the vehicles believed to be linked to the illicit activities, law enforcement uncovered and confiscated a significant amount of counterfeit currency. The seized cache

comprised 30 bundles, each containing Rs 50,000 of counterfeit notes from "Children Bank," totaling Rs 1,500,000, alongside Rs 56,000 in genuine Indian currency," police said. Furthermore, five vehicles suspected to have been used in facilitating the criminal operation were impounded, bearing registration numbers JK15-4533 (Alto-K10), JK18B-2652 (Baleno), JK18D-3543 (Alto-K10), JK01AU-5420 (I-20), and PB01A-9585 (Etios), police added. The individuals apprehended in connection with the incident were identified as Riyaz Ahmad Mir, Ghulam Nabi Malik, Arshid Ahmad Wani, Mohd Zubair, Zahoor Ahmad Salro, Aabaas Ahmad Sofi, Bilal Ahmad Sofi, Feroze Ahmad Thokar, Raja Rameez, Ishfaq Ahmad Wani, Zubair Ahmad Bijran, and Khurshid Ahmad Mir. Subsequent to the operation, police said that a case under FIR number 08/2024 was lodged at PS Kangan and ongoing investigations are underway to unravel further details—(KNO)

Timber Seized, Accused Arrested In Budgam

Agencies

BUDGAM: A Forest Protection Team seized a vehicle carrying illicit timber in the Beerwa Forest Range of Central Kashmir's Budgam district. Official sources told the news agency that the team led by Forest Officer Khag intercepted a vehicle at the Dodora Poshkar area of Khag and recovered illicit timber from it. They said one smuggler was ar-

rested on the spot while two others managed to escape from the spot taking advantage of the darkness. Police Station Khag in this regard has registered a formal case after taking safe custody of the jungle smuggler. Range Officer Beerwah Iftakar Qadri while confirming the arrest of a smuggler and seizure of illegally procured timber appealed to the general public not to indulge in green gold loot. [KNT]



YOUNG BOYS IN THE VILLAGE OF BUDGAM are delighted in the enjoyment of icicles.

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

Govt. Reviews Animal And Fisheries Sectors In J&K

KO NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar on Friday chaired a meeting to review the performance of various verticals under Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries sectors as well as Dairy Development across Jammu and Kashmir. During the meeting, the Advisor took a comprehensive assessment of ongoing works, major physical achievements, achievements under Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP) as well as financial progress under different schemes. The meeting also held a wide ranging discussion on exploring potential collaborations with relevant stakeholders, including research institutions, private sector entities and development partners, to harness synergies and accelerate the pace of growth in these sectors. During the review, Advisor Bhatnagar underlined the significance of Animal/Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries sectors in contributing to the socio-economic landscape of Jammu and Kashmir. He underscored the need for leveraging modern technologies, implementing the ongoing



projects religiously and fostering innovation to enhance productivity and uplift the livelihoods of those dependent on these sectors. Highlighting on the significance of HADP, Advisor Bhatnagar maintained that under HADP vibrant and dynamic opportunities have been made available covering different aspects of Agriculture, Horticulture, livestock and other related sectors. He called upon the officers to work in tandem with all the concerned stakeholders so that the desired objectives of this prestigious program are met. The Advisor further delved upon the officers to provide all related support and guidance to the farmers as well as youth so that they can reap the benefits of technology extension, better infrastructure and improved marketing facilities provided under HADP. He also called upon the officers to organise regular camps across the rural areas so that the farmers are consulted and their actual requirements are looked into. While reviewing the progress of various works under different schemes, Advisor Bhatnagar asked the officers of executing agencies to complete these projects within given timelines so that they are dedicated for public welfare. He also called upon the officers. Meanwhile, Advisor Bhatnagar also assessed the human resource issues of these departments. He called upon the officers to forward all the vacant posts, gazetted as well as non-gazetted, to the concerned recruiting agencies. He also asked the HoDs of these departments to update the recruitment rules as per the policy framed by the government so that apt staff having technical expertise are recruited for desired posts.

MVD Anantnag Felicitates Traffic Violators With Red Roses

KO NEWS SERVICE

ANANTNAG: In a novel attempt to motivate the citizens to adhere to the traffic rules, Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) Anantnag officials in collaboration with Traffic department distributed Appreciation certificates and Mugs depicting road safety message to disciplined drivers and also felicitated the traffic violators with Red Roses. The drive was conducted as part of the National Road Safety Month 2024. During the campaign, MVD officials and traffic personnel after catching violators, mainly without helmet riders and drivers without seat belts, took them road side and handed them Red Roses and requested them to wear helmets and follow traffic safety rules for their own safety and for the safety of their family. Those who were found following the traffic rules were felicitated with appreciation



certificates and Road Safety Mugs carrying important messages on road safety. ARTO Anantnag, Dr Mohammad Zubair Lattoo said that making people understand about the importance of traffic rules is a major challenge which needs to be checked immediately. The officer said that by felicitating the disciplined drivers on spot we believe that one can send a positive message among the commuters as well as drivers with regard to adhering to traffic rules. People must cooperate with the authorities in order to ensure violation-free passage of traffic in the district. It is a unique initiative and we want the people to be educated about the risks to their own lives and those of others due to their errors, said Dr Mohammad Zubair. The awareness campaign is also focused on stunts performed by the youth.

Police Seizes 8 Quintals Of Illegally Procured Rice In Budgam

Agencies

BUDGAM: Police in Budgam foiled a black-marketing attempt by seizing 800 Kgs of rice meant for government ration depots and arrested the accused persons involved in the commission of crime. According to a statement, the police said that a party of police station Soibugh at a checkpoint established at Arath Crossing, intercepted a vehicle (load carrier) bearing

Chassis Number BBX-WRC66797 with three persons on board. They have been identified as Nisar Ahmad Lone son of Ab Rashid Lone, Ab Qayoom Bhat son of Sonallah Bhat, both residents of Singhpora Pattan and Ab Majid Wani son of Ghulam Rasool Wani resident of Arath Budgam. During the search, the Police party recovered 16 sacks containing 50 Kg of rice each. During preliminary questioning, it

surfaced that they had bought the rice from a fair Shop at Arath which is run by Gh Nabi Wani son of Ghulam Rasool Wani resident of Arath Budgam. All the 4 accused persons have been arrested and the vehicle used in commission of crime has also been seized. Accordingly, a case vide FIR No. 41/2024 under relevant sections of law stands registered at Police Station Budgam and investigation has been initiated. [KNT]

Haji Pilgrims From Ladakh Dip From 475 To 357 This Year

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Authorities in Ladakh Friday said that a total of 357 pilgrims including three women without Mehram from the region will perform Hajj this year. Compared to last year, the pilgrims will be little less this year as a total of 475 pilgrims from Ladakh performed Hajj last year. The applications for Hajj 2024 were invited last year and dates were also extended by competent authority for the ease of the public. Talking to the news agency, Ali Majaz Chairman of Hajj Committee Union Territory of Ladakh said that a total of 357 applications were received and given the quota all of them will head to perform Hajj once the schedule is announced. He said that the majority of the applicants are from Kargil district. A total of 357 applications including 285 from Kargil and 72

from Leh district were received this year. The Chairman said that this year three women will undertake the holy journey without a Mahram. He informed that four persons above the age of 70 years are also among the pilgrims. The Chairman expressed satisfaction saying that since the inception of Hajj Committee Ladakh separately over a year ago quota for the region has also been increased to which people have responded very positively. Further, the chairman also praised Hajj Committee of J&K and administration for their cooperation given that the embarkation point for Ladakh pilgrims is in Srinagar. "We don't have a passport center in Kargil forcing aspirants to travel to Leh or Srinagar to avail the facilities. We have multiple times approached the authorities for Passport Kendra and hopefully the issue will be resolved," he added—(KNO)

J&K Bank opens an Easy Banking Unit in Jammu



KO NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Continuing its mission of providing convenient banking services to the people of remote areas, J&K Bank on Friday operationalised an Easy Banking Unit (EBU) at Surinsar in Jammu. The EBU will provide the basic facilities of banking like cash deposit, cash withdrawal, account openings etc. to the people of the area. The Bank's General Manager & Divisional Head (Jammu) Sunit Kumar e-inaugurated the EBU Surinsar in the presence of Zonal Head (Jammu) Rajesh Dubey, Cluster Heads with elected public representatives of the area, prominent persons and local residents present in good numbers at the base Branch Tootan-Di-Khui. Speaking on the occasion, the Divisional Head reiterated the Bank's commitment citing its contribution in rendering world class banking facilities to the people irrespective of their location and status. He said, "We will continue to expand

as well as deepen our footprint to serve the people belonging to different geographies by extending the latest banking facilities and financial services to their nearest possible destinations. The EBU at Surinsar will go a long way in helping the people of the area in meeting their daily banking needs." While seeking support from the public, the GM assured them that the outlet will make every effort to meet the expectations of the people of the area. People present at the base branch Tootan-di-Khui expressed their gratitude to the Bank management for opening an EBU in their area. "The EBU will definitely enhance the bonding of the people with the J&K Bank," they said. Pertinently, it was a long outstanding demand of the people of the area which is being developed as an upcoming destination spot and is a major attraction for the tourists because of the shimmering Surinsar Lake.

CUKashmir's DRS Condole Demise

KO NEWS SERVICE

GANDERBAL: The Department of Religious Studies, Central University of Kashmir (CUKashmir) organised an online meeting to express heartfelt condolence on the demise of the father of Dr. Nazir Ahmad Zargar, Academic Coordinator and Assistant Professor of the

Department. Dr. M. Zafar, Coordinator Department, chaired the meeting, which was attended by faculty members, research scholars, students and DRS staff. The meeting concluded with prayers for the departed soul and condolences were extended to Dr. Nazir Ahmad Zargar and his family.

12 Arrested, Counterfeit Currency Notes Seized In Kangan

Agencies

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comprised 30 bundles, each containing Rs 50,000 of counterfeit notes from "Children Bank," totaling Rs 1,500,000, alongside Rs 56,000 in genuine Indian currency," police said. Furthermore, five vehicles suspected to have been used in facilitating the criminal operation were impounded, bearing registration numbers JK15-4533 (Alto-K10), JK18B-2652 (Baleno), JK18D-3543 (Alto-K10), JK01AU-5420 (I-20), and PB01A-9585 (Etios), police added. The individuals apprehended in connection with the incident were identified as Riyaz Ahmad Mir, Ghulam Nabi Malik, Arshid Ahmad Wani, Mohd Zubair, Zahoor Ahmad Salro, Aabaas Ahmad Sofi, Bilal Ahmad Thokar, Raja Rameez, Ishfaq Ahmad Wani, Zubair Ahmad Bijran, and Khurshid Ahmad Mir. Subsequent to the operation, police said that a case under FIR number 08/2024 was lodged at PS Kangan and ongoing investigations are underway to unravel further details—(KNO)

Challenged By Life In More Than One Way, Kashmir's Differently-Abled Cricketers Shine

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Aamir Hassan had to learn quite early in life that left is right for him.

He didn't really have a choice. Fingers of his right hand had to be amputated when he was just an infant after burn injuries caused by an accident deteriorated into severe infection.

But life wasn't done testing him.

As if being forced to become a southpaw wasn't enough, he also had to grow up the hard way in Tarzoo Village, just three kilometres from Sopore town in Kashmir valley which earned fame for its apple orchards and notoriety for being militancy-infested during the '90s.

Being the eldest child in his family, he gave up education to help his father, who worked in those picturesque apple orchards. What he never gave up was his cricketer's ambition.

"Infrastructure is a problem in Kashmir. I daily walk three kilometres from my village for practice. As far as disturbances were concerned, I never got perturbed by them," the left-arm pacer, who is part of the

national cricket team for the differently-abled, told PTI during an interaction here.

The side has done exceptionally well in the past few years winning the 2019 and 2023 World Cup for the differently-abled, and then beating England in a bilateral T20 series last month. The achievements become all the more significant given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 disruption.

"From childhood, all I wanted to do was to play cricket. I would go for training and come back home. I never indulged in any gossip or activity that would disturb my focus," said Aamir, who idolises former pacer Irfan Pathan and the first J&K player to represent India, all-rounder Parvez Rasool.

Now in his early 20s, Aamir is the leading seamer of team, having played the two World Cups and the recent series against England where he got five wickets in five games.

Not only Aamir but national vice-captain Wasim Iqbal and batter Majid Magray, both of whom hail from Anantnag, and Jaffer Bhatt (batter) from Srinagar are shining examples of how cricket for the specially-



abled has picked up in the valley.

Aamir practised bowling while playing with able-bodied boys of his village and that helped him stay a cut above the rest when it came to competing against other physically challenged cricketers.

"You know when National Schools (Championship) was held years ago, I played under Abdul Samad's captaincy, the guy who plays for Sunrisers Hyderabad," Aamir said with a

lot of pride. Ravikant Chauhan, the secretary of the Differently-Abled Cricket Council of India (DCCI), which has been recognised by the BCCI, gave an insight into the growth of cricket in the state.

"A lot of people do not know that Jammu and Kashmir has won back-to-back national titles in this category. So, this isn't a surprise that we had 450 to 500 physically challenged

cricketers appearing for trials in Jammu.

"We receive requests everyday to conduct another round of trials. If four are playing for the national team, you can imagine the level of talent," Chauhan said.

The most experienced of the lot, Wasim developed a lifelong knee condition in his childhood and finds it difficult to walk but he had a ready role model for him to beat the odds.

"I come from the same place as Parvez Rasool, who is first able bodied cricketer from the valley to represent India. Parvez bhai has been a great supporter and it has been a privilege to know him.

"He got Jammu and Kashmir CA to donate two full cricket kits," Wasim, who works in the Civil Secretariat of Jammu and Kashmir in the Administrative Reforms, Inspections and Trainings Department, said.

He is the only one among the quartet with a secure government job.

Majid, who represented a local club named Anthem, had played alongside fast bowler Rasikh Salam, who was with Mumbai Indians some seasons back.

"Me and Wasim bhai, we first discovered together that there is something called cricket for Differently-Abled. I had some personal issues and I missed out on the World Cup both in 2019 and 2023 but when I first touched the India jersey, I became very emotional.

"Thanks to DCCI, we now stay in good hotels and when we play for India, we also get an allowance. We don't suffer from any inferiority complex about

our disability," Majid said.

For Jaffer, there couldn't have been a better feeling than raising his bat after scoring his maiden half-century for the national team.

"My family is very happy and they want me to fully concentrate on cricket. Yes, it would be great if I can get a job as that will help me feel secure while focussing on the game," Jaffer said.

"Now people in Kashmir are slowly getting to know about us. Since Kashmir willow is famous, there are lot of local bat manufacturers, who want us to use their products. I have my personal gear sponsor now that I play for India," Wasim added.

Chauhan believes that these four will be role models for the youth in Kashmir and it will only help in growth of cricket in the state.

"I must thank BCCI secretary Jay Shah for his help. This series, we played with white Kookaburra balls supplied by BCCI. They arranged for the best hotel in Ahmedabad and Jay bhai always ensured that we host teams at best Indian venues," he concluded.



Skiers Recall Gulmarg Avalanche Horror, Close Shave With Death

Agencies

SRINAGAR: When Gulmarg received fresh snowfall last week, snowboarder Rizza Alee, along with his friend Saqib Mir, accompanied three other skiers to seek thrill upon the mighty slopes.

Little did they know that the fateful day would test their courage and resilience like never before.

It was a crisp Monday morning when Alee and Mir set out with their snowboard and ski equipment to glide over snowy mountains.

As they glided down the slopes, the tranquillity of the mountains began to betray them.

Without any prior indication, a deafening roar shattered the stillness, echoing through the valleys like a thunderous beast unleashed.

In an instant, Alee and Mir found themselves engulfed in a maelstrom of ice and snow.

"We were five people including two skiers of Slovakia who went out for skiing and snowboarding. While we were descending from the phase second, we were trapped in a snow avalanche, which came from two sides. It was a very pan-

icking situation since the area was a green zone," Alee said.

Fortunately, Alee along with his another fellow skier managed to breathe while Mir was buried under many feet of snow.

"We were rescued by the Slovakian skiers who were following us. The only guy who was missing was Saqib. We could locate him and started rescuing him," Alee said.

Recounting the episode, Mir said the entire calamity occurred within a fraction of second.

"It was calm everywhere and we were enjoying our adventure. All of sudden avalanche hit the area and I was completely buried under many feet of snow. I couldn't move my hands and feet and lost all hope of survival," Mir said.

It was the Slovakian skiers who traced his location and started the rescue operation.

"If my rescue was delayed by more than a minute I wouldn't have survived. My fellow Kashmiri skiers and Slovakian skiers wasted no time to rescue me. Later people who were around also came and joined the rescue operation," Mir said. (KNO)

Last Minute Winner Sinks Real Kashmir FC In I-League



Agencies

LUDHIANA: An injury-time goal by debutant Marin Mudrazija gave Rajasthan United a valuable and deserved win over a listless Real Kashmir in the I-League on Friday at the Namdhari Stadium in Sri Bhaini Sahib. The win puts Rajasthan United up to ninth on the table, eight points clear of the relegation zone, albeit having played a game more.

The first half of the game was defined by a series of near misses and what-ifs, the biggest of which arrived from the de facto home side Rajasthan United in the first quarter of the game. Having been played through on goal via a brilliant through ball, Lalchungnunga Chhangte seemed to have beaten the keeper with his effort, only to see it bounce off the post and cleared to safety.

Despite the huge gap between the two teams on the table -- and the fact that Real Kashmir had recently beaten the then-unbeaten table-toppers Mohammedan Sporting -- Rajasthan United looked the fresher and hungrier unit, and had more shots and

possession through the first half of the game.

The only real occasion on which Bhabindra Malla Thakuri was tested in the Desert Warriors' goal was via a low cross in the box, by Krizo. Rajasthan's wingers kept the pressure up on a brittle Real Kashmir defence through the second half, and yet it was Malla Thakuri who was called into desperate action more often than his opposite number several times in the second half.

On one occasion it took his timely intervention to tip over an overhit cross from the right to prevent what would have been a shock Real Kashmir opener.

Just when it seemed like the game would peter out to a goalless draw Rajasthan struck, in injury time no less.

From Hardik Bhatt's throw-in on the right, Jefferson de Oliveira sowed enough panic inside the box via his size to induce a game of ping-ball. Real Kashmir were unable to clear their lines and a loose ball fell to Marin Mudrazija inside the six-yard box. (ANI)

I Made A Terrible Mistake: De Villiers On Virat Kohli

Press Trust of India

JOHANNESBURG: Former South Africa captain A B de Villiers has said that he "made a terrible mistake" by sharing "false information" about the personal reasons that have forced star India batter Virat Kohli to take a break from international cricket, insisting that he has no idea "what's happening there".

On his Youtube channel a few days ago, de Villiers had claimed that Kohli opted out of the first two Tests of the ongoing home series against England due to the impending arrival of his second child with actor wife Anushka

one knows what's happening there. All I can do is wish him well. Whatever the reason is for this break, I really hope he comes back stronger and better, healthy and fresh and ready to take on the world," he added.

Kohli is unlikely to play any part in the ongoing series.

Look forward to seeing SKY at T20 World Cup

De Villiers also spoke about international cricket in general during the interaction.

The original Mr 360 degree, who could hit the ball to just about any corner of the ground, de Villiers said



Sharma.

On Thursday night, he back-tracked on that statement in an interaction with select media on the sidelines of the ongoing SA T20 here.

"Family comes first, it's priority as I said on my YouTube channel. I also made a terrible mistake at the same time, sharing false information that was not true at all," de Villiers, who is the brand ambassador of the event, said.

"I just think that whatever is best for Virat and his family comes first, no

he is eager to see Surya Kumar Yadav's performance in the T20 World Cup, where he feels, India would be one of the strongest contenders.

Yadav has been described as the next Mr 360 due to his wide range of strokes.

"There are many players to watch out for in the T20 World Cup. However, I love to watch Surya Kumar Yadav, SKY bat. I am a big fan and hopefully, he has a great tournament," de Villiers said.

Ivory Coast Look To Complete Remarkable Recovery In Cup Of Nations Final

Agencies

ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast can complete a remarkable recovery and put a successful seal on an absorbing Africa Cup of Nations tournament if they can beat Nigeria on Sunday and claim the title on home soil.

Hollywood screenwriters would find their passage to potential glory barely plausible, but the Ivorians are one game away from the continent's top prize despite being on the verge of elimination on several occasions over the last month. They scraped through the group phase, staged thrilling come-from-behind wins in the last-16 and quarter-final and are now looking to complete one of the great comebacks in the tourna-



ment's storied history.

"I don't have the words, I still have trouble taking it all in," admitted Ivory Coast's coach Emmerse Fae. Fae was catapulted into the job after 70-year-old Frenchman Jean-Louis Gasset was sacked as the Ivorians waited for three days to find out whether they

would qualify from the group phase as one of the best third-placed sides.

When they did, they went on to beat holders Senegal on penalties and then snatch a quarter-final win over neighbours Mali, where they were down to 10 men for most of the match, equalised in the 90th min-

ute and then netted the winner at the end of extra time.

The Ivorians lost to Nigeria in their second group game when a cagey contest was decided by a penalty, only awarded after a lengthy VAR review. Nigeria employed a clever tactical plan, which included an uncharacteristic five-man defence and extensive use of the flanks to attack.

Their X-factor, however, remains striker Victor Osimhen, who has had an outstanding tournament despite scoring only once. The reigning African Footballer of the Year has an eye-catching work rate and is a constant menace for opposing defenders although he struggled with a stomach complaint in their semi-final success over South Africa.

Qatar, Jordan Look To Answer Critics, Fulfill Dreams In All-Arab Asian Cup Final

Agencies

LUSAIL: Qatar and Jordan will play an all-Arab Asian Cup final on Saturday where both teams are highly motivated to answer critics who gave them no chance of going so far.

Surprise package Jordan finished third in their group and scraped through to the knockouts, where they suddenly elevated their game to knock out heavyweights Iraq and South Korea. That was a triumph for their Moroccan coach Hussein Ammouta, who was heavily criticised when they finished 2023 without a win in seven games, which included six losses.

"I'm very satisfied with our achievement because it was a personal challenge,"



Ammouta told reporters ahead of Saturday's final at Lusail Stadium. "When a team loses the coach is blamed and when they win they say it's because of team morale. We prepare with all aspects in mind - physical, mental, tactical and psychological.

"I hope we'll be ready when the first whistle blows and we'll respond to the critics, 99% of the time I

don't listen to them since I don't find anything useful." While Jordan will play with nothing to lose in their first final, hosts Qatar are the defending champions after winning their maiden title in 2019.

Qatar disappointed fans when they lost all their World Cup group games in 2022, but they turned things around in the Asian Cup, scoring in every game

en route to the final, including a thrilling 3-2 semi-final win over higher-ranked Iran.

"I'm very proud to be a part of this squad... A month before the tournament no one expected us to reach the final, no one thought we could deliver these performances," Qatar skipper Hassan Al-Haydos said.

"Working together with the coach, technical staff and the Qatar Football Association, we were able to reach this level because of the squad's unity." The two coaches warmly embraced in front of the gleaming silver trophy that weighs 15 kg. But Qatar coach Marquez Lopez, who took charge in December, said all brotherly love between the two Arab nations would be forgotten at kickoff.