

## J&K Braces Up For Another Wet Spell

Heavy Snowfall From March 01 To March 03

Agencies

**Srinagar:** While the weather remained mostly cloudy, the weatherman here has predicted a wet spell from tomorrow, saying that heavy to very heavy snowfall is expected in the middle and higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir from March 01 to March 03.

Director Meteorological department, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that there is a possibility of light rain and snow at scattered places during tonight to 27th forenoon.

On February 28, the weather is expected to remain partly cloudy with light snow over isolated higher reaches while on February 29 amidst the partly to generally cloudy weather, there is a forecast of light rain and snow at scattered places.

However, he said there is a possibility of moderate rain and snow at most places with heavy to very heavy rain and snow at few middle & higher reaches during March 1st March late evening to 3rd March afternoon.

A few places may experience thunder, lightning, hailstorm accompanied by gusty winds during March 01 and March 02.

The weatherman also issued advisory in wake of the upcoming wet spell, saying that in view of heavy to very heavy snowfall over few middle & higher reaches, travellers and tourists are advised to plan accordingly & follow admin and [| More on P6](#)

## ....PM EXUDES CONFIDENCE

# Our 3rd Term Will Begin From June: Modi

Says People Have Seen New India Being Built In Last 10 Yrs

Press Trust Of India

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said a developed India will be the India of youngsters' dreams and they have the maximum right to decide how the country shapes up in the future.

Addressing a function to lay the foundation of railway projects, the prime minister said the third term of his government will start in June, but the scale and speed with which new projects have begun have left everyone baffled.

Recalling the events he



attended in Jammu and Gujarat over the last couple of days, Modi said he dedicated a dozen Indian institutes of technology (IITs) and Indian institutes of management (IIMs) and five All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to the country.

The Indian Railways is undergoing a transformation and it will benefit those who are studying in schools and colleges and those below [| More on P6](#)

## Modi Aims For Minimal Govt Interference In Society

Press Trust Of India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said that his aim is to create a society where the interference of the government is minimal and it acts as a catalyst to ensure prosperity of people.

The government should always be there for the poor, the prime minister said, adding, "We have to create a society wherein interference from the government is minimal...I especially dislike interference in the lives of the middle class."

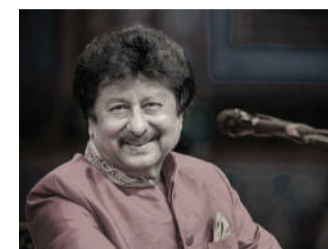
Addressing Bharat Tex 2024, Modi said that for the last 10 years, he has been fighting to create a society with minimal government interference and would continue to do so in the next five years.

He stressed that in ensuring prosperity in the country, the government must act as [| More on P6](#)

## PM Lays Foundation Stone To Redevelop Katra Railway Station

The Mata Vaishno Devi railway station in Jammu and Kashmir's Katra city will be redeveloped at a cost of Rs 40 crore to enhance the existing facilities and introduce new amenities for passengers. The step is part of the Amrit Bharat Station scheme under which Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday laid the foundation stone for the redevelopment of 553 railway stations across the country at a cost of more than Rs 19,000 crore. Union minister Jitendra Singh unveiled a plaque marking the formal redevelopment of the Mata Vaishno Devi railway station, which is part of his Udhampur parliamentary constituency. The station is in Reasi district. Addressing a gathering on the occasion, Singh said the inclusion of the Katra station in the Amrit Bharat Station scheme is reflective of the prime minister's special focus for the development of this region. [| More on P6](#)

## 'Chitthi Aayee Hai' Ghazal Singer Pankaj Udhas Dies At 72



Press Trust of India

**Mumbai:** Renowned ghazal singer Pankaj Udhas, best known for "Chitthi Aayee Hai" and "Aur Ahista Kijiye Baatein", died here on Monday following prolonged illness, his daughter Nayab said. He was 72.

Udhas, who also made a mark as a playback singer in many Hindi films, including "Naam", "Saajan" and "Mohra", died around 11 am at the Breach Candy hospital, a family source said.

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"With a very heavy heart, we are saddened to inform you of the sad demise of Padmashri Pankaj Udhas on [| More on P6](#)

## SJVN, JKPCIL Ink Pact 300 MW Solar Power To Be Supplied To J&K

Press Trust Of India

**New Delhi:** SJVN Green Energy has said it has signed an agreement with Jammu & Kashmir Power Corporation Ltd to supply 300 MW of power.

This 300 MW power shall be supplied to JKPCIL from the 1,000 MW Bikaner Solar project which is being developed under the Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) Scheme of IREDA (Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency) at a cost of Rs 5,491 crore, the company said.

The project is being developed under the Domestic Content Requirement (DCR) mode and is slated for



commissioning by July, 2024. "Wholly owned subsidiary SJVN Green Energy Limited (SGEL) has signed the Power Usage Agreement (PUA) with Jammu & Kashmir Power Corporation Limited (JKPCIL) at Jammu on 23.02.2024 for 300 MW Solar Power Capacity," SJVN said in the filing to BSE.

## J&K Gears For Cleaner Air With Research Boost LG Announces 1.5 Cr For Aerosol Research Centre

Observer News Service

**Jammu:** Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday emphasized on collaborative and cross-sectoral coordination to tackle air pollution, which has turned into a serious health concern for the people across the country.

He assured support to the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism for expansion of research-related activities in Jammu and Kashmir and also announced Rs 1.5 crore for strengthening of the Himalayan Aerosol Research Instrumentation Centre of the Central University of Jammu.



Inaugurating the second 'Aerosol Winter School-Manthan 2024' at the Central University of Jammu in Samba district, Sinha commended the joint endeavour

- Cross-sectoral coordination
- Learning from past mistakes
- Sustainable solutions
- Balanced and sustainable development
- Inclusive public participation
- Support for research

of the varsity, Sindhu Central University Ladakh and Indian National Young Academy of Science to impart hands-on training on required instrumentation and [| More on P6](#)

## 2023 Rajouri Terror Attack NIA Files Charge Sheet Against 5 LeT Operatives

Press Trust Of India

**Jammu:** The National Investigation Agency on Monday filed a charge sheet against five Lashkar-e-Taiba operatives, including three Pakistan-based handlers of the banned outfit, in connection with an attack on civilians in Rajouri district last year.

The final report against a juvenile who was also apprehended in the case will be submitted to the Juvenile Justice Board in Rajouri, a spokesperson of the federal agency said.

Seven people belonging to the minority community were killed and several others injured when terrorists attacked

Dhangri village in Rajouri on January 1. While five civilians were killed in firing by terrorists, two lost their lives in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast the next day.

The charge sheet against three Pakistan-based LeT handlers, including two top commanders of the proscribed outfit, and two arrested 'over ground workers' was filed before a special NIA court under various sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Indian Penal Code.

The spokesman identified the accused as LeT handlers Saifullah alias Sajid Jutt alias Ali alias Habibullah alias Numan alias Langda [| More on P6](#)

## Railway Expansion To Boost Horticulture Industry: Fruit Growers Say Problems Of Freight Hike, Accessibility Limitations Will Be solved

Agencies

**Srinagar:** With Kashmir's railway connectivity being extended to the rest of the country, apple growers and dealers foresee its transformative impact on the horticulture sector.

Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the railway extension to Sangaldan, Sumer, and Khari areas of Ramban district under the USBRL Project in Kashmir. In the next five to six months, the link will connect with the rest of the country. The long-awaited



railway connectivity, which links Kashmir with the broader Indian railway network, is being hailed as a game-changer by farmers.

Among its many anticipated benefits, the newfound accessibility promises to address key challenges faced [| More on P6](#)

## Fair Trial Often Impossible Without Fair Probe: HC Orders Fresh Probe Into Alleged Embezzlement Of RDD Funds

M Ahmad

**Srinagar:** Observing fair trial is often impossible without a fair investigation, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has ordered a fresh probe into alleged fraudulent withdrawal of funds by officers of the Rural Development Department (RDD) Doda during 2009-10 and 2010-11.

"It goes without saying that

the constitutional courts have the authority to order re-investigation/de-novo/fresh or even assign the investigation to any other investigating agency, with a view to ensure a fair investigation," said a bench Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal, underlining that fair trial is often impossible without a fair



investigation. The case (FIR No. 07/2013) had been registered against at least nine employees under section 5(1) (d) r/w 5(2) J&K Prevention of Corruption Act, 2006, 120-B Ranbir Penal Code, for misappropriation of funds by dishonest and fraudulent means. "While this Court

acknowledges that issuing such a direction with regard to an investigation of a case should be done sparingly, the facts and circumstances of the present petition.....have compelled this court to exercise this power," the court said and ordered the fresh investigation into the case after quashing the order of re-investigation passed by the Special Judge. [| More on P6](#)

## HC Quashes 4 PSA Detention Orders

M AHMAD

The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has quashed detention under Public Safety Act (PSA) against four detainees and ordered their immediate release if not

wanted in any other case. Allowing separately filed petitions, a bench of Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul quashed detention orders against Ghowhar Ahmad Bhat of Cheermarg Zainapora Shopian, Irshad Ahmad Bhat of Nildong Batapora Shopian, Nadeem Ayoub Itoo of [| More on P6](#)

## 'Job Seekers Duped By YouTuber' Two Kashmiris Forced To Fight For Russia At Kyiv Frontline

Auqib Javeed

**Srinagar:** Everytime, Sajad Ahmad Kumar hears the distant echoes of bullets and firing during his phone conversation with his brother Azad Yousuf Kumar, his heart skips a beat.

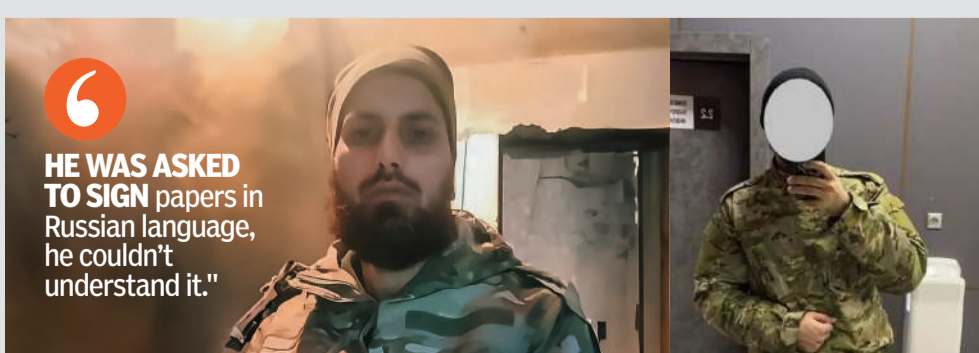
Two months ago, when Azad, a borewell technician, was blessed with a baby boy, he resolved to find a secure job that would support his growing family. However, little did he know that he would end up in Russia fighting their war with neighboring country Ukraine.

Azad, a 31-year-old resident of Poshwan village in Tiral, Pulwama district, stumbled upon an advertisement from a YouTube channel called "Baba Vlogs," operated by a consultant named Faisal Khan, based in Dubai.

"My brother reached-out to them, they informed him to travel to Dubai," said Sajad.

Azad, according to his brother, fled to Dubai in December 2013, where he was provided tickets to Moscow, Russia, by the said consultant.

"He was asked to sign papers in Russian language, he couldn't



HE WAS ASKED TO SIGN papers in Russian language, he couldn't understand it."

understand it. He is not educated as well," Kumar said. Azad wasn't the only Indian

who was dubbed by the company, there were 11 others from different states of India

who were forcefully dispatched to Russia to join its war with Ukraine.

According to reports, these individuals were allegedly lured by agents to enlist in the Russian state-funded private military company, the Wagner Group, under the guise of employment opportunities in Russia. Subsequently, they were purportedly left in conflict-ridden Ukraine as part of the Russian military force.

Upon arrival in Russia, Azad and his companions were transferred to the Russian Army and underwent a rigorous 15-day training program, and subsequently deployed to

the border with Ukraine. "He was forced to serve as a mercenary to fight the Russian war," Kumar laments, adding, "two weeks ago, a bullet hit his feet and he is injured now."

He says that they aren't able to communicate with their kin regularly and they fear for his life.

"We don't know anyone. Neither we know to whom we should contact," Kumar said.

"His wife is crying inconsolably and eagerly yearns for her husband's return."

According to Sajad, his brother, Azad is [| More on P6](#)





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## On Track

The delayed completion of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, originally set for February, has left many eagerly anticipating the transformation it promises for the region. The challenging terrain, characterized by the young Himalayas, has posed unforeseen infrastructural challenges, pushing the operational deadline to July this year. Despite the setback, the recent inauguration of the electrified railway line between Baramulla and Sangaldan in Jammu and Kashmir by Prime Minister Narendra Modi marks a significant step towards realizing the ambitious vision of connecting Kashmir to the rest of India via rail.

The USBRL, spanning an impressive 272 kilometers, is not merely a transportation project; it is a gateway to unlocking economic and tourism opportunities for the region. The delay, while disappointing, points out the complexities involved in navigating the rugged terrain, including the ongoing tunneling work around the Chenab Bridge, which stands at a towering height of 359 meters. This bridge, taller than the Eiffel Tower, is a symbol of engineering marvel and resilience in the face of geographical challenges.

The partial commissioning of the USBRL, covering the Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section, is a crucial milestone that offers a glimpse into the project's potential benefits. The usage of Ballast Less Track (BLT) along this route promises a smoother and more comfortable riding experience for passengers. Also, the inclusion of India's longest transportation tunnel, T-50 (12.77 km), in the Khari-Sumber section adds another feather to the project's cap.

From an economic perspective, the completed USBRL holds the promise of facilitating trade and commerce between the picturesque Kashmir valley and the rest of India. Seamless connectivity is a catalyst for economic growth, attracting investments and fostering business activities. The transportation of goods and services via rail will not only be more efficient but also contribute to the overall development of the region.

Tourism, a key driver of Kashmir's economy, stands to benefit immensely from the operationalization of the USBRL. The scenic route, passing through Anantnag, Awantipora, Pampore, and other stations, presents a unique opportunity to showcase the natural beauty and cultural richness of the region. The prospect of a Vande Bharat Express running through this picturesque landscape adds an extra dimension to the tourist experience, making Kashmir more accessible for travelers.

As Prime Minister Modi flagged off various rail projects in Jammu and Kashmir, including the electrified Baramulla-Srinagar-Banihal-Sangaldan section, it became evident that while the USBRL's full operationalization might be delayed, the journey toward realizing its transformative impact has already begun. The completion of the track in July is set to herald a new era of economic prosperity and increased tourism for the Valley.

### OTHER OPINION

## A new success

Moon landings are picking up pace for the second time in history, but now with more countries and novel definitions of success in the mix. Chandrayaan-3's soft-landing confirmed that the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) understanding of the technologies and processes involved and the choices it made — as an impressive space research and flight provider emerging from colonial shadows — are correct. Similarly, the failure of the Luna 25 mission would have taught Russia's Roscosmos something about what it got wrong, particularly as a space agency whose reputation is on the wane after spectacular highs. On February 22, U.S.-based Intuitive Machines (IM) became the first private company to soft-land a robotic craft on the moon. The success of many space service providers in the U.S. is rooted in crucial support from NASA in their formative years. This is true in IM's case as well, but with important distinctions. IM launched its Odysseus lander to the moon as part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) programme, through which the agency is funding instruments onboard commercial missions to the moon hoping their findings will ease NASA's eventual return to the natural satellite. IM's Odysseus itself had a rocky last leg of the journey: as its descent got under way, the lander's navigation instruments glitched, forcing IM engineers to quickly cobble together a fix and transmit it to the craft, instructing it to switch to an experimental NASA instrument onboard. After this hitch, Odysseus appeared to have soft landed, but no confirmation was readily forthcoming due to a weak data link between the craft and antennae on the earth. The next day, IM said Odysseus may have tipped over but without consequence to most of its payloads, including six from NASA, and solar panels.

IM's success testifies to the potential of the CLPS programme and could help extend it in future. NASA's say in CLPS missions is limited to flagging interesting landing sites and providing some payloads. By 2020, it had contracted 14 companies to bid on missions, with its purse size of \$2.6 billion. For the devolution of such critical responsibilities to be possible in any country, it needs, as the U.S. possesses, a healthy and diversified private space service landscape. This is the value of IM's success within the context of the U.S. space programme. India recently approved up to 100% automatic foreign direct investment in parts of its national space programme, potentially paving the way for healthy competition among Indian start-ups to ease ISRO's burden in future. Space is an area that necessitates expansive collaboration, among nations and within them.

The Hindu

# Antimicrobial Resistance

## Concerns and the Way Forward

Dr. Mohammad Iqbal Yatoo

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is considered as one of the ten global public health and development threats that humanity is facing. It is a critical One Health concern with implications for human, animal, plant, and environmental health.

AMR occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi become resistant to antimicrobial treatments to which they were previously susceptible. Antimicrobials — antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics — are substances widely used to prevent and treat infections in humans, aquaculture, livestock, and crop production. Their effectiveness is now in jeopardy because a number of antimicrobial treatments that once worked no longer do so because microorganisms have become resistant to them. Microorganisms that develop resistance to commonly used antimicrobials are referred to as superbugs.

So antimicrobial resistance is the ability of microorganisms to become increasingly resistant to antimicrobials to which they were susceptible. Microbial pathogens develop resistance against antimicrobial drugs making them ineffective for treatment of infections. Antimicrobial drugs are commonly used for curing infections caused by microbial pathogens. Inability of antimicrobials to cure infections due to resistance problems can cause havoc in the public healthcare system.

Antimicrobial resistance threatens human and animal health and welfare, the environment, food and nutrition security and safety, economic development, and equity within societies. AMR poses serious threats to pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. It could make antimicrobials ineffective and useless and can kill more than 10 million people by 2050. Nearly 250,000 people are dying annually in the European Union and 700,000 globally due to AMR and more likely causing more deaths than cancer in future.

AMR could cause a loss of \$1 trillion dollars in the global economy and a surge of 1.2 trillion dollars in annual health expenditure by 2050 sinking the global GDP by 1.1-3.8%. The cost of treatment is rising due to ineffectiveness of antimicrobial treatment by AMR. In the EU alone it is estimated that AMR costs EUR 1.5 billion annually in healthcare costs and productivity losses.

AMR disproportionately affects low- and middle-income countries. The World Bank estimates that an additional 24 million people would be forced into extreme poverty by 2030 if no action is taken on AMR today. As per estimates by 2050, AMR may pose economic crises similar to the 2008 financial crisis. AMR threatens sustainable development goals of United



Rupak De Chowdhuri/Reuters

Nations, especially targets for good health and well-being (Goal 3).

Understanding the basis of AMR is of utmost importance. Devising interventions that can support antimicrobials and can help in overcoming the menace of AMR will be needed in the future.

There are many causes of AMR of both natural and manmade origin, latter being the main cause incited by unregulated use or misuse of antimicrobials in animals, humans and agriculture, application of antimicrobials in animals as prophylactics or feed additives and use of antimicrobials in animals destined for human use. Societal pressure, inappropriate use of antimicrobials, inadequate diagnostics, and hospital use coupled with agricultural use of antimicrobials aid in development of AMR. The application of antimicrobials is central to resistance development both in animals, humans and the environment. Unrestricted use, under dosage, overuse and inappropriate use of antimicrobials in animals and humans predisposes to AMR. Antimicrobial consumption will increase in animals by 99% in 2030 and in humans by 13%. There was a significant surge in the global consumption of antibiotics (increased by 65%, 21.1-34.8 billion DDDs (defined daily doses) during 2000 to 2015, which was mainly driven by low- and middle-income countries. India is the largest consumer of antibiotics (12.9 × 109 units (10.7 units/person)) followed by China (10.0 × 109 units (7.5 units per person)). BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) have shown 76% of the overall rise in antibiotic use during the decade 2000 to 2010. Among BRICS countries 23% of the rise in the retail antibiotic sales was attributed to India, while around 57% of the increase in the medical sector was in China. The rise in antibiotic use has multifaceted reasons but unregulated systems and ineffectiveness being of prime importance. This further aggravates the problem of AMR as constant exposure of pathogens to antimicrobials results in resistance.

Plasmodium falciparum parasite are other examples of resistant microbial pathogens.

Understanding the basis and mechanisms of resistance is of utmost importance for devising interventions and curtailing the menace of AMR. Devising techno interventions that could support antimicrobials and help in combating AMR are the need of the hour and requirements for safeguarding the future. This involves efforts at regional, national and global levels. The main approaches that should be under focus include judicious and limited use of antimicrobials in animals, regular screening of antimicrobials for AMR, development of novel antimicrobials, alternatives to antimicrobials, monitoring and surveillance of AMR, awareness and outreach on AMR, collaborations at national and international levels and implementing the initiatives of one health.

Considering the importance and need for combating AMR, quadripartite joint secretariat on antimicrobial resistance was constituted with global organisations including World Health Organisation (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) to drive multi-stakeholder engagement in AMR.

The United Nations General Assembly in 2022 resolved to hold a UNGA High-level Meeting on AMR in 2024 which will be an opportunity to commit to clear and new targets and practical steps to address AMR. This event will allow Heads of Government and State, Government Ministers and political leaders the opportunity to discuss effective approaches to addressing AMR at a local, national and global level with regards to funding, policy development and international and multi-sectoral collaboration.

On a similar pattern, Sher E Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) is organizing JK Agri-Med Science Congress (2023-2024) from 27 to 29th February 2024 involving experts from Agriculture and allied sciences and medical sciences with the aim of convergence of expertise in agricultural and medical science in order to discuss and focus on the issues and challenges that the bioeconomy and healthcare will be facing in future including antimicrobial resistance.

The author is Assistant Professor, FVSc and AH Shuhama Principal Investigator of SERB, DST and BIRAC projects on infectious diseases of livestock. Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The opinions and observations are of the author and not of the institute he works for



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## Graceful Gestures

In the hustle and bustle of our cutting-edge lives, where efficiency and speed often take priority, the significance of mannerism can occasionally be neglected. Mannerism, the diffused artwork of carrying out oneself with grace and politeness, is an undying distinctive feature that provides a touch of beauty to our interactions. Beyond being an insignificant social nicety, it plays a pivotal role in fostering tremendous relationships, developing harmonious environments, and contributing to personal and expert achievement.

Mannerism isn't restrained to a hard and fast of inflexible regulations; rather, it is an expression of consideration and appreciation for others. It features a spectrum of behaviors, from easy gestures like protecting doors open for others to greater complicated interpersonal competencies like powerful communication and active listening. At its

center, mannerism displays a cognizance of the impact our movements can have on the ones around us and a dedication to contributing definitely to our shared areas.

One of the profound benefits of training mannerism is its ability to put the foundation for meaningful relationships. Politeness, kindness, and attention form the cornerstone of wholesome interactions. By adopting a mannered technique, we create an ecosystem of consideration and warmth, making it easier for others to connect to us on a deeper stage. Whether in non-public relationships or expert settings, the artwork of mannerism will become a bridge that fosters information and cooperation.

Imagine a world wherein anyone prioritizes kindness and attention. Mannerism has the energy to convert our environment into havens of tranquility and positivity. When people embrace correct manners, conflicts

are minimized, and the general environment turns into conducive to collaboration and creativity. A polite and respectful environment nurtures a feel of network and belonging, contributing to the overall well-being of its inhabitants.

In the expert realm, mannerism is a precious asset which can set people apart in their careers. Employers often cost personnel who no longer only excel of their abilities however additionally show off a high degree of professionalism and courtesy. Effective conversation, punctuality, and a deferential demeanor decorate one's professional recognition, establishing doors to possibilities and advancement.

Mannerism isn't always handiest a non-public exercise however it is also a catalyst for wonderful exchange in society. The ripple effect of courteous conduct can encourage others to undertake comparable at-

titudes, growing a collective movement closer to a greater thoughtful and compassionate international. In this way, the effect of mannerism extends far beyond personal interactions, influencing groups and shaping the cultural fabric.

In a world that is continuously evolving, the undying essence of mannerism stays a beacon of mildness, guiding us towards a greater graceful and harmonious lifestyle. It is a preference to embrace the artwork of consideration, politeness, and respect—and funding in the first-rate of our interactions and the proper-being of our groups. As we navigate the complexities of our lives, let us not neglect the transformative power of mannerism, for in its subtlety lies the key to growing a greater stunning and interconnected world.

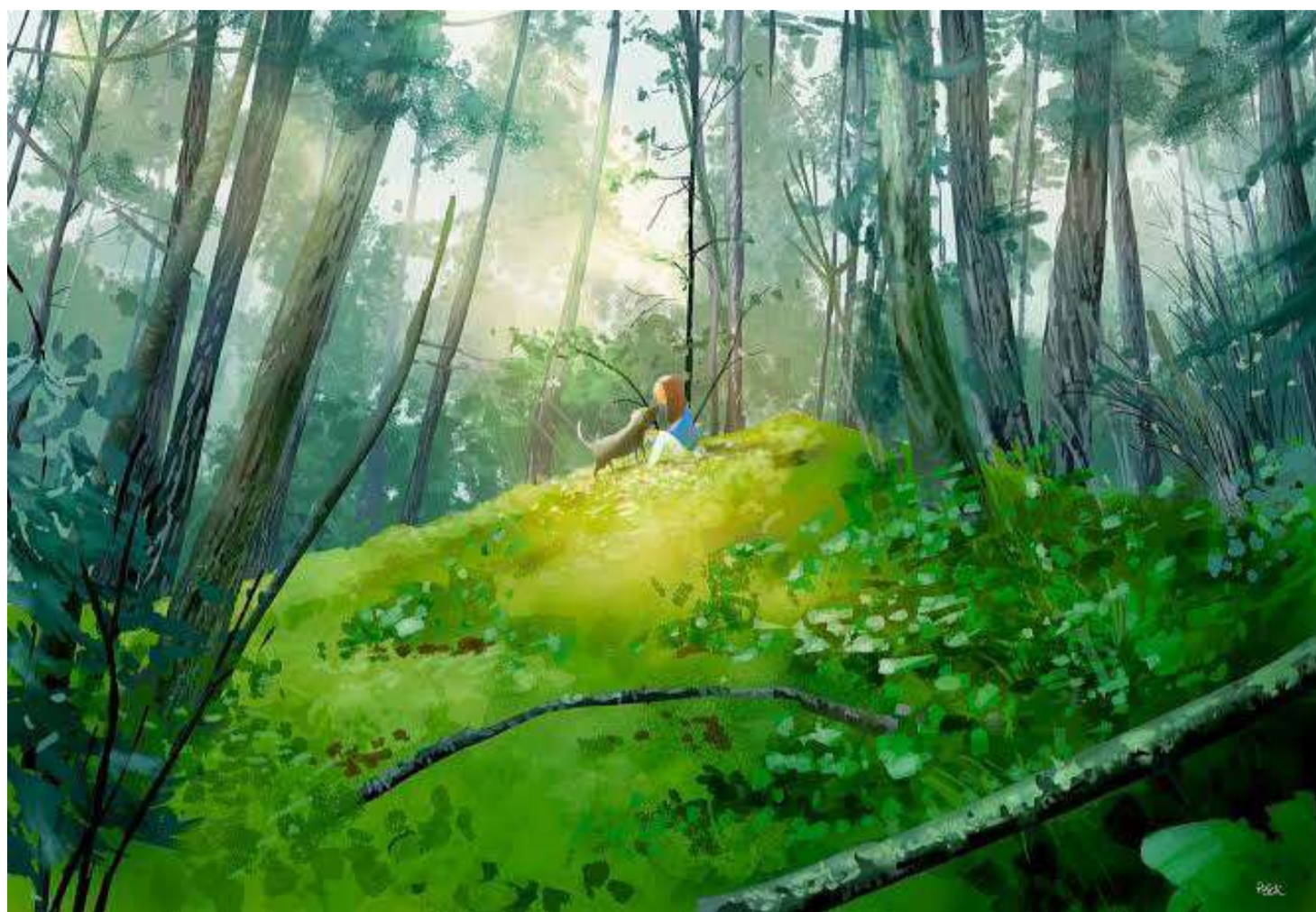
Dr Mudasir Ahmad Gori

# The Kaleidoscopic Spring

Mushtaq Hurra

**A** dormant yet optimistic bud of a rose shrub standing in the courtyard of my home, apprised me that spring is coming. Narcissus is about to open its eyes from the slumber of prolonged winter hibernation to proclaim the resuscitation, revival, rejuvenation and rebirth of the spring. Drooping twigs of white willows with a light green tinge, are about to kiss the mother earth's bosom, to free it from the haunts and curses of frosty winter. Greens and flower seedlings grown under concentrated poly-houses, are ready to entice anthophiles and agriculturists. Croaks of toads have begun to fill symphonious melodies into the mildly-cold environs of our valley. Hoopoes pecking with their long black beaks to unearth insects and earthworms from orchards and compounds of houses, cements the belief that our sustenance ( Rizq ) is already stockpiled somewhere, we just have to explore it. The holy Quran endorses the fact : And when the prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek the bounty of Allah SWT, and celebrate the praises of Allah SWT often, that ye may prosper ( Al-Jumma Verse no 10 ).

The season of spring is adding kaleidoscopic vibes to the landscape of Kashmir valley. The monotony of harsh winter is over. Deep frozen ice is melting, harrowingly murderous icicles have vanished, and the serpent of winter has fled to some distant lands. Lofty snow-clad mountain peaks have begun to distribute the potion of life to the creation of Allah SWT, irrespective of their affiliations and relationships with the ridges. Tall cony pines and cedars are about to spread their green canopies to protect delicate creatures under their soothing shades. Mushroom treasures are waiting for the first thunder of the spring to sprout from the chest of mother earth. Dormant species are yearning to awake from the



prolonged hibernation of ice and snow. Yellow petals of tiny daffodils shining brightly on graves, vividly symbolise the calm and tranquil state of resting inmates of the tombs. Arrival of Ababeel ( Swallow ) reunites us with our separated friends.

Abundant flow of crystal clear water in rivers and streams expand chests of farmers and agriculturists with optimism of a bumper crop in the coming kharif season. Meadows are about to wear the green velvety carpet. The cooing of ring-doves on tree branches adds music to the surroundings. Fairies are carrying water guns to sprinkle bright colours on the soft white wings of butterflies to make them look



**A DORMANT YET OPTIMISTIC BUD OF A ROSE SHRUB STANDING IN THE COURTYARD OF MY HOME, APPRISED ME THAT SPRING IS COMING.** Narcissus is about to open its eyes from the slumber of prolonged winter hibernation to proclaim the resuscitation, revival, rejuvenation and rebirth

enticingly elegant with dotted hues of various shades. Numb flora is sucking the nectar of warmth from the mildly shining sun of the early spring to restore

life, vitality and vigour. Chirping myna is frequently visiting the windowsill of my room to peck scattered rice and bread particles. Warbles of sparrows add

saccharinity to the ears of all creatures. Arrival of the spring is being celebrated with festive fervor and gaiety.

Agriculturists are honing their hoes and spades using whetstones to venture into their farmlands. Seedbeds of different vegetable species are prepared with the hope that a handful of seeds will produce abundantly rich dividends for laborious farmers. Resumption of agro activities eliminates the indolence and pessimism of icy winter. The demon of dreaded cold flees stealthily to unknown woods. Baby plants viz embryos caged between cotyledons of seeds crave to break the bars of hibernation to contribute for the col-

lective good of humanity. Fresh air of the spring neutralizes toxins like an antidote does. Mother earth comes back to life after the teasing spell of the wintery lull. Pink blossoms of almond trees are ready to restore smiles on melancholic faces. I mean the spring comes to balm maimed and bruised souls.

The season of pleasant warmth reunites the bumble bee with narcissus, who have been longing to meet each other, but the cold cruel winter has been impeding their reunion for plenty of days. Flowery fragrance scents every corner of the mid-air to pleasantly aromatic vibes. Mother earth morphs into the garden of Eden with different shades and hues of flowers and plants. The aromatic smell of the spring hypnotizes souls and causes hangovers to honey bees who leisurely sing hymns on soft sepals of daffodils while manufacturing sugary and sweet honey. Verdureless fruit giving trees are reminded of their miraculous work to bear fruits by the shrilling breezes of the spring, after a deep winter sleep.

With the inception of the spring every year, birds construct their fresh abodes on tree branches, attics of houses and granaries, eaves of buildings and ceilings of homes. They probably know the ephemeral and evanescent character of the world, for they don't choose iron and cement concrete. Unlike human beings, they build homes for a solitary season. Hence, they are neither greedy nor oblivious about the impermanence of the world. They never wrangle with their fellows for petty things. They teach us values like harmonious living, mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. Wishing the coming spring erases the monotony of sorrow, grief and melancholy from our lives !

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## Digital Escapism And The Miracle Of Cave Art

Carlos Montemayor

**P**rehistoric cave art provides a window into the earliest days of humanity. It is almost a miracle that these artistic messages reached us, under the sheltered darkness of caves, after tens of thousands of years.

Hand prints are common among the most ancient of these paintings. We may not know exactly what these prints mean, but we immediately feel gripped by them, partly because we understand the fact that a prehistoric human knew this was a way of communicating with the future and with humanity as a whole. They somehow knew this could work—that we would feel connected to them, despite our enormous communicative and cultural differences.

The miracle of "cave art" is both that they succeeded in making us feel connected to them and that their beautiful artistic creations actually survived for so long. The first miracle is explainable in terms of our common cognitive and moral needs—our shared humanity. The second was sheer luck.

Pigments on rocks would not be valuable, at all, unless they constituted an act of joint attention between prehistoric humans and humanity as a whole. This timeless power of joint attention is constitutive of humanity. The value and energy of joint attention depend fundamentally upon real facts, as opposed to contraptions or simulations that would create a communicative farce. For instance, the farce may be that the hand prints were placed there under fake conditions by an impostor, who is just messing with us. Then they are neither ancient nor real acts of communication.

A fake can manipulate the recipient of a message, making the recipient feel connected, but only the truth can establish a genuine and valuable connection between sender and recipient, one that even has a liberatory power through communication, as these early creations of prehistoric humans demonstrate. Truth is deeply related to this no-



tion of communicative care and permanence. The world has epistemic value because it has a real history, and we understand that we are part of its history. We are not arbitrarily here as the result of a whimsical decision of an impostor that places us in an enslaved or subservient situation, similar to the characters that live in a simulation, as in the movie "the Matrix".

Humans are keenly aware of the imminence of their own death. This makes them realize how important it is to communicate truthfully and unequivocally. Cave art transcends the specific circumstances of our very limited human lives, but it is

radically different from the escapism of living in a fake or simulated world.

The care for truth and genuine communication (the more traditional human epistemic drives) stands against epistemic escapism, which is the idea that living in a simulation would be of equal value as living in our real and precious planet. The old version of this idea is that everything is a dream, an illusion. The new version is about the wonders of living in a virtual world, aided by technology that is smarter than us. Clearly, our new version is more dangerous because it implies that a fake world may actually be better than reality—

this was never the point of the traditional, skeptical version.

There is little hope to connect truth with freedom if epistemic escapism is true. Our world is familiar to us because we are part of it, and this depends fundamentally on the factual history of the world. In a simulation, there would be no connection between truth and justice either. Genocides, pandemics, the slave trade, and starvation could all be interpreted as part of the fakery, just events that are added to the simulation with no substantial significance other than perhaps entertainment or shock (they are not real!). They would be on a par with

fake football games and horse races. When this kind of disconnection between truth, freedom, and justice is encouraged by our fascination with technology, recently with artificial intelligence, we are opening the door to all sorts of communicational and societal risks (Montemayor, 2023).

The solution is not to destroy machines or prevent the development of artificial intelligence. What is needed is the reinvigoration of our communicative capacities, which have suffered from the exploitation of communication for commercial purposes. Instead of creating more risk and misunderstanding, we need

to create more trust. This is the next technological challenge we have to face, and more voices are contributing to this discussion.

But it is worth asking, why are we so fascinated by the new forms of epistemic escapism? A plausible answer is that this is because we are facing a transitional point in society, and our problems seem to be larger than our collective wisdom. No wonder we want to escape from the world—to Mars, to a simulation, or to the virtual worlds that will be created by our technological overlords. What would be an easier way to escape than turning our world into a mere simulation? If we are to keep our humanity and trust in each other, then we need to fully appreciate the efforts of our ancestors to connect with us. Joint attention would not be a thing if we were not driven by the need to communicate with each other and create an understanding that allowed us to evolve (despite the inability to learn from our mistakes).

The superficial interpretation here is that it is nice that the cave artists simply painted such beautiful images for their ancestors. The deeper lesson is that they knew that the only way of transcending the constraints and seemingly insurmountable problems of living a limited life is by appealing to our needs for representing and caring about the world and each other, thereby creating a strong bond between truth, freedom, and justice. The drive to seek truth and to share knowledge is best exemplified by the evolution of humans, with varying degrees of challenges along the way. Now we must assess the challenge that the seduction of an idealistic, yet simulated, world will detract from the truth, enabling manipulative forces to exploit this unreality in favor of their own motivations. We must step back and scrutinize the compelling simulations emerging today and the ethical implications of our ingenuity.

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